Language Conflict in Post-Soviet Linguistic Landscapes

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Abstract. In this article it is argued that the study of linguistic landscapes (public uses of written language) can benefit from viewing them as dynamic phenomena and examining them in a diachronic context. Based on the changes in the post-Soviet space since 1991, five processes are identified and examined in with regard to language change and language conflict. It is further argued that the study of linguistic landscape offers a useful tool for post-Soviet sociolinguistics and for Slavic sociolinguistics at large, and illustrations are provided of the insights afforded by such inquiry.

1. Introduction

When we arrive in a new country, public signs, ads, and billboards are often the first form of contact we have with the language and script of the place. If the country is multilingual, each instance of language choice and presentation in the public signage transmits symbolic messages regarding legitimacy, centrality, and relevance of particular languages and the people they represent (Shohamy 2006). It is only recently, however, that the study of *linguistic landscape*, i.e., public uses of written language, has emerged as an independent area of sociolinguistic investigation (e.g., Backhaus 2007; Gorter 2006c; Landry and Bourhis 1997; Scollon and Scollon 2003; Shohamy and Gorter 2009).

To date, only a few studies have examined post-Soviet linguistic landscapes (e.g., Brown 2007; Sadikhova and Abadi 2000; Sloboda 2009; Yurchak 2000). Consequently, the present paper has two interrelated aims. My first aim is to highlight potential contributions of the linguistic landscape approach to the study of language and identity politics in post-Soviet states. My second aim is to show that linguistic and social changes that have taken place in post-Soviet states can offer important contributions to the study of linguistic landscape. I will begin with an overview of theoretical and methodological underpinnings

of this area of research. Then, I will discuss linguistic landscape phenomena central to the processes of derussification and language shift in post-Soviet countries. I will end with the key questions that need to be asked with regard to linguistic landscapes in future work on multilingualism in post-Soviet states.

2. Linguistic Landscape: Theory and Methodology

The study of linguistic landscape has come to prominence in the field of sociolinguistics only within the last decade (for an overview, see Backhaus 2007). A foundational article by Landry and Bourhis (1997) defines linguistic landscape as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on governmental buildings" (25). But what makes public signage worthy of investigation? Coupland (forthcoming) argues that as visualizations of modernity, linguistic landscapes can bring different qualities of contemporary urban experience into focus, including different manifestations of language conflict. And indeed most research in this area has been conducted in multilingual societies and communities, including Israel (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Spolsky and Cooper 1991; Suleiman 2004), Quebec (Landry and Bourhis 1997), Basque country (Cenoz and Gorter 2006), and Wales (Coupland forthcoming).

To examine these complex negotiations, researchers commonly gather a representative collection of public signage from a particular area, placing each picture in the context of time and place in which it was taken (see Barni and Bagna 2009 for a discussion of the uses of software in this data collection). These items are then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, in terms of the frequency of appearance of specific languages; the order of their appearance in multilingual signs; the relationship between presumed translation equivalents in such signs; the prominence of particular languages as seen in the uses of order, font size, and color; spatial location and mobility of the signs; material the signs are made of; and the primary function of the signs, e.g., informational/indexical or symbolic. Reh (2004) suggested that multilingual signs should also be analyzed from the point of view of information arrangement: (i) duplicating, (ii) fragmentary, (iii) overlapping, and (iv) complementary, where different types of information

are provided in each language, transmitting somewhat different messages to different audiences.

The choices made by various social actors can be analyzed from a variety of theoretical perspectives. To understand how power relations between hegemonic and subordinate groups shape and are shaped by linguistic landscape, scholars may draw on Bourdieu's (1991) ideas about symbolic power (e.g., Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). To understand the economic underpinnings of various choices and options they may appeal to Grin's (2006; Grin and Vaillancourt 1997) work on economics of multilingualism or to contingent valuation method (e.g., Cenoz and Gorter 2009). Recent work on globalization and commodification of English offers another useful analytical perspective, in particular for analyses of advertising (Backhaus 2006, 2007; Huebner 2006; Hult 2009; Lanza and Woldemariam 2009; Piller 2001, 2003). Potential links between linguistic landscape, linguistic diversity, and language maintenance have been examined through the lens of ethnolinguistic vitality (Landry and Bourhis 1997) and the ecology of language (Hult 2009). Linguists also examine linguistic landscape as an important site of language contact and change (Huebner 2006, 2009; Piller 2003), while semioticians are concerned with ways in which spatial and linguistic arrangements convey meanings (Scollon and Scollon 2003).

