

The Role of English in Shaping the Linguistic Landscape in Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The issue of visible written language used in Slovene public spaces is addressed. This is rapidly changing under the influence of English as the *lingua franca* of today. The names of stores, restaurants and other establishments as well as graffiti and other signs in Maribor, Slovenia's second largest city, are examined. Four different locations are compared: the old city center, the city's largest shopping mall, the Drava riverfront, and the student campus. Differences and similarities with regard to the ratio of different languages used are discussed in light of Slovenia's language policy. They are also analysed from the linguistic perspective, focusing on lexical, syntactic and orthographic aspects. It is suggested that Slovenia should invest more effort both in the actual implementation of its language policy and language planning so as to guarantee that Slovene retains its status as official and state language not only *de jure* but also *de facto*.

Keywords: Slovene linguistic landscape, language policy, English as a lingua franca

Vloga angleščine pri oblikovanju slovenske jezikovne krajine

POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava problematiko javnih napisov v slovenskem prostoru. Predvsem zaradi vpliva angleščine kot lingue franca ta v času globalizacije doživlja hitre spremembe. Raziskava se osredinja na imena trgovin, restavracij in drugih lokalov ter na druge vrste napisov, kot so oglasi in grafiti. Primerja štiri lokacije v Mariboru, drugem največjem slovenskem mestu: staro mestno jedro, največje nakupovalno središče, gostinski/turistični predel ob Dravi in študentski kampus. Primerja jih v smislu prisotnosti različnih jezikov na napisih in jih predstavi s perspektive jezikovne politike. Dodatno jih analizira z lingvističnega vidika (besedje, skladnja, pisava). Rezultati raziskave kažejo na nujnost dobro premišljene jezikovne politike in jezikovnega načrtovanja, da bi slovenščina v Sloveniji ohranila status uradnega in državnega jezika ne le na papirju, ampak tudi v praksi.

Ključne besede: slovenska jezikovna krajina, jezikovna politika, angleščina kot lingua franca

1 Introduction

Linguistic landscape is a term referring to a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing all types of “the visible display of written language in public space” (Gorter 2013, 190). It can be studied from various perspectives and by various disciplines, from anthropology to applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. It first attracted the attention of researchers a little over forty years ago, when it was perceived as particularly suitable for the study of societal multilingualism, revealing contact and conflict between different languages as well as their hierarchy and variation.

The most quoted definition of linguistic landscape in the literature is perhaps that of Landry and Bourhis (1997, 25):

The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shops signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.

Since then, new types of signs have emerged due to recent technological developments such as electronic interactive touchscreens, scrolling banners, flat-panel displays, signs and slogans on stationary and mobile vehicles, etc. These as well as graffiti should be considered if we are to obtain a maximally comprehensive picture of the linguistic landscape of a particular public space.

Globalization trends over the past two decades have spurred a rapidly growing interest in linguistic landscape studies (e.g., MacGregor 2003; Backhaus 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Cenoz and Gorter 2006; Agnihotri and McCormick 2010; Barni and Vedovelli 2012; Manan et al. 2015; Dressler 2015; Moriarty 2014; Nikolaou 2017; Amos 2017; Shang and Guo, 2017; Karam et al. 2020; Bolton, Botha and Lee 2020). Globalization as a cultural, economic and political force, often associated with “Americanization”, can be observed in its significant impact on all areas of life, in particular through popular culture and consumerism as a preferred lifestyle. Increased mobility, both physical and virtual, is therefore a noteworthy factor, while linguistically, globalization means the spread of English throughout the world as a universal means of communication. It is thus not only multilingual regions and societies that constitute fertile ground for linguistic landscape studies, but also formerly monolingual ones that now see the presence of English alongside the local language as, in the words of Kingsley Bolton (2012, 1), “through globalization, we now inhabit a familiar universe in most destinations throughout the world, ...”. With English as a *lingua franca*, it is now indeed all but impossible to find a country where national language(s) do not co-exist with English at least to some extent in certain areas/domains. The linguistic worlds of the young in particular are becoming increasingly diverse. Central European countries, Slovenia included, are no exception in this respect, which is why the aim of this article is to provide an insight into the way English contributes to the shaping of Slovenia’s linguistic landscape. More specifically, both the sociolinguistic and the linguistic aspects of this phenomena will be addressed, the former in light of Slovenia’s language policy and the latter in terms of Slovene-English language contact as manifested on various linguistic levels from vocabulary to spelling and syntax.

2 Slovene-English Language Contact through Time

The first contact of Slovene with English can be traced back to several centuries ago, when a few individual words were imported into Slovene via German as an intermediary language. Words such as *keks* and *šport* from the English *cake* and *sport* were fully adapted to Slovene both phonologically and morphologically. It was only in the second half of the 20th century, however, that the influence of English began to be truly felt in Slovenia. That was the period when the former Yugoslavia (and Slovenia as one of its republics), following the end of WWII, increasingly turned to the West, partly for political reasons, partly due to its fascination with the technologically advanced, and therefore modern nature of Western society. This fascination and pragmatism also manifested itself in the introduction of English as a foreign language to be taught in elementary schools, which contributed to the systematic spread of English. Greater mobility in business and personal spheres and the ever-increasing influence of media and entertainment (in particular American) in the ensuing years only served to increase the influence of English. However, what was crucial in terms of the role English now plays in Slovenia was the emergence of the internet. Over the last few decades this has contributed to the status English enjoys today, that of an unprecedented *lingua franca*. No other language exerts such an influence on other languages, Slovene included, as English.

