

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AS MECHANISM OF PUBLIC
POLICY: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND COMMUNICATION ASPECTS**

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Abstract

The article presents a research project devoted to the study of linguistic landscape (henceforth – LL) as a mechanism of public policy, with special attention paid to its socio-cultural and communication aspects. The project contributes to the creation of a more favorable language ecology for the peoples of Russia and harmonization of their social, interethnic and intercultural relations. The goals of a complex interdisciplinary study of LL as a mechanism of public policy are specified. The novelty of the approach to LL is emphasized and the research methods are described, which correspond to the three main stages – technological, epistemological and phronetic. It is especially noted that, to improve LL, practical steps will be proposed in the form of recommendations on language policy and resolving conflict. The study is conducted by a group of specialists with significant experience in fundamental and applied scientific research in the fields of linguistic ecology, ethnolinguistic vitality, political and axiological linguistics, intercultural communication, and theory and practice of translation. The initiative to implement the project reflects the activities of RosNOU's scientific schools and is a result of cooperation between RosNOU and the Union of Translators of Russia, which has as one of its priority areas the study and use of translation activities as a socially justified form of intercultural communication, most effective for expanding the spheres of presence of native languages in life of the peoples of Russia and ensuring the necessary level of their vitality.

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1. Introduction

Russia is a multinational country, in which many regions are already multilingual or have the potential for becoming multilingual. The right to study and develop the native language is guaranteed to all the peoples on its territory. In 2019, the Fund for the Preservation and Study of the Native Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation was created, designed to promptly respond to problems resulting from migration and diasporic processes, hybridization of ethnic and social groups, and intercultural contacts, including the expansion of global English (Gritsenko & Kirilina, 2014). The main problem is the threat of language extinction; according to the level of viability assigned by UNESCO to the languages included in the Atlas of Endangered Languages of the World, more than 110 languages in Russia are under the threat of extinction, with the overwhelming majority of these languages classified as “vulnerable”. The death of a language results in the loss of the national and cultural identity of the people speaking this language, leading to the emergence of psychological dissonances among the speakers of this language and their descendants, susceptibility to destructive influences from the outside, and is often the cause of regional instability posing threat to national security.

The disappearance of languages is, unfortunately, a worldwide problem, prompting the UN General Assembly to proclaim the period 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The UN General Assembly recommends that the member states pay special attention to the creation of mechanisms for successful implementation of this program. Such mechanisms are necessary for the preservation of the national and cultural identity of all peoples of Russia, strengthening their civic consciousness, harmonizing social, interethnic and intercultural relations, and maintaining a balance in the dialogue of cultures.

One of such mechanisms is language policy, regulated by the state and aimed at creating a favorable linguo-ecological environment, which is crucial in the context of multilingualism, and meets one of the main tasks formulated in the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development of the Russian Federation until 2035. A favorable language ecology has a positive effect on, among other things, the social aspects of communication, e.g., resolution of ethnic conflicts; political aspects, e.g., attitudes towards public authorities; and psychological aspects, e.g., people’s emotional involvement in their place of residence.

2. Problem Statement

One of the most important and effective means of forming a favorable language ecological environment is LL, conceptualized as the existence of a language in a public visual space, including various road signs, billboards, wall graffiti, etc. LL has a clear ecological focus, being a means of visual identification, presentation, and regulation of human environment.

LL began to be actively studied within the framework of the expansion and intensification of language contacts, language conflicts and multilingualism, in general (Gorter, 2006; Pavlenko, 2009). In the process of intercultural interactions, certain groups of people in different regions of the world began to notice that their language environment is changing, for instance, signs appear in other languages. The intensity and nature of the reception of such language phenomena can be different – from a simple

statement of fact to shock and indignation in connection with harmful influence on their native language. Not surprisingly, LL is associated with ethnolinguistic vitality, i.e., the ability of speakers to maintain and protect their existence as a collective entity in intergroup situations (Landry & Bourhis, 1977).

In Russia, LL research is becoming more common. Previously, LL was often identified with a group's speech characteristics, such as jargon, and problems of linguistic geography (Grachev & Romanova, 2008; Kitaygorodskaya & Krysin, 2008). Now LL is understood as a visual manifestation of language in public spaces. Scholars interested in the study of the linguistic construction of a territory and its visual branding, ethnically marked LL in the post-Soviet space, LL in connection with migration processes, LL as a reflection of the processes of globalization (Baranova & Fedorova, 2017; Pavlenko, 2017; Peshkova, 2019; Saduov, 2020), etc. It is important to note that most of such research turns to the study of LL in areas such as advertising, commerce and business. If attention is paid to how the state uses the language for its purposes, then such issues are addressed as language norm, language support, implementation of legal acts, etc. In other words, LL as a public policy mechanism remains outside of its scope. Meanwhile, Russia, as a multinational and multilingual state, provides rich material for such studies. This is precisely what the present project is aimed at, i.e., conducting a comprehensive study of LL as an instrument of language and, more broadly, public policy, in order to identify its fundamental characteristics that can be used toward improving the overall language ecology in the country.

3. Research Questions

The main question addressed in the project is how LL can be studied as a mechanism of public policy and presented within the paradigm of modern language ecology on the basis of interdisciplinary research, while paying special attention to socio-cultural and communication factors. This question is fundamental since it is a well-thought-out language, educational and cultural policy that contributes to the harmonious development of individuals, their cultural and scientific growth, creative self-expression and motivation for fruitful work for the public good.

