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Linguistic Landscape of an International University Campus: Approaches, Features, Findings

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Abstract. The relevance of this study is explained by the fact that despite the diversity of linguistic landscape studies of urban spaces, the methodology for studying the linguistic landscape of educational organizations is not systematically described and there is a lack of research on the communicative space of universities. Meanwhile, the linguistic landscape of a university is one of the important tools for its management and transmission of values and ideology, it is also a space for interaction between administration, teachers and students. In addition, the linguistic situation developed at Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, where the campus is a unique multinational multicultural space with a peculiar linguistic landscape, is of scientific interest. The purpose of the study is to describe the linguistic landscape of the international campus of RUDN University as a classical university with high level of internationalization with the use of the methodology developed by the authors. The material presents visual texts posted on RUDN University campus. The objectives of the study involved the following methods: sociolinguistic methods and techniques; descriptive method with characteristic techniques of generalization; classification and interpretation; quantitative, comparative and semiotic methods. The main results, which also contribute to the scientific novelty of this study, are as follows: 1) the authors proposed a methodology to describe the linguistic landscape of an educational organization; 2) clarified methodologically important issues related to the concept and functions of the linguistic landscape of a university; 3) identified the subjects shaping the linguistic landscape of the university, and determined the degree of their activity in its creation and contribution to the linguistic diversity of the landscape; 4) established that the ratio of languages, as well as the dominant language of written communication, depends on the subject of the texts; 5) pointed out that the linguistic landscape reflects the focus of RUDN University on internationalization; 6) formulated preliminary recommendations for organizing written communication on campus to increase its effectiveness and improve the ergonomics of the campus communicative space; 7) noted that the linguistic landscape is only a part of the complex communicative space of a university campus, for a comprehensive study of which the authors of the article introduce the term 'communicative landscape'.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, university campus, internationally oriented university, communicative space, intercultural communication, communicative landscape

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Языковой ландшафт кампуса интернационального университета: методология, анализ, результаты

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Аннотация. Актуальность данной работы обусловлена тем, что при многообразии лингволандшафтных исследований городских пространств методология изучения языкового ландшафта образовательных организаций системно не описана, исследований коммуникативного пространства вузов недостаточно. Между тем языковой ландшафт университета является одним из важных инструментов его управления, трансляции ценностей и идеологии, а также пространством для взаимодействия администрации, преподавателей и студентов. Кроме того, научный интерес представляет языковая ситуация, сложившаяся в Российском университете дружбы народов имени Патриса Лумумбы, кампус которого является уникальным многонациональным поликультурным пространством со своеобразным языковым ландшафтом. Цель исследования — с применением разработанной авторами методологии описать языковой ландшафт интернационального кампуса РУДН как классического университета с высоким уровнем интернационализации. Материалом выступили визуальные тексты, размещенные на территории кампуса РУДН. Задачи исследования предполагали использование следующих методов: социолингвистические методы и приемы, описательный метод с характерными приемами обобщения, классификации и интерпретации, а также количественный, сопоставительный и семиотический методы. Основными результатами, составляющими также и научную новизну данного исследования, стали: 1) предложена методология описания языкового ландшафта образовательной организации; 2) уточнены основные методологические понятия и функции языкового ландшафта вуза; 3) выделены субъекты, формирующие языковой ландшафт вуза, определена степень их активности в его создании и вклад в языковое разнообразие ландшафта; 4) установлено, что соотношение языков, а также доминирующий язык письменного общения зависит от тематики текстов; 5) показано, что языковой ландшафт отражает ориентированность РУДН на интернационализацию; 6) сформулированы предварительные рекомендации по организации письменной коммуникации на территории кампуса для повышения ее эффективности, а также по улучшению эргономичности коммуникативного пространства кампуса; 7) отмечено, что языковой ландшафт явля-

ется лишь частью сложного коммуникативного пространства кампуса университета, для комплексного изучения которого авторы статьи предлагают использовать понятие «коммуникативный ландшафт».

Ключевые слова: языковой ландшафт, университетский кампус, международно ориентированный университет, коммуникативное пространство, межкультурная коммуникация, коммуникативный ландшафт

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Introduction

The organization of campuses of higher educational institutions in the Russian Federation has recently received special attention, which is confirmed by conferences, round tables and publications on this topic (for example, the All-Russian scientific and practical conference “Current directions for the transformation of university campuses. USPTU campus”; XXIII Yasin International Academic Conference on Economic and Social Development; International Scientific and Practical Conference Future of Human Smart Cities in Europe and Central Asia: challenges and opportunities (“The Future of Smart Cities in Europe and Central Asia: Problems and Prospects”), III International Scientific Conference “Visual Anthropology–2019. University City: Living Space and Visual Environment”, etc.). Scientific events discuss issues related to the organization and architecture of the campus, ecology, information and educational environment, etc. (for example, Innovative environmental educational project “RUDN University Green Campus”).