Since linguistic landscape research is still in its inception, several theoretical and methodological debates plague the field (Backhaus 2007; Gorter 2006a; Huebner 2009). The first involves the problem of representativeness and scope of a sample: How does one select a representative sample? Are data from one street or one area sufficient for generalizations about a city as a whole? If several streets or areas are to be selected, how does one go about selecting them? Huebner (2006) shows that a difference in sample selection between his own study and that of Smalley (1994) led to a very different understanding of the role of English in the linguistic landscape of Bangkok. These issues also need to be confronted on a larger scale, in terms of representativeness of particular cities. In the post-Soviet space, for instance, Brown's (2007) study revealed differences in distribution of Belarusian and Russian signage between Minsk, Vitebsk, and Grodno, Bilaniuk (2005) noted differences in the treatment of Russian in eastern and western Ukraine, and Zabrodskaja (2009) highlighted discrepancies between areas in Estonia dominated by ethnic Estonians and those dominated by ethnic Russians.

The second important question concerns the unit of analysis or the linguistic sign (Gorter 2006a; Huebner 2009). What constitutes an appropriate object for linguistic landscape inquiry? Should texts on moving objects, such as buses, be included? What about printed matter, such as books or postcards? Researchers vary with regard to what they consider the scope of the inquiry. Backhaus (2006) defines a sign as "any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame" (55), a definition that focuses on things visible to passersby, from street signs to commercial billboards to handwritten stickers 'push' and 'pull' on entrance doors. In turn, Shohamy and Waksman (2009) argue that linguistic landscape inquiry should incorporate all types of multimodal discourses—"what is seen, what is heard, what is spoken, what is thought" (313).

The third area of debate involves analytical categories used for understanding the sign authorship. Several researchers distinguish between *top-down* or official signs, that is signs placed by the government and related organizations (e.g., street names, road signs), and *bottom-up* or non-official signs, that is signs placed by autonomous social actors, such as commercial enterprises, private organizations, and individuals (e.g., shop signs, personal announcements) (Backhaus 2006, 2007; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). Coupland (forthcoming) and Huebner (2009) argue that while this distinction is informative, it is also too broad and fails to capture the agency and social situatedness of the signs, whereby the same sign may be read as top-down by some readers and as bottom-up by others. The bottom-up category in particular has elicited a lot of critique because it lumps together different social actors who may display different degrees of preoccupation with official language policies. Large multinational corporations may aim to present an internationally recognized image (global signs), local commercial enterprises may need to comply with local policies, and private individuals may make their choices based on their own linguistic competencies and those of intended readers.

The concerns above are also related to the fourth problem in the field, the difficulty of determining the sign's authorship, primary functions, and intended addressees. In relation to authorship, Malinowski's (2009) study of bilingual Korean-English business signs in Oakland, California, showed that because businesses often change hands, current business owners are not necessarily the authors of the signs and may be unaware of the reasons behind specific language and

word choices. In relation to readership, Calvet (1994) argued that Chinese signs in a typical Parisian Chinese restaurant may be directed at the French customers and carry a predominantly symbolic function of giving the restaurant its 'air chinois'. In contrast, Chinese signs in a restaurant located in the Belleville area of Paris, inhabited by Chinese speakers, may carry primarily an informational function, addressing people who know the language. In the post-Soviet context, this complexity is particularly salient with regard to Russian. As will be shown later, in some contexts it is difficult to determine whether Russian functions as a regional lingua franca, a language of interethnic communication, or a minority language.

The fifth issue involves the language or languages of the sign—it has been repeatedly noted that clear determination of the languages is not always possible (Backhaus 2006, 2007; Huebner 2006). Some signs may appeal to language mixing, play, and lexical borrowing, displaying, for instance, blends of French and Dutch (Backhaus, 2007) or English words written in Kanji, Hiragana, or Katakana (Backhaus 2006). The issue of indeterminacy is particularly relevant to the work in post-Soviet countries where three problems are commonly present. The first involves new coinage, seen, for instance, in commercial signs in Baku that appear in a Latin alphabet and cannot be easily assigned to a particular language (Sadikhova and Abadi 2000). The second problem involves transliteration, seen, for example, in business signs in Uzbekistan where Russian words may be written in a Latin alphabet, e.g., *ximchistka* 'dry cleaner's' or *salon krasoty* 'beauty salon' (Sharifov 2007; see also Figure 8, p. 265). The third problem involves bivalency that may occur in genetically close languages. Thus, in Ukraine, signs displaying bivalent words such as *kafe* 'café', *bank* 'bank', or *vokzal* 'railroad station' can be read as both Ukrainian and Russian. In a sign from a café in Kyiv, Ukraine (see Figure 1 on the following page), the most prominent word, *kafe*, belongs to both languages (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008).