3 Linguistic Landscape in Light of Slovenia's Language Policy

In as far as language policy legally regulates language use in the public domain, the degree to which it shapes the linguistic landscape of a given country may vary; in Slovenia, language policy plays an important role, although it does not always correspond to actual language practice. Thus the Slovene Constitution¹ proclaims Slovene to be the official and state language on the national level (with Italian and Hungarian also being official languages in the municipalities with residents belonging to Italian and Hungarian ethnic minorities). Furthermore, the Act on Public Usage of Slovenian Language (APUSL),² passed by Parliament in 2004, provides specific rules with regard to Slovene being prioritized in the public domain in Slovenia and as the language by which Slovenia is represented in international contacts. And yet despite the specific instructions on the implementation of APUSL and the penalties for violating it, such violations seem to occur on a fairly regular basis.

In order to understand the protective nature of the state's legislation toward Slovene, it is necessary to take a brief look into the past. Throughout their history, Slovenes lived under foreign rule, such as the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, where the use of Slovene was restricted to domestic contexts. Even in the former Yugoslavia, the Slovenes' ambitions to have their own state were denied, and while Slovene was one of the three official languages along with Macedonian and Serbo-Croatian, it was in reality the latter that played a more important role in certain domains and functioned as a *lingua franca* on the national level. In addition, due to their geographical position, Slovenes were exposed to very strong and direct German, Italian, and Hungarian linguistic influences. As a result, the Slovenes regarded Slovene as a major distinguishing factor

¹ See <https://www.us-rs.si/media/constitution.pdf> (accessed 25 November 2022).

² See <https://www.eui.eu/Projects/InternationalArtHeritageLaw/Documents/NationalLegislation/Slovenia/lawonpublicusageofslovenianlanguage.pdf> (accessed November 25, 2022).

and the core of their ethnic identity. “In the absence of other sources of political power – i.e., state administrative mechanisms—language and culture functioned as a frame of reference for national unification” (Nečak Lük 2017, 58). This unification and statehood finally happened in 1991, when Slovenia became an independent state and, in 2004, also a member of the EU.

It was expected that the elevated status of Slovene, which even became one of the official languages in the EU, would enhance its prestige as far as the language practice and language attitudes of Slovene speakers are concerned. However, paradoxically, just the opposite is often the case. It seems that the absence of the previously very real sense of endangerment has contributed to the development of a somewhat looser attitude toward language, and that a sort of self-complacency both on the part of many speakers and institutions has set in. It could perhaps be argued that, to some, language awareness no longer matters. This is in marked contrast with some situations in which Slovenes fought passionately for their language (e.g., during WWII, when it was forbidden to speak Slovene in the occupied Slovene territories; in 1989, when the prospect of a court trial against Slovene dissidents in Serbo-Croatian triggered mass demonstrations and the eventual disintegration of the former Yugoslavia) as well as with the present-day struggle of the Slovene minority in Austria for bilingual signs and schools. Not to mention that even descendants of Slovene immigrants in North America express frequent regret that they did not have the chance to learn the mother tongue of their ancestors (Šabec 2021). It is thus only in recent decades in Slovenia that the discrepancy between the formal status of Slovene and its actual use in the public domain has appeared, and that Slovene is frequently found to be losing ground to English in certain domains as a more prestigious language (cf. Shaligram and Connor-Linton 2006, 294).

4 Methodology

Linguistic landscape studies may be confined to various specific geographic areas, from small ones such as just one street or neighborhood to bigger ones such as towns or cities and even whole countries. In my case, I decided to focus on Maribor, the second largest city in Slovenia, which, I believe, is similar and comparable to other urban environments in Slovenia. The study will complement earlier studies conducted in the capital city of Ljubljana (e.g., Schlick 2003; Gliha Komac et al. 2016; Ahačič et al. 2017; Snoj 2018).

The fieldwork for this study was carried out in the period from January until May 2022 in four locations in Maribor: the old city center; Maribor’s largest shopping mall, Europark; Lent, the entertainment section of the Drava riverfront; and the main student campus. The objective was to obtain as comprehensive a picture of Maribor’s linguistic landscape as possible, which is why I was interested in establishing whether these locations differ in terms of the language(s) used in public space and if so, in what way and why. While the emphasis will at all times remain on the presence of English and its impact on Slovene, other languages in as far as they appear will also be included in the study. I thus set out to do the following:

- Examine names according to the types of stores, restaurants, services and the like to see whether the choice of language for a name is associated with a particular type of establishment.

- Compare the names of the establishments located in the old city (Gospodka Street, Poštna Street, part of Slovenska Street, and part of Partizanska Street, and The Main Square, Castle Square, Liberty Square, and Slomšek Square, all interconnected and forming an integrated urban center) with those in the Europark shopping mall, which in a way constitutes a modern mini-city in itself. These two areas are an ideal location for fieldwork, as they are both pedestrianized and extremely busy, with masses of people passing through them on a daily basis.
- Examine various signs such as advertisements and slogans in the old city center to determine the ratio of monolingual vs. bilingual vs. multilingual ones, paying special attention to specific languages and their discrete or hybrid/mixed forms.
- Examine the linguistic landscape of the Lent riverfront and the student campus. In addition to names and signs, I intend to focus on graffiti, as I expect to find more of those in these two locations (the former being a popular entertainment area, the latter populated by young people).

Individual streets and squares were visited and re-checked several times during the period of data collection. All of the signs and names were photographed and handwritten notes about each of them were made. The language, type and size of fonts and the order in which the languages appeared were all recorded. However, the information relating to fonts and the order are not included in all cases, as this would exceed the scope of the paper.