In addition, the study addresses a number of more specific questions, for example: What are the mechanisms for the formation of ethnocultural, regional and civic identity? What are the cultural-educational and linguo-axiological functions of LL? How can LL help relieve social, political and ethnocultural tensions, and prevent conflict? How can significant and promising LL projects be promoted? How can the results of the description and interpretation of LL be applied in practice, giving specific recommendations for improving the language environment in all spheres of life?

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the project is a comprehensive study of the fundamental characteristics and functions of LL as a mechanism of public policy, implemented through the integration of socio-cultural and communication factors, and aimed at creating a favorable lingo-ecological environment in Russian society.

From this main purpose, the following specific purposes follow:

- 1) identifying and describing various types of LL as a category of the socio-political sphere;

- 2) identifying the functions of LL as a category of the socio-political sphere;
- 3) understanding the nature of each type of LL as a category of the socio-political sphere and the signs representing it, giving an interpretation of their essential characteristics;
- 4) applying the results of such description and interpretation in practice, giving specific recommendations for improving LL as a linguo-ecological environment in all its areas;
- 5) laying the foundations for the development of a new Russian and international scientific school of fundamental and applied research aimed at a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of LL as a mechanism of public policy.

It should be noted that the project presupposes the creation of conditions for active interaction of the key participants in the area of language policy, including the central regions (Moscow and St. Petersburg), the leading cultural and industrial regions of Russia, including the North-West, the Urals, etc., as well as national republics and national regions (districts); an important role of the Chechen Republic in this joint research should be especially noted.

5. Research Methods

This project is based on an approach rooted in the ideas of Aristotle, who identified *techne*, *episteme* and *phronesis* as the main intellectual virtues. *Techne* is the knowledge of how something can be produced, e.g. a certain sign of LL such as an advertising mirror. *Episteme* is the knowledge involving theoretical understanding, e.g. graffiti is often created with a 'subversive' purpose, defying social norms. *Phronesis* is the morally informed human practice that belongs to the area of practical ethics, e.g. deciding whether street names in two or more languages should be posted.

This approach has both theoretical and practical significance. Based on *techne*, a Glossary will be compiled, reflecting the main types of LL in terms of their production technologies. Based on *episteme*, a Dispositive will be developed, presenting knowledge about the goals behind various types of LL. Finally, based on *phronesis*, a Toolkit will be created as a practical guide for making decisions in different LL situations. The Electronic Portal, which combines the Glossary, Dispositive and Toolkit, will allow interaction with those using the research results or wish to expand its space by contributing their own examples and observations.

The general scientific approach developed for this project is reflected in the specific methods applied at each stage of the research. In accordance with the general approach, three stages of research are distinguished – Technological, Epistemological and Phronetic. The task of the Technological Stage is to identify and describe different types of LL. Here, empirical methods will be used, e.g. observation, interview, and content analysis. The task of the Epistemological stage is to understand what is behind each type of LL. Here, interpretive methods will be used, e.g., semiotic analysis, rhetorical analysis, and discourse analysis. The task of the Phronetic stage is to propose concrete steps that can lead to the improvement of LL. Here, praxeological methods will be used, e.g., critical analysis and cultural analysis.

6. Findings

For the first time, a comprehensive and theoretically substantiated classification of LL will be presented, based on Russian material, representing visual signs in the field of public policy according to their authorship, modality, regularity of distribution, etc. (Pütz & Mundt, 2019). For the first time, LL will be considered from the point of view of identity formation (political, social, ethnic, professional, etc.); from the point of view of the discursive representation of various political doctrines and ideologies; from the point of view of ethnolinguistic vitality (state languages of the subjects of the Russian Federation and the national languages of the peoples of Russia); and from the point of view of mobility of various groups (ethno-cultural, political and social, including professional and age groups).

For the first time, practical steps, in the form of recommendations for language policy and resolving conflict situations, will be proposed for improving LL. The research results will be important for the harmonization of interactions at various levels – from interpersonal to intercultural, interethnic and international communication, as well as in a variety of contexts – from educational to professional, from socio-political to diplomatic. The results of the study will find their application both within Russia, e.g., for creating a better linguo-ecological environment for its citizens, and outside the country, e.g., for improving intercultural communication, including contacts with diasporas. This study can be used as a model for the analysis of any theoretical and practical situation related to LL as a public mechanism in the socio-political and socio-cultural sphere.

7. Conclusion

Summing up, it should be noted that the present study is carried out by a group of specialists with significant experience in fundamental and applied scientific research in the fields of linguistic ecology, ethnolinguistic vitality, political and axiological linguistics, intercultural communication, and theory and practice of translation. The initiative to implement the project reflects the activities of RosNOU's scientific schools and is a result of cooperation between RosNOU and the Union of Translators of Russia, which has as one of its priority areas the study and use of translation activities as a socially justified form of intercultural communication, most effective for expanding the spheres of presence of native languages in life of the peoples of Russia.

The project as a whole is aimed at creating a favorable linguo-ecological environment for all the peoples of Russia, increasing the level of vitality of their languages and dialects, and expanding their socio-cultural and communicative functionality. In this regard, the project fits into the international space of the fundamental and applied research aimed at the preservation and development of indigenous languages, as well as into the system of international events associated with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

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