Language prominence or, in Scollon and Scollon's (2003) terms, "code preference", is another issue debated vigorously in the field. How do we interpret the visual hierarchy in a reliable manner? Scollon and Scollon (2003: 120) suggest that the preferred code commonly appears on top, on the left, or in the center of the sign. Backhaus (2007) argues that this semiotic approach is Western in nature. In his analysis

Figure 1. Café sign in Kyiv, Ukraine, 2007. (Reproduced with the permission of the author, Svitlana Melnyk.)

of multilingual signs in Tokyo, Backhaus (2006, 2007) determined code preference through the order and size of font or texts in the respective languages, with size overruling order in cases where texts in larger font are placed in a subordinate position. Huebner (2006) argues that both placement and size can be offset by other features such as color, images, and the amount of text in the language in question. In Figure 1, for instance, prominence is determined by the size of the font and additionally by the placement. In the post-Soviet space, this issue deserves close attention, since Western preferences for top or left placement may not necessarily be dominant in Central Asia or the Transcaucasus.

Last but not least, a thorny debate at the heart of the field involves the meaningfulness of various approaches. Some scholars, like Backhaus (2007), argue that random pictures of curious signs are unlikely to be of significance and only rigorous approaches to sampling, selection, and quantitative analysis can produce scientifically relevant re-

sults. Others, like Coupland (forthcoming), view distribution frequencies as purely descriptive and argue that the field needs to develop a theoretical account of linguistic landscaping, asking what forces shape particular landscapes, whose designs and priorities they respond to, and what competing value systems may be at work.

While these theoretical and methodological debates go on, researchers working in this area strive to be as explicit and transparent as possible regarding (i) their theoretical assumptions; (ii) geographic areas where the research was conducted and the rationale for the choice of these areas; (iii) types of signs examined and the rationale for their choice; (iv) schemes for categorization and analysis; and (v) the larger significance of their findings for understanding of language use. This work has already enriched our understanding of language use in social settings and has great potential for expanding it further. The present paper aims to contribute to this expansion by focusing on a largely overlooked dimension of linguistic landscapes—their dynamic character. To date, the field has been dominated by synchronic investigations that focus on a single point in time, thus implicitly treating public signage as static. In what follows, I approach linguistic landscape not as a here-and-now phenomenon but as a process to be examined diachronically and in the context of other language practices. Among the many aspects that are subject to change, I will focus on one, namely language change in public signage. I will explore manifestations of this change in the context of post-Soviet countries.

3. Derussification and Language Shift in Post-Soviet Countries

Post-Soviet countries offer a fruitful context for diachronic study of linguistic landscapes because, in the past two decades, post-Soviet symbolic landscapes have undergone drastic changes reflecting both nation-building efforts and transition to the new capitalist and global economies. In 1991, the fourteen nation-states that emerged from the ruins of the Soviet empire adopted a variety of desovietization policies to distance themselves both from Russia and the totalitarian past and to accomplish a transition to the new economy. In the area of language, these policies aimed at derussification and a shift toward titular languages and English as a new lingua franca. Azerbaijan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan also implemented a transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet in the titular language. Over the past two

decades these language policies have been translated into practices across a variety of domains (e.g., official language use, education, media, commerce), with varying degrees of success. The outcomes have been shaped by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the demographics of the country, people's attitudes toward particular languages, and political orientation of individual governments (Pavlenko 2008a, b, c). Throughout, linguistic landscape has emerged as a space where language conflicts have become particularly visible.

As already mentioned earlier, to date only a few sociolinguistic studies have examined post-Soviet linguistic landscapes. They became the central focus of Brown's (2007) and Sloboda's (2009) studies in Belarus, Pavlenko's (2009) research in Ukraine, Sadikhova and Abadi's (2000) study in Azerbaijan, Zabrodskaja's (2009) work in Estonia, and Yurchak's (2000) and Bennett's (2008) research in Russia. They also became an integral component of larger studies conducted in Belarus (Giger and Sloboda 2008), Kyrgyzstan (Orusbaev et al. 2008), Moldova (Ciscel 2007, 2008), and Ukraine (Bilaniuk 2005; Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008). Brown's (2007) and Pavlenko's (2009) studies offer direct examinations of changes through particular periods of time, while other studies contribute to our understanding of the changes through direct and indirect references to the situation before and after the fall of the USSR (e.g., Sadikhova and Abadi 2000). Undoubtedly, semiotic changes in post-Soviet landscapes are broader and more profound than a change in the languages and scripts used in public signage. Yurchak's (2000) analysis, for instance, illuminates privatization of the public space, visible in the names given to enterprises by the new business class, while Bennett (2008) considers the symbolic comeback of the old Russian orthography. Due to space limitations, however, in what follows I will focus exclusively on language choice and outline a theoretical framework that highlights five manifestations of the shift-in-progress: language erasure, language replacement, language upgrading and downgrading, language regulation, and transgressive signage.