The data are presented numerically and some typical examples listed for illustration purposes, while the more interesting cases are singled out and commented on in detail in the Linguistic Analysis section.

5 Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Data Presentation

The results of my study of the linguistic landscape in Maribor are very telling. Of 204 names of stores and other establishments in the old city center, only 41% are Slovene (e.g., Zlata nitka), 24% are English (e.g., M'Queen BOUTIQUE), 21% are partly in English and partly in Slovene (e.g., Metražne tkanine Elegance), and 14% in some other language (e.g., Papagayo) or are coinages that do not belong to any specific language (e.g., Q Qulto; AJDAS). The comparison with Europark, the largest shopping mall in Maribor, shows an even greater ratio of English names (of 85 names altogether only 23% are Slovene, 45% are English or partly in English and partly in some other language, and 32% in other languages or artificial coinages), likely because of the greater concentration of stores as opposed to the more varied structure of establishments and businesses in the old city center. The situation on Lent, the Drava riverfront, and on the main student campus is slightly different for reasons which will be explained later.

As for possible association of establishment types with the choice of a particular language, English features most frequently in the names of clothing stores and restaurants, cafes and bars (e.g., Boutique Trend; CLC City Light Cafe). Restaurants, cafes and bars as well as

clothing stores, various services from car washes to shoe repairs, and tourist attractions, are also among those whose names are most often combinations of Slovene or some other language and English (e.g., Steakhouse Rožmarin Vinoteka; Le Vino Wine Bar; Okay najbolj pisana trgovina; Wash Car Avtopralnica; Čevljarstvo Lady M; Mariborski grad–Maribor Castle). Italian, for instance, is a frequent element in the names of restaurants and clothing stores (e.g., La Pizza al taglio; Intimissimi). German, on the other hand, is very rare despite the proximity of Austria (e.g., Dravska kolesarska pot v Sloveniji–Drauradweg in Slowenien–Drava cycling route in Slovenia; incidentally, I found a single German sign Wir Sind Jones in the Jones Outlet store in old city center). There is one business type that is surprisingly very multilingual, hair salons (e.g., MIČ STYLING with the word “hairstylist” in ten other languages), a business which we do not expect to be frequented by many foreign visitors. Another example of multilingualism with signs in even more languages is the Pikapolonica ice cream kiosk in Liberty Square (see Figure 1). The same is true of the souvenir store Zakladi Slovenije. Examples of languages other than Slovene or English are also Baščaršija and Fudo, both restaurants, the former offering Bosnian cuisine, the latter very diverse international dishes and named after a Japanese Buddhist deity. The names of drugstores are also almost all foreign (e.g., LUSH Fresh Handmade Cosmetics, Müller, Bottega Verde). As for shoe and luggage stores, it is interesting that of the seven located in Europark, six have English names (e.g., Office Shoes; Bags & More) and the seventh one is a hybrid form consisting of the Greek word GEO, the letter “X” signifying technology and the Italian word RESPIRA. All three shoe stores in the old city center, on the other hand, have Slovene names (e.g. Otroška obutev Pika; Čevlji Janez; Čevlji Kisilak). So what about Slovene? Exclusively Slovene names are typical of pharmacies, newsagents, and watch and jewellery stores (e.g., Zlatarna Šeligo; Trafika 3DVA; Zlatar Šeligo), and florists (e.g., Mestna cvetličarna; Rožica–Cvetličarna). Bakeries are also typically Slovene (e.g., Hlebčkova mala pekarna; Pekarna Miška), and only two, both in the old city center, have foreign words added to indicate the type of business (e.g., Hiša kruha–pekarna–bakery–bäckerei–panificio).

While this is but a sample of all the stores included in my study, the few examples presented show how Slovene names are mostly associated with small businesses and services aimed at the local population, and English ones primarily with franchises of multinational companies, hospitality services (see Figure 2), and tourist attractions. This partly accounts for the greater ratio of English names in Europark, as small local businesses find it hard to compete with large multinational companies and/or cannot afford to rent the premises there.

Moreover, the number of multinational companies doing business in Slovenia is on the increase, another palpable sign of globalization, and understandably, they have English or other foreign names (e.g., Peek and Cloppenburg; ZARA). More controversial, in that they are in conflict with the country’s language policy regulations, are those with completely English names even though they are owned and run by Slovenes (e.g., Atelier DH Fashion, which stands for David Hojnik’s fashion boutique). With no Slovene whatsoever I can only assume that the owner is hoping to reach out to international consumers, while taking local ones for granted. Many others do the same, putting tourists and international visitors ahead of the local population and, not so infrequently, displaying their non-standard linguistic formulations (e.g., the name of a baby clothes store Alladin, or a sign that reads “Don’t push



FIGURE 1. Multilingual sign on an ice-cream kiosk in the old city center.



FIGURE 2. Entrance to a craft beer store in the old city center.

the door!!! They are electric”). An interesting example of that is the sign “hot wine” instead of “mulled wine”, possibly based on the analogy with “hot chocolate”. In either case such names represent an obvious infringement of the rules specified in Articles 17 and 18 of the Act on Public Usage of Slovenian Language cited below.

Article 17

(Designation of legal persons governed by private law)

(1) A business name or the name of legal persons governed by private law and natural persons engaged in business activities shall be entered in Slovenian in the company register or other official evidence, if it exists, in accordance with sector-specific laws.