However, there is currently an insufficient amount of works devoted to a comprehensive study of the characteristics of campus communicative space, both in the Russian science and internationally (for more details, see [1]). Among the few, we can note the project “Linguistic Diversity on the EMI Campus” [2; 3], aimed at studying the functioning of languages on the campus of the University of Southampton (UK). A dynamically developing area becomes analysis of the linguistic landscape of universities, especially those that traditionally accept students from around the world. Linguistic landscape, as a rule, is understood as «all linguistic elements that are visible in a certain part of the public

space» [4]. Significant studies of this kind are projects implemented in East Asian universities over the past five years: a study of the linguistic landscape of Jilin University of Foreign Studies [5], field study of the linguistic landscape codes of the campus of Shandong University of Finance and Economics [6], comparative studies of linguistic landscapes of Chinese universities' campuses in Jilin [7], analysis of the linguistic landscape of the university campus in Ponorogo [8], study of the linguistic landscape of the campus of Wuchang Shouyi College in Hubei Province from the perspective of educational and extracurricular activities [9]. Another significant study is done by Jae Hyun Im [10], devoted to the research of the linguistic landscape of departments of East Asian languages and cultures at a university in the Midwestern United States (Indiana University at Bloomington), which found that East Asian departments strive to preserve and express their identity through publicly available language and cultural resources. Let's note that a separate area is represented by research into the linguistic landscape of school institutions [11–14], which emphasizes its significant role in the evaluation of students, and in the transmission of ideological attitudes related, among other things, to politics and culture, society and languages.

The communicative space of Russian educational institutions has not often become the object of research; even if so, then only in a comparative aspect. As examples, we can suggest the project implemented by the National Research University Higher School of Economics “Language landscape and communication with international students (case study of the University of Jena and the National Research University Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg)”, carried out as a part of the bachelor's research work by E.V. Teplukhina; work on a comparative analysis of the spatial configuration of the linguistic landscape of Chinese and Russian universities [15], which highlights only one aspect of the phenomenon being studied — spatial campus organization.

Meanwhile, the language situation observed at Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Moscow, Russia) is of scientific significance. The university teaches students from almost 160 countries around the world, thus the RUDN campus becomes a unique multinational multicultural space with a unique linguistic landscape. It is important to note that the linguistic landscape of the campus is shaped by all participants in communication and at the same time influences all residents of the campus. In addition, the linguistic landscape is a reflection of the language policy, or language ideology [2; 12; 14] of the university. This is what determines the relevance of the topic under consideration.

The object of this study is the communicative space of an international university. **The subject** is the linguistic landscape as an integral component of the general communicative space of the university.

The purpose of the study is to apply the methodology developed by the authors to describe the linguistic landscape of the campus of an international university based on the example of Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.

The purpose of the study involves the following **tasks**:

1. to clarify the concept of linguistic landscape in relation to the study of the communicative space of the campus of an international university;
2. to identify features and functions of the linguistic landscape of the international campus of the university;
3. to propose a methodology for conducting research on the linguistic landscape of a multilingual campus;
4. to describe the linguistic landscape of RUDN University campus;
5. to identify controversial issues in studying the linguistic landscape of an international campus and outline the prospects for such research.

The objectives of the project determined the choice of appropriate **research methods**:

- sociolinguistic methods and techniques to collect material: continuous sampling method, controlled selection method (selective sampling method);
- descriptive method to review the material: characteristic techniques of processing, classification, generalization and interpretation;
- quantitative method and the comparison method to develop principles for systematizing and classifying the material;
- semiotic method, pragmastylistic and semantic analysis to analyze linguistic material.

The theoretical base of the research is formed within the theory of linguistic landscape [3; 16–22], and relies on the methodology of linguistic landscape research [23–26], on the practice of studying the linguistic landscape of cities [27–32] and educational institutions [11–14], on the study of the connection between the linguistic landscape and language ideology and policy [33; 34], on the tendency of internationalization in world universities [35; 36].