3.1. Language Erasure

The visibility of the public space and the fact that it is primarily shaped by public authorities makes it a central arena for enforcement of language policies, creation of particular national identities, and ma-

nipulation of public practices. An intended shift can be manifested in this symbolic arena in a number of ways, most dramatically through *language erasure*, that is deliberate removal of signage in a particular language. In the post-Soviet space, it was Russian—and sometimes Cyrillic script in general—that became subject to language erasure, most prominently in the Baltic countries, the Transcaucasus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

There exist three possible ways of erasing a language from linguistic landscape. The first involves replacement of old signs with new signs where the offending language is now absent. This approach is the most expensive but also the most effective because it leaves no physical trace of the other language; the erasure can only be made evident through comparison of the old and new signage. The other two approaches are cheaper but also less effective than the first one because they leave behind material traces—and thus reminders—of language erasure. Thus, the second approach involves deletion (e.g., painting over) of parts of bilingual signs. This approach is evident in a street sign in Riga, Latvia, where the Russian name on the bottom line has been painted over with a lighter blue color (Figure 2 on the following page). The third approach, adopted with genetically related languages that use the same script, involves modification of single letters. For example, in a road sign in Ukraine, language erasure took place as a change in script, where the letters 'o' and 'ы' in the Russian names of the cities *L'vov* and *Stryj* were painted over with 'i' and 'и', resulting in the Ukrainian names *L'viv* and *StrIj* (Figure 3 on the following page).

These approaches may often coexist because, even with a context of a single country, language erasure does not proceed uniformly. For instance, Bilaniuk (2005), who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine in 1991–92, noted that the process of replacement of Russian-language and bilingual signs with Ukrainian-language signs did not take place in the same manner throughout the country. In L'viv, a complete replacement of all street signs occurred "practically overnight" (Bilaniuk 2005: 95), while in Kyiv the authorities at first opted to modify letters in existing signs, thus changing Russian words into Ukrainian as quickly and inexpensively as possible. The researcher argued that this approach detracted from the normalizing force of lan-

Figure 2. Street sign in Riga, Latvia, 2007. (Source: A. Kuz'min, http://ru.wikipedia.org, Russkij jazyk v Latvii)

Figure 3. Road sign in western Ukraine, 2007. (Source: Russianname, http://ru.wikipedia.org, Ukrainizatsija)

guage institutionalization and "made the authority backing Ukrainian appear as poor and superficial as the changes on the signage" (Bilaniuk 2005: 95).

Given the fact that colonial languages commonly remain in use in postcolonial countries (Simpson 2007, 2008), the large-scale derussification of the post-Soviet space offers new possibilities for the study of language shift. Nevertheless, to date, it has not been examined in-depth, in particular in linguistic landscapes, the area where it had been most conspicuous. Future studies of derussification in post-Soviet landscapes will enrich our understanding of the change in linguistic regimes, while studies of the consequences of language erasure, including public reception of the new signs, will add insights to our understanding of language planning.

This study also has potential to contribute to our understanding of language rights. To date, in the work on post-Soviet countries, language rights have been invoked at length with regard to citizenship testing in Latvia and Estonia and the closing of Russian-language schools in the Baltic countries and in Ukraine (Pavlenko 2008a). Little attention, however, has been paid to the uses of written language in the public space (but see Sadikhova and Abadi 2000 on concerns expressed by the elderly in Azerbaijan). Yet Shohamy (2006) argues that this area cannot be ignored, in particular when local residents do not have competence in the languages used in public signage and are thus unable to follow street signs and other written information. This is not an issue in Ukraine or Belarus, where the languages are genetically related and the populations functionally bilingual, and so the change of signage was a symbolic gesture that did not cause any major inconveniences and in some cases proceeded unnoticed (cf. Brown 2007). It is, however, a concern in places where Russian speakers did not—at least initially—have competence in the titular languages. Thus, future work needs to examine how language erasure took place in various contexts, and whether it affected the welfare of particular populations.

3.2. Language Replacement

Another manifestation of the shift-in-progress involves *language replacement*, where a new language takes over the functions of a language that had been eliminated. In the post-Soviet countries, the language that came to replace Russian was the global lingua franca Eng-

lish. In Ukraine, for instance, Ukrainian-Russian signs were replaced with Ukrainian-English signs as early as 1991 (Bilaniuk 2005). As in other post-Soviet countries, this change symbolized the transition from Soviet totalitarianism to western-style cosmopolitanism and global values (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008; Ciscel 2008; Pavlenko 2008c; Sadikhova and Abadi 2000). In and of itself the use of English is not a unique phenomenon. Studies to date have documented a growing salience of English in linguistic landscapes of Ethiopia (Lanza and Woldemariam 2009), Japan (Backhaus 2006, 2007), Israel (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006), Netherlands (Cenoz and Gorter 2006), Spain (Cenoz and Gorter 2006), Sweden (Hult 2009), Taiwan (Curtin 2009), and Thailand (Huebner 2006). The difference between these contexts and the post-Soviet space is in the fact that in post-Soviet countries English appeared as a replacement for Russian, while in other contexts it is a language added to the landscape.