(2) A translation of a business name or the name into a foreign language may be used in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia only together with the business name or the name in Slovenian. The translation shall not be printed in a graphically more prominent manner than the business name or the name in Slovenian.

Article 18

(1) Establishments, shops, catering establishments and other establishments, or other business spaces that are not designated by the registered name or the business name of a legal person governed by private law or the name and surname of a natural person, shall be designated in Slovenian.

(2) Irrespective of the provision from the previous paragraph, the name of an establishment, shop, catering establishment and other establishment, or other business space may contain words in a foreign language if these words are an internationally used expression for an individual type of business space, if they include a foreign trademark or service mark or in the case of abbreviations known to the majority of consumers due to habitual use, if they are a component part of the overall image.

Not only are English names frequently more prominent than Slovene ones, as in the case of the much bigger “SOCKS” above the much smaller “nogavice” in square brackets (see Figure 3), as if the latter was an explanation for those not sophisticated enough to understand English), more often than not there are no Slovene equivalents. Some blame for this must also be attributed to the very ambiguous wording of Article 18, which refers to “foreign trademark[s] or service mark[s] or in the case of abbreviations known to the majority of consumers due to habitual use”. This allows for a very arbitrary interpretation and all but prevents the Ministry of Culture, which is, according to Article 26, in charge of monitoring the implementation of the rules, to take action in case of violations (Zelnik 2017).³

A partial answer to the question as to why the formulation of Article 18 is so vague lies in Article 34 TEFU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union),⁴ which relates to intra-EU imports and prohibits “quantitative restrictions and all measures having equivalent effect” between Member States. I believe, however, that the part that reads “Quantitative restrictions on imports and all measures having equivalent effect shall be prohibited between Member States” is given too much weight by the Slovene authorities. By interpreting it extremely narrowly, they are leaving the decisions on language use more or less up to market forces and commercial interests. Instead, I believe that they should take a more proactive stance, protecting Slovene with more self-confidence and, above all, with the national interest in mind.

The situation is even more alarming in the case of other signs, especially advertisements. Out of 129 signs in the old city center only 28% are Slovene, 18% are English and the remaining 54%, while in Slovene, also contain English words and phrases. Lent and the student campus are comparable in this respect. The language of advertisements is regulated in Article 23 of APUSL, stating that:



FIGURE 3. A sign for a store selling socks in Maribor’s biggest shopping mall, Europark.

³ There was at least one case in which the court ordered the removal of such signs, as reported by Snoj (2018, 52).

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012E%2FTXT> (accessed November 25, 2022).

(1) Public advertising of products and services, a presentation of an activity, and other forms of public information in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia shall be in Slovenian, in accordance with the sector-specific law. If advertising is in particular targeting foreign nationals, foreign languages may also be used, however, variants in foreign languages shall not be more prominent than the Slovenian one.

In rare cases, this provision is actually observed (see Figure 4), but in most it is almost brazenly violated (see Figure 5).



FIGURE 4. A sign for a restaurant in the old city center, with Slovene being the more prominent language.



FIGURE 5. A sign in the old city center, with English as the dominant language.

Slovenia is not an island and cannot, nor does it wish to, isolate itself. Being situated at the crossroads of Germanic, Romance and Slavic countries, Slovenes have always been in contact with other languages. Therefore, due to their geographical location as well as their historical position under foreign rule, Slovenes have always recognized the need to speak other languages in addition to their own. In addition, the Act of Public Usage of Slovenian Language allows the usage of other languages when the provisions of international treaties are binding for the Republic of Slovenia (Article 1 of APUSL).⁵ In all other areas, it promotes the use of Slovene as the official and state language. However, the discrepancy between this language policy and the actual state of affairs is far from negligible, and the attitudes of native

⁵ Article 1 of APUSL reads “The Slovenian language (hereinafter: Slovenian) is the official language of the Republic of Slovenia. It is the language of oral and written communication in all spheres of public life in the Republic of Slovenia, except when Italian and Hungarian are official languages in accordance with the Constitution of Slovenia, and when the provisions of international treaties that are binding for the Republic of Slovenia specifically allow also the usage of other languages.”

speakers of Slovene with regard to this issue differ. Some believe that the language will take care of itself and does not need any regulation, while others are concerned about its survival. The results of an online survey “Languages in Slovenia and the Slovenian Language abroad” carried out in 2017 by Ahačič et al. (2017), for instance, shows that as many as 71% of the 3,267 respondents agree with the statement that the Slovene linguistic landscape should embrace the use of Slovene in the names of various institutions, stores, restaurants, public signs and the like. Concern for the status of Slovene is also frequently expressed through other sources, such as TV roundtable discussions and letters to the editors by readers complaining about “corrupt” language. Unhappiness over a condescending attitude toward Slovene, for instance, is reported in a recent magazine article (Glücks 2022), highlighting multinational corporations and platforms such as Apple and Netflix. These companies were singled out for not offering services in Slovene on their interfaces or Slovene subtitles, in contrast to, say, Samsung with a Slovene interface on their electronic devices, or Microsoft, which offers a Slovene version of Windows.

That said, we cannot ignore the rapidly growing impact of Americanization and, with it, English as a pervasive language in all spheres of our lives. This undoubtedly has implications for personal, social and cultural identity as well, especially among the young, and will be addressed in more detail in the conclusion. First, however, I will analyse selected names, signs, advertisements and graffiti from the linguistic perspective.

