

Urban linguistic landscape of the city of Rijeka in historical perspective

The importance of the sign of linguistic landscape

“ So I was walking for a long time at night, sideways towards a road where I saw cars going, and in one place I saw an illuminated advertisement for Coca – Cola. And I said to myself: Mm, I have never seen that in Yugoslavia or a socialist country, this must be Italy already.” (Czech Television 2006).

What is a sign in the linguistic landscape?

“A sign was considered to be any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame. The underlying definition is physical, not semantic. It is rather broad, including anything from the small handwritten sticker attached to a lamp – post to huge commercial billboards outside a department store.” (Backhaus, 2007: 66).

The definition of the linguistic landscape

“ The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration“ (Landry i Bourhis, 1997: 25).



Piazza – Elizabetha
1916. (before)

Jadranski trg
2016. (now)



Goals and tasks of the research

- to give an overall review of the linguistic landscape of Rijeka in different historical periods and social circumstances of its development by analysing how the linguistic landscape has developed and changed in the period between 1870 up to the present.
- to try to establish the link between the language and social processes and practices, in particular of the way in which linguistic landscape contributes to the construction of social reality which at the same time shapes the LL in its turn.

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals and tasks of this research we have to analyze:

- which languages were/are used in the city of Rijeka and
- what is their vitality
- to what extent changes in linguistic landscape have influenced the public perception of the language in a particular context, i.e. the LL reflects languages present in the language community of the city of Rijeka.

Methodology

Deliberate sampling is used because the results obtained from the samples gathered make generalization possible (Ben-Rafael et al..(2004; 2006), Edelman (2010) and Hübner (2006).

- 100 deliberately collected samples for the period of Austro-Hungarian Empire (1870-1918)
- 50 deliberately collected samples for the period of Italy (Germany) (1918-1945)
- 50 deliberately collected samples for the period of SFR Yugoslavia (1945 -1991)
- 123 deliberately collected samples for the period of the Republic of Croatia (1991 – 2016)

- the samples for diachronic analysis have been collected from print media and archival documents.
- the samples for synchronic analysis have been gathered using signs on three busiest locations in the city centre.
- the procedure itself consisted of taking pictures of signs (signboards) with a digital camera, then sorting the signs according to variables, and their statistical processing using SPSS Package (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for statistical analysis which has also been used in diachronic approach when analysing LL.

Analysis and results

For the period between 1870-2016 we examine the order in which the language appears on the sign. There are two types of signs:

- Bottom up - i.e. – private signs represent commercial discourse
- Top down - institutional signs (city and regulatory affairs: city government, signs on buildings, public institutions, tickets)

The period from 1870 – 1918

Table 1. The order of languages on the sign according to the importance

Language	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	The only
Hungarian	21,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	42,0
Italian	46,0	9,0	5,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	9,0
German	20,0	8,0	3,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	28,0
Croatian	12,0	3,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,0
English	1,0	1,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,0
French	0,0	2,0	0,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

The 1900 census according to the language used

2.842 Hungarians, 17.492 Italians,
1.945 Germans, 7.947 Croats

The period from 1919 – 1945

Table 2. The order of languages (in percentage) in Rijeka

Language	First	Second	Only
Italian	72,0	6,0	68,0
German	10,0	0,0	8,0

Monolingual signs

On 68% of signs only Italian is used

On 10% of signs only German is used

Multilingual signs

1st language Italian–72% of signs

1st language German-10% of signs

The census of the population

	1910	1918	1925
Italians	23.283 (46.94%)	28.911 (62.5%)	36.251 (79.1%)
Croats	15.731 (31.71%)	9.092 (19.6%)	4.970 (10.8%)
Hungarians	3.619 (7.29%)	4.431 (9.6%)	1.397 (3.1%)
Germans	2.476 (4.8%)	1.616 (3.5%)	798 (1.7%)

The period from 1945 -1991 (the period of Yugoslavia)

Bottom up - private signs (commercial discourse- service industries and domestic industry) which take up (18,8 % out of 100 samples)

Foreign private signs – signs from abroad which companies use to advertise their products in print media (commercial discourse) which take up (12,9 out of 100 samples)

Top –down – institutional signs (city and regulatory affairs discourse, the names of institutions, official documents) which take up (11,9% out of 100 samples)

Social sign – signs that are public property in view of the fact that private property does not exist (commercial discourse) which take up (56,4% out of 100 signs)

Table 3. the order of languages (in percentage)

Language	First	Second	Third
Croatian-Serbian	78,2	16,8	1,0
Italian	8,9	6,9	-
English	6,9	20,8	8,9
Russian	2,0	3,0	-
Hungarian	1,0	-	-
French	2,0	5,0	1,0
Turkish	1,0	-	-
German	-	9,9	-
Slovene	-	1,0	2,0

The number of languages on the sign

Monolingual signs (34,7%)

Bilingual signs (49,5%)

Trilingual signs (15,8%)

Nationality structure in Rijeka according to the census for the period between 1948 – 1991.

	1948		1953		1961		1971		1981		1991	
Nationality	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%
Croats	37.324	55	65.354	75	81.890	81	98.121	74	103.248	65	117.178	70
Italians	25.319	37	7.770	10	3.247	3	2964	2	1.917	1	3.247	2

The period between 1991- 2016

The early 90s was the period of social changes which resulted in the aggression on Croatia following its proclamation of independence. These events are also reflected in the nationality structure of Rijeka.

Table 5 : Nationality structure of the city of Rijeka

Census year	Total	Croats	Serbs	Yugoslavs	Muslims/ Bosnians	Italians	Slovenes	Others
2011.	128.624	106.136 82,52%	8.446 6,57%		2.650 2,06%	2.445 1,90%	1.090 0,85%	784 0,61%
2001.	144.043	115.797 80,39%	8.946 6,21%		1.975 1,37%	2.763 1,92%	1.575 1,09%	12.987 9,02%
1991.	167.964	117.178 69,76%	18.891 11,2%	6.925 4,12%	4.803 2,85%	3.247 1,93%	2.709 1,61%	14.211 8,46%

Table 6. – the order of languages

Language	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth
Croatian	56,9	16,3	1,6	-	-	-
Italian	7,3	7,3	2,4	1,6	-	-
English	18,7	11,4	0,8	0,8	-	-
German	4,1	0,8	1,6	0,8	-	-
Serbian	1,6	-	-	-	-	-
French	6,5	0,8	-	-	1,6	-
Hungarian	1,6	0,8	-	-	-	-
Chinese	0,8	2,4	-	-	-	-

Monolingual signs (59,3%) the most frequent ones with both institutional and private signs (mostly Croatian)

Bilingual signs (34,1%)

Conclusion - Rijeka today

- Croatian identity with elements of local identity
- Multilingualism is less present in public sphere than before
- Croatian is a dominant language
- Italian is used in culture and commercial discourse
- English supports and indicates the process of globalisation (in all fields)

Through the comparison of the signs of LL from the period of Hungarian authority up to the present moment we can observe how under the influence of political ideologies the signs of LL have changed and how they have influenced the articulation of the population identity and their use of language.