The two languages differ in their symbolic associations and also in the levels of language competence: at present, in the post-Soviet space, levels of Russian-language competence still supersede levels of English (Pavlenko 2008c). Consequently, it is likely that in post-Soviet countries, as in other places around the world, the symbolic function of English—the language of prestige, internationalization, sophistication, and global values—eclipses its communicative function as a lingua franca (Curtin 2009; Piller 2001, 2003; Scollon and Scollon 2003). In Kyiv, for instance, in the early 1990s businesses were among the first places to display Ukrainian-English signs, in accordance with the new fashion for English (Bilaniuk 2005). In Baku, by 2000, 40% of the store signs used English as a primary language (Sadikhova and Abadi 2000).

An example of such symbolic usage is seen in the sign displayed in the Kyiv café (Figure 1 on p. 252), that incorporates two English words, Vitamin and Batterfly, the latter either an erroneous rendition of 'butterfly' or a neologism (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008). In the absence of any clear informational function carried by the two words, it is likely that they are used for display purposes, to lend the sign an 'international' aura. Similar display appearances of English-language brand names, trademarks, and logos are seen in advertisements for a Waterman pen in Kyiv, Ukraine (Figure 9 on p. 266), and for electronic products by JVC in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (Figure 10 on p. 268) (for similar examples from Moldova, see Ciscel 2008). In contrast, in the

Figure 4. Department of Passport and Visa Control, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2007. (Reproduced with the permission of the author, Abdykadyr Orusbaev)

road sign in western Ukraine (Figure 3 on p. 256) and in the sign over the Kyrgyz Department for passport and visa control (Figure 4 above), English carries an informational function as a lingua franca of international travel.

Not all segments of the post-Soviet population are equally pleased with the transition to English or to the Latin alphabet: older people often appear annoyed by the incomprehensible words in the storefronts (Bilaniuk 2005; Sadikhova and Abadi 2000). In future work, it would be interesting to see how and when English appeared in particular linguistic landscapes, how it is used in different contexts, whether it has indeed replaced Russian as a lingua franca, at least in some contexts, and who may benefit from or be inconvenienced by such a replacement.

3.3. Language Upgrading and Downgrading

While erasure and replacement represent an extreme case of language downgrading, a language can also be downgraded while remaining

part of the signage. Thus, another manifestation of an intended language shift is a change of language status in the public signage referred to as *language upgrading* or *downgrading*. This change takes place through changes in presentation prominence, that is ordering, font size, color, and amount of information offered in each language. Both upgrading and downgrading are visible in post-Soviet linguistic landscapes. All fourteen countries have upgraded the titular languages in the public signage, while downgrading Russian. Similar to language erasure, language upgrading and downgrading take place differently in different contexts even within the same country. Intriguing evidence of such variation comes from Brown's (2007) study of changes in bilingual signage in Belarus. The study shows that between the years 1984 and 1997 the proportion of signs in Belarusian and Russian varied from the predominance of Russian in 1984, to exclusive Russian usage in 1986 to equal usage in 1991 to predominance of Belarusian in 1997. More importantly, Brown (2007) shows that the distribution of languages in the signage varied across metro stops and lines, between metro signage and other official signage, and also between the three cities studied, with Belarusian dominating the signage in Grodno, Russian in Vitebsk, and bilingual signage appearing most prominently in Minsk. Last but not least, while most bilingual signs represented the titular language Belarusian first, there were also new signs where Russian, the second state language in Belarus, appeared first.

Differences across contexts were also documented in Moldova, where government office signs now appear in Moldovan and Russian, while names of private shops and businesses have been restricted to Moldovan (or more specifically to the Latin script), although details may be offered in either language or both (Ciscel 2007, 2008). An interesting example of variation in prominence based on the intended audience comes from Kyrgyzstan. In the bilingual announcement of a voting place in Bishkek, seen in Figure 5 opposite, Kyrgyz precedes Russian in the top sign, while Russian appears on the left sign and Kyrgyz on the right, creating an appearance of equality. In contrast, the sign in Figure 4 on the preceding page, announcing the Department of passport and visa control, displays a different arrangement: Russian top and center, flanked on the sides by Kyrgyz and English. In this case Russian may be prioritized as a lingua franca of transnational migration and travel in the post-Soviet space.