5.2 Linguistic Analysis

Compared to the 129 signs found in the old city center (only 18% in English and 28% in Slovene, but as many as 54% in English, partly English or in other foreign languages), the numbers on Lent and on the student campus, which are smaller in size than the other areas analysed in this study, are considerably lower. There are also differences in the type of signs. While the old city center is a very diverse area with all kinds of establishments, Lent is fairly homogenous in that it consists primarily of bars, restaurants, and cafes, the only exception being a few tourist and cultural attractions. In comparison, the student campus has the least signs, most of them being posters for various events. Both on Lent and the student campus, we also encounter graffiti.

The analysis focuses on the language of the signs, which may be Slovene, English, in some other foreign language or a combination of more than one language. In the case of those containing Slovene and English elements, I will try to determine whether they are in fact bilingual (following the legislation fully as far as the prominence of Slovene is concerned or only to some extent) or in a mixed/hybrid code. Furthermore, I will examine them from lexical, syntactic and orthographic perspectives.

5.2.1 Slovene vs. Bilingual vs. Mixed Signs

The majority of signs in the old city center are found on store windows and doors, in front of cafes, restaurants and other food and drink catering businesses, but also on other establishments such as clubs, associations, institutes, government offices and the like. Some of the more interesting ones will be commented on in more detail below.

Among the English only advertisements, for instance, we find: Locally Roasted Coffee; We serve Costa coffee; Fish & Chips Old School–New School; Beer from local & other microbreweries–Slovene Wines Cocktails & Snacks; Sticky fingers; Green & safe–Safe Travels sponsored by World Travel and Tourism Council; My opportunity–My style; Europcar – moving your way; Time to shop–An inspiring lifestyle universe full of carefully selected products for home body soul; Shop Tax Free; Western Union Money transfer; Dress your phone; and, of course, the official tourist slogan I Feel sLOVEnia, with the by now well-established wordplay on “love” as part of the name of the country. The slogan appears as #ifeel sLOVEnia on a display advertising Maribor as a tourist destination. In general, hashtags and web addresses are becoming an increasingly common addition to the signs on posters and store windows (e.g., #visitmaribor; www.sonček.com, the latter with the English spelling “ch” so as to allow for the correct pronunciation of the Slovene word *sonček*). A notable exception is the C&A store, which displays its website address in both languages. In English this reads “c-a.com”, while in Slovene it is “spletna trgovina na c-a.com” (i.e., “online shop at c-a.com”).

Two English signs stand out, one for its incorrect spelling of Alladin (correct: Aladdin), and the other due to its origin. It is seen above the now defunct movie theatre Udarnik and reads “Please be honest now”. The slogan was created by Heiko Beck Kos, a German visual artist, in 2012, when Maribor was the European Capital of Culture. The sign remains there, prompting us to take a fresh look at life and break our everyday routines. From the viewpoint of language choice, though, it underscores the omnipresence of English (a German artist, working in a Slovene setting, and the sign in English).

Yet another sign on a large ginger heart-shaped souvenir in the window of the Zakladi Slovenije store is special in that it reads “Greetings from Slovenija”. Here, Slovenija is spelled in its original form rather than in English, giving the souvenir a more authentic or, for international visitors not familiar with Slovenia, perhaps even exotic touch.

A sign that is somewhat ambiguous is HAHahaha Second hand shop, where at first sight we recognize HAHahaha as a Slovene interjection indicating laughter. This is the most likely interpretation, although both “ha” and “hah” may be used in English as well.

A sign that is almost entirely in English is that on the Nana Bistro Kavarna Lounge Bar (with the Slovene name Nanin bistro next to it), where everything from “ice or hot latte to go, pancakes to go, lunch to go, hot chocolate to go, bowl to go, smoothie to go, eggs to go, sandwich to go” is in English, the only exception being “preostala ponudba” (“other food and drinks”) with the QR code beside it. Incidentally, the term “coffee to go” recurs so often in the Slovene hospitality business that it has become almost a permanent feature. The alternative terms *kava to go*, *kava za zraven* and *kava za na pot* are used as well, but considerably less often.

Moving on to bilingual signs complying with ASUPL, I should mention tourist signs with the purpose of providing directions as well as the descriptions of tourist attractions. All are very systematic and transparent, and they are all bilingual, and in some cases even trilingual, with German either in second or third place (see Figures 6 and 7).



FIGURE 6. Bilingual traffic signs in the old city center.



FIGURE 7. A trilingual sign on Lent, with Slovene as the prominent language, followed by German and English.

Another clear example of adhering to ASUPL is the Maribor Hotel, with two parallel columns listing the hotel's services/facilities, the first one in Slovene, the second in English: M hotel–hotel, prjazan dom–friendly home, spa–spa, sprostitvev–relaxation, savna–sauna, razgled–view, udobje–comfort, kužkom prijazni–pet friendly, kavica–coffee, klepet–chat, lokalna vina–local wine, pijača–drinks.

There are some bilingual signs that strike me as unusual at first, as I expected them to be in Slovene only. I have in mind the following two: Javni medobčinski stanovanjski sklad Maribor–Maribor Public Intermunicipal Housing Fund Maribor and Skupnost občin Slovenije–Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia. While it is difficult to find a valid reason for English in the first case, the second one is justified since the association is a member of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe.