Methodology

The landscape metaphor was discussed in social sciences back in the 20th century to describe complex types of interaction between man and the environment. To describe the coexistence of languages in urban space, scientists introduced the concept of linguistic or language landscape [17], which was defined as «the language of public road signs, billboards, street names, place names, commercial store signs and public signs on government buildings» [17. P. 25]. In modern understanding / announcements, the linguistic landscape also includes moving objects: tickers on video screens; advertising on vehicles, car stickers, text on T-shirts and accessories [14]. The publicity of the elements (signs) that form the linguistic landscape is emphasized by D. Gorter, who believes that the

study of the linguistic landscape concerns the use of language in its written form in the public sphere [16]. Similarly, I. Ban-Raphael and others define linguistic landscape as «any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution» [28. P. 14] or «the use of language in its written form (visible language) in the public sphere» [27. P. 9].

Modern sociolinguistics proposes to consider as such a ‘public sphere’ spaces of not only an entire city or region, but also individual districts and spaces of educational institutions — schools and universities (see above). Therefore, the use of linguistic landscape methodology to describe the linguistic landscape of RUDN University campus is scientifically justified.

However, the description of the linguistic landscape of the campus of an international university, such as RUDN University requires some methodological clarifications.

Firstly, the territory of the RUDN campus is a relatively limited geographical space: on the one hand, there are no visible boundaries (access to the territory is open to any person), on the other hand, the compact arrangement of campus facilities along one street, common elements of the linguistic landscape (for example, navigation signs, symbols, etc.) make it possible to identify the campus as a single dedicated space within the city. Important characteristics of this space are: 1) it is defined as belonging to the university, and 2) there are two types of subjects in it — internal, related to the university (students and employees), and external, which are not directly related to the university but like internal ones, they participate in the creation of the linguistic landscape.

Secondly, the functions of the linguistic landscape, which theorists write about (In particular, Landry, Bourhis), change in the educational context of a university campus; new ones appear.

According to researchers, the linguistic landscape performs «two main functions: informative and symbolic» [17. P. 25]. **Informative function** is considered as providing information about the linguistic diversity of a certain territory and the level of its involvement in the processes of globalization, that is, part of the linguistic landscape created by the university administration and broadcasts its ‘linguistic face’. Thus, the duplication of all official information signs into English, as will be shown below, indicates the university’s desire to maintain the status of an ‘internationally oriented university’.

Symbolic function is associated «with the status of the language, the demographic and institutional power of the ethnic group» [17. P. 27]. In the case of a university campus, this function is determined primarily by the transmission of the high status of the Russian language as the state language in Russia and the language of education. As M. Pütz puts it, the dominance of a language emphasizes its «strength, power, status, significance and vitality in a given territory» [33. P. 301]. But apart from that, the presence of announcements / posters in foreign languages highlights the social activity of a particular language community.

Axiological function becomes an important function of the campus linguistic landscape [24. P. 158]. Texts located inside and outside buildings «record the value system of society and, in addition, are themselves one of the means of forming an axiological picture of the world of recipients» [24. P. 158]. For example, the distribution of multilingual announcements throughout the campus creates the image of ‘the most multinational university’, ‘peoples’ friendship university’, it also works to broadcast the university’s mission «by uniting people of different cultures with knowledge, RUDN creates leaders who make the world a better place».

Didactic and adaptive functions of the campus linguistic landscape are specific particularly for the educational space: «signs and announcements in Russian motivate international students to study it more deeply, and also serve for faster adaptation in a foreign language environment» [37. P. 142], while the inscriptions found in other languages familiarize Russian-speaking students with the written culture of various countries and encourage them to study foreign languages, that is, they promote students’ multilingual literacy and intercultural competence [4]. The multilingual text space of an international campus is an effective tool in the process of acquiring identity and social integration of students [10], which results in cross-dialogue and interpenetration of cultures. That is, we can talk about the **identification function** of the linguistic landscape.

Research material

The research material is presented in visual texts located on the RUDN campus — signs, announcements, indexes, posters, plaques, screens, etc.

The representativeness of the material correlates with the selected for analysis campus objects that reflect key types of university activities — academic buildings, dormitories, social and cultural facilities and the area adjacent to the buildings (for more information on the composition of the campus, see [38]). Using a continuous sampling method, we collected texts located on campus, namely: in administrative spaces (main building, the RUDN multifunctional centre); educational spaces (8 faculties); dormitories (4 buildings); cafés, restaurants and spots to eat on campus (located inside academic buildings and separate spots); space of cultural life (International Club); street space (tickers and screen on the main building, signs and markers throughout the campus).

In order to ensure the reliability of the statistical data and the consistency of the analysis, we worked out the unit of analysis. Under the unit of analysis we mean a text that simultaneously meets the following criteria: separate location, similar design, common theme and author’s intention.

Thus, we collected 4148 text units.