Figure 5. Voting place, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2007. (Reproduced with the permission of the author, Abdykadyr Orusbaev)

With the exception of Brown's (2007) study, however, to date, examination of upgrading and downgrading in linguistic landscape—be it in post-Soviet countries or elsewhere—has been restricted to the here-and-now arrangements in public signage. In future studies, it would be informative to examine how, when, and why the changes in presentation of particular languages took place and what symbolic messages were transmitted through such changes. These analyses need to place multilingual signs in the context of local language practices and competencies, differentiating between arrangements that reflect linguistic competencies of intended audiences and those that reflect aspirations of particular governments (see also Coupland forthcoming). In the post-Soviet context particular attention needs to be paid to the functions of Russian, which can be alternatively conceived as a minority language, as a language of interethnic communication (and thus a second language of several minority populations), and as a regional lingua franca.

3.4. Language Regulation

Another manifestation of the shift-in-progress, referred to here as *language regulation*, involves signs that attempt to manipulate language choice and use through content, a phenomenon that has not yet received attention in linguistic landscape work. To date, I have been able to differentiate between three types of signs that attempt to regulate language use in the public space. The first and the most indirect cate-

gory of signs urges its audiences to learn and/or speak particular languages in general. One example of such signage is billboards that were installed in Kazakhstan in 2007, the year of the Kazakh language, to appeal to citizens' language loyalty. These billboards sported slogans, such as "It is a responsibility of each citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan to learn the state language" and "Kazakh, speak Kazakh with a Kazakh!" (Smagulova 2008).

The second, more direct, type of signs urges people to speak a particular language here-and-now. For instance, a now infamous sign placed near the cash register in a Philadelphia restaurant, Geno's Steaks, urges customers to speak English because they are in America. In a similar vein, the sign, displayed in a clinic in L'viv, Ukraine, urges people to speak Ukrainian stating: "According to the resolution by the parliament of Ukraine on February 28, 1989 'Regarding the state nature and official status of the Ukrainian language in institutions and organizations' we speak Ukrainian here" (Figure 6 opposite). The last clause, "we speak Ukrainian here," appears in red and in the largest font, making it the most prominent part of the sign. The statement is signed by several agencies: Administration (presumably of the clinic), as well as *Rukh* 'Movement', *Memorial* 'Memorial', and *Prosvita* 'Education', all of which appear to be non-governmental organizations.

The third type of sign promotes correct usage of particular languages. For example, the sign displayed in a L'viv trolley bus urges people to speak Ukrainian correctly (Figure 7 opposite). Its opening lines state: "Attention! Let's speak correctly!" These lines are followed by two columns: the first, titled "incorrectly", lists examples of Russianisms in Ukrainian, and the second, titled "correctly", offers standard Ukrainian counterparts. The sign lists two agencies presumably responsible for its wording, *Svoboda* 'Liberty', presumably another NGO, and *Upravlinnia transportu LMR* 'L'viv municipal transport administration'.

Effectively conveying the one nation–one language ideology, both signs rally, indirectly, against Russian language use (Figure 6) and, directly, against Russian language influence on Ukrainian (Figure 7). In doing so, they form part of a larger movement that resurged in the 1990s to promote linguistic purism in Ukrainian and to derussify the language (Bilaniuk 2005). We do not know much, however, about either the spread or the uptake of such signs.
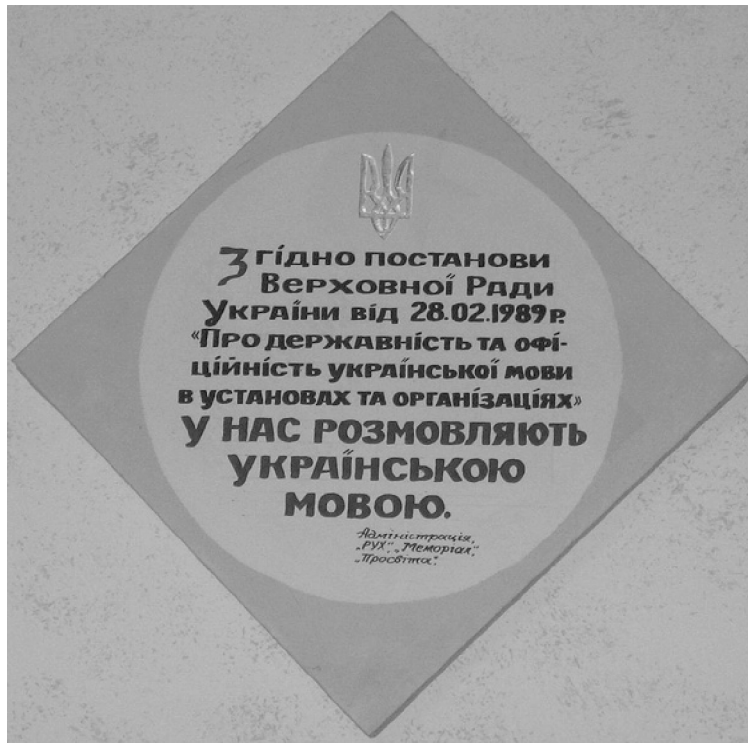
Figure 6. Sign in a regional clinic, L'viv, Ukraine, 2007. (Source: Russianname, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainization)