Equally puzzling as the Housing Fund sign, yet in a different way, is the sign Slovensko panevropsko gibanje–Regijski odbor Maribor. Since this is related to the Maribor Regional Council of the Paneuropean Movement, I would expect the sign to be bilingual. The same can be said about the advertisement for the European Youth Olympics Festival, which will take place in Maribor in the summer of 2023. Except for the acronym EYOF 2023, the rest of the text is in Slovene only (ENO MESTO–ENO SRCE. Olimpijski festival evropske mladine 2023). And the same is also true of some traffic-related signs such as Odvoz s parkom, where it would be useful for foreign visitors to know that they are parking in a tow-away zone. Parking in general is a problem both for locals and for international visitors, which is why it is strange that the instructions on the EasyPark parking meters are given only in Slovene. Yet another very practical sign which would likely be appreciated in English by non-Slovene speakers is *vleci/rini* on the doors, indicating “pull/push”.

Other Slovene-only signs primarily advertise merchandise and discounts (e.g., Nova kolekcija korekcijskih očal; Popusti od -20% do - 50% na vse). The fact that a store is a franchise of a multinational company is no obstacle to such an approach, as illustrated by YStyle store (Vem, kaj si ženske želijo. Želijo biti lepe.) or by QVape Shop (Za življenje brez tobaka). There are four signs advertising food, three of them on kiosks and one on a grill and bar restaurant (Okusi tradicije–Originalne mariborske lepinje; Sveže solate–Topli in hladni napitki; To je ta občutek–uživajmo v hrani skupaj–kebab–krompirček–hot dog–hamburger; Okusno iz domačih krajev–Zdravo poreklo.) Some events, such as Opera Night, are also advertised only in Slovene, as are some general notices, even though they are EU-related (e.g., Glavni trg Maribor; Evropska unija–kohezijski sklad. Naložba v vašo prihodnost. Naložbo sta sofinancirala Evropska unija in Republika Slovenija. Ureditev Koroške ceste z Glavnim trgom).

The majority of signs, however, are in a mixed/hybrid code,⁶ with some words in Slovene and others in English. The size and type of fonts often differ, with English more prominent in many cases. Some examples include:

- Ngon–okus Vietnama–Modern Vietnamese cuisine
- Gurmanski sendviči–Pizze & Burgerji–Pulled Pork–Hrustljave Perutničke–Spare Ribs–Krompirček
- Sladoledi–Smoothie & Frapeji–Tudi za vegetarijance in vegane
- David’s Burgers–Dovoljeno št. oseb 40, vstop z masko. Dragi gostje za vstop v lokal David’s Burgers se oglasite na okencu takeaway
- Fotografija na kavi–naredi selfi pri nas ali uporabi sliko iz svojega telefona–Prestige cafe
- Takšni kot ga imate radi–Bacon Cheese Burger. Zdaj še boljši
- Malinovec je spet IN
- LOKALKA–local foods and goods–Coffee to go–KAVA ZA ZRAVEN–Tukaj se kuha kava iz lokalne pražarne–est. 2016–TOVARNA KAVE–SPECIALTY COFFEE–Butično–lokalno–dobro (see Figure 8)
- DOBRINA zadruga za razvoj trajnostne lokalne oskrbe–Grocery store with local products (Feel the local taste)–Vez med podeželjem in mestom–Food from the neighborhood
- Objekt varuje PROTECT
- Objekt varuje FIT varovanje



FIGURE 8. Part of a storefront in the old city center.

⁶ We cannot speak of code switching as there is no reason to believe that either the authors of the signs or the target audience are bilingual.

The last two examples contain mixed names of security firms. An interesting case is PISARNA, with a smaller sign that reads “coffee–connect–create” underneath, followed by two paragraphs in Slovene, describing the purpose and the atmosphere of these premises and the logo of the Maribor student club KŠM (standing for “Klub študentov Maribor”).

A lack of consistency in the mentioned examples is obvious. With no attempt to provide equivalent words in both languages, it is hard to see exactly which customers the advertisers are targeting. Are they assuming that Slovenes will understand the English words? Very likely, even though that assumption may be true with regard to younger people but not for the elderly, at least not for all. And what about English-speaking foreigners? How are they supposed to decipher the Slovene part of the text? The pictures, graphic design and different distribution of words may make the sign a little less confusing, but the message as a whole remains incoherent.

This brings us to the student campus, where English is very much present on posters for various events and the like (84%). Some examples include:

- Outdoor fitness & Fun
- BEST uvodni sestanek
- HOCUS POCUS–I need coffee to FOCUS
- Coffee & FRIENDS the best BLEND

The number of English or English-influenced names is almost non-existent, though, if I disregard the cafeteria, whose name Piano restavracija follows an English syntactic pattern. All other names and signs relating to institutions (faculties, student union, sports facilities, etc.) are in Slovene. The number of English, partly English and other foreign names of establishments is relatively low on Lent, too, especially compared to the old city center (32% vs. 72%). A possible reason could be the long tradition of the main restaurants, coffee

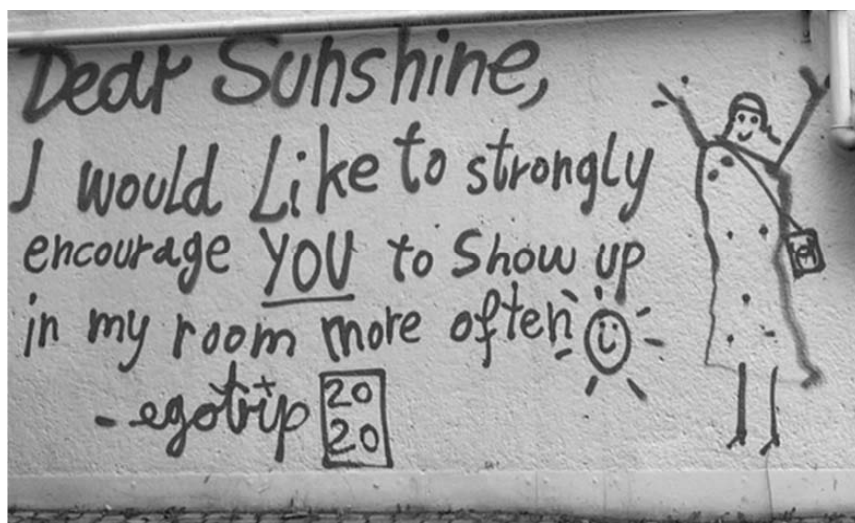


FIGURE 9. Graffiti on Lent.