Given the dynamic nature of the linguistic landscape, it is important to fix the time period for collecting material for this study: March–April 2023.

Analysis criteria

The most important methodological issue was taxonomy — elaboration and of criteria for analyzing the material.

Since the linguistic landscape is closely related to linguistic diversity [3], the first criterion for classification was the **language of the text**. The **linguistic type** of communication was the second classification criterion: the material showed that texts can be monolingual (In one language), bilingual and multilingual (written in two or more languages, respectively). The key aspect of describing the linguistic landscape, which is noted by researchers [28; 29; 39–41], is the subjects creating it. Therefore, the next criterion for classification was the **addressee** of the text. Within the educational context, such addressees are the university administration, teachers and students. In addition, external entities that are indirectly related to the RUDN University also take part in creating the linguistic landscape — organizations that provide various services to students and university employees (for example, cafés, copy centres, hairdressers, etc.). In addition, we identified the **topics of the texts** as a criterion. To fulfil the purposes of this study, we defined the topics broadly: management of university activities, support of the educational process, extracurricular activities, organization of university space, arrangement of student life.

Such a set of criteria made it possible to comprehensively describe the linguistic landscape of an classical university with high level of internationalization.

Research results

Out of the 4148 units of analyzed texts, 1495 (36 % of the total) were written in foreign languages or with the inclusion of foreign languages. Among them, we spotted texts in 12 languages: English, Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Latin, Portuguese, Uzbek, Farsi, French, Japanese.

This representation of languages confirms the focus of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia on multinationality. It should be noted that multilingualism and multiculturalism are one of the main values of RUDN University, broadcast in the public communication space of the university and in its mission.

However, it was found that with the variety of languages represented, the degree of manifestation of multilingualism depends on the addresser and the topic of communication. The greatest linguistic diversity is recorded in texts for the administration and students. At the same time, the topics of the texts are different.

Texts in foreign languages or with the inclusion of foreign languages, written on behalf of the administration, are devoted to issues of organizing everyday life related to life and health (for example, fire safety), and university navigation (by navigation we mean texts that facilitate navigation

in the university space: directional signs, signboards, etc.). At the same time, 1089 units (73 % of the total number of texts of this type) are bilingual texts (Russian + English) that organize the campus space. The duplication of all official information signs into English, as will be shown below, demonstrates the university's commitment to maintaining its status as an internationally oriented university.

Student texts in foreign languages are devoted to various issues of extracurricular activities — their authors are not only international, but also Russian students studying different languages. It is interesting that, despite the prevalence of monolingual texts, the variety of languages in them is represented as widely as possible: we registered texts in English, Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Latin, Uzbek, French, and Japanese.

Almost two-thirds of all texts on campus are monolingual (68 %), with 94 % of them written in Russian and only 6 % in other foreign languages (2651 and 179 units of text, respectively).

The most active creator of the linguistic landscape is the university administration — 88 % of all announcements, which is explained by its multifunctionality (managing the activities of the university, ensuring the educational process, organizing the university space, arranging the life of students and extracurricular activities). Texts from the administration prevail in all thematic groups.

Thus, in the *University Management* block, texts created by the administration account for 98 %, while almost all of them are in Russian: out of 354 texts in this block, only 26 are in a foreign language. This may be explained by legal requirements for document management in the Russian Federation¹.

A similar situation is observed in the thematic block *Organization of the educational process*, where out of 725 texts by the university administration, 88 % — 640 units — are in Russian. This is connected with the fact that all bachelor's programs, as well as most master's programs, are implemented in Russian, which is the state language² and is legally established as the language of education³.

At the same time, 82 texts in this thematic block were created by the administration in foreign languages or with the inclusion of a foreign language, which is 12 % of the total number of texts. This is primarily due to the fact that the university implements some of its programs in foreign languages — foreign language documentation is required to accompany them.

In addition, we should note the activity of teachers in compiling texts on organizing the educational process — 12.5 % of texts (102 units) were prepared by teachers who provide for the educational process. It is important to emphasize

¹ Federal Law dated 01.06.2005 “On the state language of the Russian Federation”

² Ibid.

³ Federal Law dated 29.12.2012 “On education in the Russian Federation”

that the main interaction between the teacher and students within the educational process, according to local regulations, is carried out in the telecommunication educational information system (TEIS), as well with the use of corporate mail.

The greatest variability is found in the thematic block *Extracurricular Activities*, where 62 % of all announcements (358 units of text) are created by the administration; the second most active addresser is students (25 %, 144 units of text). In monolingual texts on extracurricular topics written on behalf of the administration, multilingualism is most evident: in addition to Russian, 4 foreign languages were implemented in 22 texts. The high activity of students in the thematic block *Extracurricular Activities* is explained, among other things, by the great work of teachers who inspire students and motivate them to create multilingual texts as part of extracurricular activities.