Figure 7. Sign in a trolley bus, L'viv, 2007. (Source: Vodnik, http://ru.wikipedia.org, Russkij jazyk na Ukraine)

Future study of language regulation needs to examine its scope and social reception, while considering (i) sociolinguistic processes that give rise to specific instances of language regulation; (ii) local contexts in which particular signs appear; (iii) the timing of appearance and the duration of display of such signs; (iv) the intended audiences; and, finally, (v) public uptake, i.e., reactions of different stakeholders to particular signs and the impact of these signs on language use. In Russian-dominant areas of Ukraine, according to Bilaniuk (2005), the linguistic purism movement may have actually undermined the revival of Ukrainian, because it instilled insecurities in people who may have otherwise been willing to speak their "imperfect" Ukrainian.

3.5. Transgressive Signs

A shift in progress, and in particular a shift imposed from above, cannot proceed without tensions. Manifestations of such tensions in linguistic landscape are found in *transgressive* signs. Scollon and Scollon (2003: 22–23) see transgressive signs as signs that violate conventions on emplacement. In the present paper, this definition will be extended to signs that violate or subvert official norms in the choice of either script or language. Examples of transgressive script subversion can be found in Kishinev, Moldova, where Russian business owners subvert the Latin-only rule created to promote the use of Moldovan by adopting English-language—instead of Moldovan-language—names for their shops (Ciscel 2008). In Uzbekistan, commercial enterprises use the Latin script, now adopted for Uzbek, to transliterate Russian names (Sharifov 2007), or as in Figure 8 opposite, to playfully combine a Russian word in the Latin alphabet *pivo* 'beer' with a Russian word in Cyrillic *bočkovoe* 'draft (literally: from a barrel)'. And in Baku, Azerbaijan, an owner of a stationery store kept his sign in Cyrillic Azeri, instead of Latin, to accommodate his older customers (Sadikhova and Abadi 2000).

Other signs may also subvert language choice, using the language not sanctioned by official norms. Thus, in Kyiv, Ukraine, commercial enterprises may adhere to Ukrainian-language policy in permanent signage while subverting it in temporary signs. These signs are printed

Figure 8. Beer salon sign, Uzbekistan, 2007. (Reproduced by permission from http://www.fergana.ru)

in Russian on a sheet of paper, enclosed in protective plastic casing, and posted on walls, doors, windows, or columns. For instance, in the window of a large bookstore *Lɪtera* 'Letter', seen in Figure 9 on the following page, the name of the section *Kanceljars'ka kramnicja* 'Stationery supplies', appears in Ukrainian, followed by the brand-name Waterman in English, and then a typed up sign in Russian that states *Kseroksa net* 'We have no xerox'. The latter appears to be a dialogic sign created in response to repeated inquiries and its choice of language may reflect the competence of the sign writers (store personnel) or the intended audience (despite its Ukrainian-language name, the store houses large holdings of Russian-language books).

Some businesses also subvert the Ukrainian-language norm in the permanent signage, either straightforwardly or playfully. For instance, a sign over an art gallery displays its Russian name *Mir iskusstva* 'Art World' in large font and also in brackets, while the Ukrainian name on top in much smaller font reads *xudožnɪj salon* 'art gallery'. Another strategy is to display Russian or potentially bivalent words, such as *prodmar* (abbreviation of 'grocery store') or *kontrakt* 'contract' in pre-1917 Russian spelling with a "ъ" at the end, thus signaling their Russianness (see also Bennett 2008). Russian-language also commonly ap-

Figure 9. Bookstore window, Kyiv, Ukraine, 2008. (Author's picture)

pears in private ads and in graffiti in Kyiv. Last but not least, in their struggles over language, individual social actors may also appeal to upgrading and downgrading strategies, such as painting over signs and replacing official names with names in the other language (Gorter 2006b).

To date, signs that subvert script and language norms have not received much attention in the study of linguistic landscape and the

phenomenon of transgression is still poorly understood. It is possible that the signs discussed here diverge from the official language norms but fit within agreed-upon local norms. To understand the degree to which a particular sign may be transgressive, future studies need to examine the norms and expectations regarding language and script choice that function in particular contexts at particular times for particular social actors.

3.6. Linguistic Landscapes and Language Practices

So far, the discussion above has emphasized the need to examine linguistic landscapes diachronically as dynamic phenomena. I have only briefly touched upon the relationship between public signage and social actors. Yet the discrepancy in language choice between top-down and bottom-up signage discussed above suggests that in some post-Soviet countries there may be a rift between official language policies and everyday language practices. A few linguistic landscape studies that have considered language practices suggest that the frequency of language use in public signage may not be indicative of its use in language practices. For instance, in a comparative study of Basque in the Basque country and Frisian in Friesland (Netherlands), Cenoz and Gorter (2006) found that Basque was much more visible in linguistic landscape, due to proactive language policies, while Frisian was more widespread as a language of oral communication. In turn, Coupland (forthcoming) used census and survey data to argue that the use of Welsh in the linguistic landscape of Wales reflects an aspirational political ideology of "true bilingualism" and not realities of everyday language use.