shops and bars on Lent, whereas in the old city center small establishments frequently go out of business and are replaced by new ones. Hence, the greater degree of vulnerability and variation in the names with which they try to attract new customers. There is no lack of English or partly English advertisements (e.g. Rooster Bar: Weekend Vibes) and other signs (73%) on Lent, however. Moreover, both locations lend themselves to graffiti. These, however, are not only in English but are rather diverse on Lent, ranging from Slovene to English, German, French and Croatian, while they are predominantly in English on the student campus. Examples of some Slovene and English graffiti include: Jogurt ali joga? Torek ali torta?; Bodimno realisti–Zahtevajmo nemogoče; Nothing compares to Havana; Egotrip4EVER; Green Power; Chemtrails; Joke 42; MB Dream and the one seen in Figure 9.

5.2.2 Lexical Aspects

Several phenomena can be observed in vocabulary, from introducing completely new words/ yet unestablished calques into Slovene to replacing Slovene words with English ones and, finally, to adapting English lexical items phonologically and morphologically in accordance with the rules of Slovene grammar.

An interesting example of the first is the advertisement for “a long table” event (Ne zamudi prvega “long table” dogodka v Mariboru 9. junija 2022), where it is not clear what precisely is meant by this phrase. It is only by reading the accompanying text and by Googling it that I learned that it was going to be an exclusive “Velvet Dinner” (“Žametna večerja”) for 150 guests, organized for the first time by Maribor Tourist Board, Factumevent, an events company (Factumevent being another word that looks English in appearance, but is in fact a combination of the Latin *Factum* and the English *event*), and several catering and biotechnical schools. The event was planned to take place at the foot of the wine-growing Kalvarija Hill, which stands close to the edge of the city center. Local chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants would be serving gourmet dishes made from local produce, assisted by hospitality students. The name “Velvet” came from the name of the famous vintage wine sort Velvety Black, originating from Maribor’s famed vine, said to be the oldest in the world (some 450 years). The organizers apparently expected potential guests to already know what “long table” would mean in this context, or to search for more information themselves, as they offered no explanation at all as to the nature of the event, perhaps counting on it becoming a tradition and thus self-explanatory in the future.

Two English words “since” and “est.” (for “established”), commonly used with brand names, have almost entirely displaced their Slovene equivalent (*že od*). I found one example of the latter with a jewellery store (Zlatarnica 14k–brezčasni nakit že od 1952) and numerous examples with “since” and “est.”: Meranovo since 1922; Lastovka est. 1976; and even ^{est. 2017} PLAC za kavo in več, a coffee place (PLAC being a colloquial expression for a place/square) established as recently as 2017, thus hardly invoking a sense of tradition. Something similar is beginning to happen in the case of “for sale” or “for rent” signs, with English being increasingly used, either together with the Slovene equivalent or on its own (e.g., Prodamo–for sale e-nepremicnine@nkbm.si).

As mentioned above, in some cases English words may undergo phonological and morphological adaptation and are, after a certain period of time, no longer perceived as

foreign. This is often the case when there are lexical gaps in Slovene which need to be filled.⁷ The sign “Rentaj nas”, seen on a stationary vehicle, is not such a case, however, as there is a perfectly good word for this in Slovene (*najemi nas*). Despite that, the loanword *rentaj*, due to its adaptation, behaves as any other Slovene word and is becoming quite common (partly due to its seemingly more sophisticated English image, and possibly also to its association with “rent a car”, a term that has all but displaced *najem avtomobila*).

Two other signs are examples of loanblends, i.e., words consisting of two parts, one of which is of native and the other of foreign origin. In “Postani datamilijonar z neomejenimi paketi MIO”, the English noun “data” is used instead of the Slovene adjective *podatkovni*. In “Praktično brezplačno Za dobro počutje uporabi mestno kolo **mbajk**” the word *mbajk* is a blend of “Maribor” and the English word “bike”. “M” is retained and “bike” pronounced and spelled in accordance with Slovene rules. The advertisement is for bicycles that can be rented to cycle around the city. The name was obviously created with a wide audience in mind, especially the young (with their affinity for slang) and also for tourists who should, regardless of the Slovene spelling, be able to recognize the origin/meaning of the word.

There are a few other cases of blending. *Beautique* consists of beauty + boutique and is in fact an example of wordplay, while *INDUSING* d.o.o. *industrijski inženiring* originates from Industrial + engineering. Words ending in -ing such as *inženiring*, *lizing* (alternatively spelled as *leasing*), *consulting* and the like are the result of morphological blending based on the English model and are now quite common in Slovene (Sicherl and Žele 2018). Still, forms such as the above mentioned *INDUSING* or *DOMING* for an architectural bureau still sound rather unusual.