71.5 % of the texts in the thematic block *Organization of everyday life* were issued by the university administration (309 texts out of 432). Among them, we spotted 75 texts written in or using a foreign language it, which constitutes a fairly large percentage (17 %) of the total number of administrative texts in this thematic block. Compared to other thematic blocks, there is the largest number of bi- and multilingual texts, which, in our opinion, is explained by the need to convey information about ensuring life safety to the maximum number of addressees. For example, we found texts with the same content (for example, fire safety notices) translated into 8 languages: English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish, Farsi, Vietnamese, Portuguese.

As mentioned above, 52 % of all texts (1887 units) by the administration are devoted to the organization of the university space, and therefore were allocated to the thematic block *Navigation*. It is important to note that 1088 of them are bilingual, with 99 % (1078 units) of Russian-English texts, and only 10 announcements contain combinations of other languages: Russian-Spanish, Russian-Chinese, Russian-German, Russian-Italian, Russian-French, Russian-Latin.

We separately consider the participation of external entities in creating the linguistic landscape of the RUDN University campus. The analysis showed that their role is insignificant — 5 % of the total number of all texts (216 units). The largest number (117 units — 49.5 % of all ‘external’ texts) concerns everyday topics, which is determined by the nature of the addressees’ activities (these are shops, cafés, copying and photo centres, etc.). Besides, external entities take part in organizing extracurricular activities, for example, inviting students to various courses, master classes, and events outside the university. ‘External’ texts related to extracurricular activities account for 30 % of the total number of texts created by external entities.

Let’s us note that external addressers provide predominantly monolingual texts (195 units — 90 % of the total number of ‘external’ texts), while the vast majority of them are written in Russian: only 11 monolingual texts in English were found. In addition, we point to the minimal use of foreign languages: only 10 %

of ‘external’ texts are bi- and multilingual. The use of foreign languages (English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Chinese) when creating texts by external entities, as a rule, performs an attractive function within a marketing strategy — «not to inform but to impress and attract» [42. P. 558].

Discussion

The results of the analysis showed that the linguistic landscape of the RUDN University fully reflects the multinational nature of the university and its international orientation, as evidenced by the multilingualism of both text senders and their addressees.

The dominant language in written communication is Russian — the state language of the Russian Federation and the language of education. English is also active as a language of international communication, which demonstrates the university’s involvement in globalization processes. However, given the fact that a large number of native speakers of other languages, in particular Chinese, study at the university, we find it advisable to consider the issue of translating a number of texts concerning important aspects of the organization of the educational process and everyday life into other foreign languages.

Translating texts into other languages will help, on the one hand, maximally expand the audience, on the other hand, to differentiate recipients, excluding those for whom this information is not relevant, and thus increase the efficiency of information management in a multilingual team.

In addition, in our opinion, an increase in the number of texts in different languages can, help improve the ergonomics of the campus communicative space, more successful adaptation and social integration of international students with a beginner level of mastering Russian, and at the same time help develop intercultural competence and multilingual literacy among all students living in the unique international environment of the RUDN University campus.

The multifunctionality and polyphony of the linguistic landscape require a meaningful approach to its formation, taking into account the axiosphere of the RUDN University, its ideology and language policy.

Conclusion

We developed a methodology that made it possible to describe the features of the linguistic landscape of an international university.

The results of the study of the linguistic landscape of the international campus have theoretical value (for contact linguistics, intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, linguoculturology, psycholinguistics, etc.) and practical significance (the use of the data obtained helps to improve the organization of the educational space of internationally oriented universities, support international students, and

increase the efficiency of educational and everyday communication in a multilingual team. So, we have developed a methodology that made it possible to describe the features of the linguistic landscape of an international university.

However, the study clearly showed that the linguistic landscape, shaped with written public texts, is only part of the complex communicative space of a multilingual university campus. Such a space, according to observations at this stage, involves various forms of communication — written, oral, digital.

It seems appropriate for us to use in further studies of the communicative space of educational organizations the concept of ‘communicative landscape’, which is a systemic education that includes such components as the linguistic landscape of the campus, a set of onomastic features, visual representations of all campus spaces (non-verbal signs); graphics features; symbolic identity markers and linguocultural signs (symbols, nationally marked clothing items, etc.); contemporary spoken language of campus residents; textual representations of the campus (mention in the media, social networks, etc.).

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