This aspirational ideology may also be at play in linguistic landscapes of some post-Soviet countries. As in the case of Wales, it may be reflected in bilingual signs placed by officials in a predominantly monolingual context. Thus, in Belarus, official signs use Belarusian and Russian, while Russian alone dominates everyday language practices. As a result, Belarusian appears to carry a ritualized symbolic function, indexing the nation in the public space (Brown 2007; Giger and Sloboda 2008). In the absence of Russian, however, Belarusian, a genetically close language, can also be used for informational purposes. This is not the case in Kyrgyzstan, where monolingual Russian speakers cannot easily read Kyrgyz. There, bilingual (e.g., Figure 5 on

p. 261) and trilingual signs (e.g., Figures 4, on p. 259, and 10, below) address audiences who are likely to be either monolingual in Russian or bilingual in Kyrgyz and Russian (Orusbaev et al. 2008).

In other places, the situation is reversed and monolingual signage may appear in largely bilingual environments. Thus, in eastern Ukraine, official signs in Ukrainian address an audience bilingual in Ukrainian and Russian (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008). In such contexts, we may witness a discrepancy between top-down and bottom-up signs, with the latter serving as an arena of contestation of existing linguistic regimes (e.g., Figure 9 on p. 266; see also Ciscel 2007, 2008).

Most importantly, and regardless of how particular nations are imagined by their respective governments, bottom-up signs in linguistic landscapes—including those in post-Soviet countries—commonly affirm a complex multilingual reality. As seen in Figures 1, 8, 9, and 10, such signs may weave titular languages and the two lingua francas, Russian and English, arranging information in a complemen-

Figure 10. Billboard, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2007. (Reproduced with the permission of the author, Abdykadyr Orusbaev)

tary manner (Reh 2004), so that particular words or texts appear in one language only. This non-parallel bilingualism suggests that the texts address bi- and multilingual audiences, rather than monolingual speakers of different languages, and is commonly encountered in Azerbaijan (Sadikhova and Abadi 2000), Belarus (Brown 2007; Giger and Sloboda 2008), Estonia (Zabrodskaja 2009), Kyrgyzstan (Orusbaev et al. 2008), Moldova (Ciscel 2007, 2008), Ukraine (Bilaniuk 2005; Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008; Pavlenko 2009), and Uzbekistan (Sharifov 2007).

4. Conclusions

Two interrelated arguments were made in this paper. First, I have argued that the study of linguistic landscape can benefit from seeing linguistic landscapes as dynamic phenomena and examining them in a diachronic manner. Using the changes that have taken place in the post-Soviet space since 1991, I have highlighted five processes that can be examined in such developmental inquiry with regard to language change and language conflict. Second, I have argued that the study of linguistic landscape offers a useful tool for post-Soviet sociolinguistics and for Slavic sociolinguistics at large. I have used the phenomenon of imposed language shift to examine potential insights afforded by such inquiry.

To ensure that the findings from the study of linguistic landscape have a larger significance for our understanding of language use in the post-Soviet space, the following questions need to be addressed in future inquiries. With regard to the Soviet era we need to know what languages and scripts were used in the public signage in the context in question. What ideologies did they reflect? What informational and symbolic functions did they carry for their intended addressees? What were the language competencies of the intended audiences, in particular the population inhabiting the area? Based on these competencies, whose rights were legitimized and whose rights may have been violated by particular choices? What, if any, discrepancies existed between language choices in public signage and actual language practices?

Similarly, with regard to the post-Soviet era, we need to know: What are the new constellations of languages and scripts in the public signage in the context in question? What ideologies shape these

choices? What informational and symbolic functions do they carry for the intended audiences? What are the language competencies of these audiences? Whose rights do particular choices legitimize and whose language rights may they violate? What discrepancies appeared in this period between top-down and bottom-up signs and between public signage and language practices?

Questions also need to be asked with regard to the impact of the changes in question: What if any effect did the changes in linguistic landscapes have on public perception of the languages in question? What if any effect did they have on language practices? Did the derussification of the public space contribute to the diminished use of Russian and increase in the use and prestige of the titular languages? Did it disadvantage speakers who previously relied on Russian for navigating the public space?

It is my sincere hope that future studies in post-Soviet contexts will engage with these questions and integrate the linguistic landscape approach within larger ethnographic and sociolinguistic projects, considering linkages and discrepancies between visual reality and everyday language practices, both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective.

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