Finally, I should mention the sign *FIT ŠIQ po vegansko. Novo*. This is an odd combination of the English *FIT* and an artificial form *ŠIQ*, known as “chic” in English and as *šik* in colloquial Slovene. The spelling is indeed unusual due to the Slovene letter “š” in combination with “Q”, which is not part of the Slovene alphabet.

5.2.3 Syntactic Aspects

The influence of English on syntax has become so widespread that many Slovene speakers no longer notice it. A prominent example is word order, where in Slovene common nouns as a rule precede proper nouns. Many names and signs in this study, however, follow the English pattern of putting proper nouns first (e.g., *Pika Poka Žar*; *Tijuana Plesni studio*; *Kamra nepremičnine* instead of *Žar Pika Poka, Plesni studio Tijuana; Nepremičnine Kamra*). It could be argued that such forms are easier to accept compared to English lexical items that stand out more due to their foreign appearance. In as far as the syntactic influence of English on Slovene is thus less salient than the lexical one, it may have more long-term implications for the structure of the Slovene language, i.e., a potential for language change.

Another sign connected to syntax or perhaps also to stylistics is a bilingual one, “*Plačilo možno le z gotovino.–Payment only in cash.*” Here the influence is reversed, with Slovene

⁷ For more on the integration of English words into Slovene, see Šabec (2018).

influencing the English translation. Instead of “Payment only in cash” a native speaker of English would more likely express this with “Cash only.” Further evidence of how English as a *lingua franca* is by no means immune against transfers from the mother tongue(s) of non-native speakers is the sign Čuvajnica na stolpu, which is translated as The guardroom on the Tower instead of “The guardroom in the Tower”.

5.2.4 Orthographic Aspects

The orthographic influence of English is a very salient feature of written signs, both in the spelling of individual words and in the use of punctuation. To start with, we see that Slovene letters such as “k” and “ks” are frequently replaced by English “c” and “x” (e.g., ABC Capital, d.o.o.; Extra), and “č” by “ch” (e.g., Svet čaja Chai). We also encounter reduplication of “s” in signs such as Express izdelava ključev. Another English feature, where Slovene speakers are expected to understand English, is the creative and/or playful use of letters and figures (e.g., All4kids; Fresh 4 life). The ampersand sign has become an almost standard substitution for the Slovene conjunction *in* meaning “and” (e.g., Za vas pripravljamo burgerje, steake, bbq low & slow, solate, testenine in še več). The cited example contains other English words such as “low” and “slow”, the partly Slovenicized form *steake* for “steaks” as well as the “BBQ” abbreviation for “barbeque”. English abbreviations and acronyms such as “co.” are a fairly frequent occurrence. The influence of English can be observed in the use of punctuation as well. This is the case in the example CUT’N’GO, with two apostrophes marking the ellipsis in the conjunction “and”.

The orthographic influence, however, is not a one-directional phenomena. Some English translations are clearly marked by transfer from Slovene. One case in point, where Slovene punctuation rules are incorrectly applied to English, is a partly bilingual sign on the through-the-wall book return box at the University Library. It reads: “Vračanje gradiva. Prosimo vse, da knjige v trezor vračate eno po eno.–Please, return the books through the slot one at a time.” The word “please” is followed by a comma, which is correct in Slovene, but not in English. The second case also involves the use of commas. The sign is related to COVID-19 restrictions and states “Please keep your distance (1,5 m).” The comma is used instead of a decimal point in the number, again in accordance with Slovene punctuation rules.

6 Conclusion

The findings presented here confirm the general impression about Slovene signs gradually disappearing, or at least taking a back seat compared to foreign signs on the streets of Maribor. The language primarily responsible for this change is English, which is playing a major role in shaping the linguistic landscape. Even though the present study is limited in scope, I believe that a similar situation is also prevalent in the rest of urban Slovenia.

There is of course nothing wrong with the presence of English in Slovenia. In today’s era of globalization, English is indeed indispensable in international communication and we should encourage learning it at all levels. This, however, does not mean that we can neglect our own mother tongue. Just the opposite – the unchecked spread of English should be a cause for serious concern. In that sense there is a need not just for a well-considered language protection policy for Slovene as the state language, but also for stricter monitoring of its implementation

in the public domain. Neglecting to do so could have a negative effect on Slovene speakers who, seeing the disarray with regard to the use of the language, may themselves start feeling confused and insecure, gradually losing proficiency in certain domains and ultimately resorting to mixing Slovene with English.

It is therefore imperative to make sure that Slovene remains and continues developing as a fully-fledged language capable of complex forms of expression in all contexts and areas of life, including the arts, humanities and science. Left to chance, this unregulated situation, with English perceived by many as a more prestigious language, might, in the long run, lead to diglossia, with Slovene as a low variety and English as a high variety. Such a scenario is completely unacceptable, not just in terms of language vitality, but also from the viewpoint of identity. Regardless of the fact that, for some, identity is local, for others, it is global, and for some, it is both, language remains an intrinsic part of our personal, social, cultural and ethnic identities. In that sense language contributes to our self-awareness and boosts our self-confidence, allowing us to work with members of other nations and speakers of other languages on an equal footing.

As a matter of language policy and language planning (providing sufficient funding, among other things, for work on digital and other linguistic tools, from dictionaries to language corpora), we should therefore do everything to empower Slovene and to always put it first in the public domain. At the same time, we should encourage and support learning other languages: English as a *lingua franca* first, but also the languages of the neighbouring countries. Preserving linguistic diversity should be a priority, as it brings enrichment in all respects, or as Tomáš Masaryk put it so eloquently, “The more languages you know the more you are human.”

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