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THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF SCHOOLSCAPES: OVERVIEW OF THE BILINGUAL SCHOOL CONTEXT

Abstract: The paper explores the linguistic landscape in schools (schoolscape) and their messages transmitted as hidden curricula and covert semantic representations. The concept of schoolscape refers to the totality of visual materials, such as notice boards, tableaus, displays, teaching materials, maps, building signs, marks, etc. that can be found within the space of a school. These reflect on the life and communicational needs of the social environment, articulated in a given period of time. This visual linguistic configuration of the educational scene is an essential part of the "hidden curriculum" of the pedagogical space at hand. The study relies on empirical data obtained in a specific field, namely, in the schools of a Hungarian ethnic minority community from Romania where bilingualism represents a special form of social existence. Data were collected through the observation and documentation of the linguistic landscape, through focus group discussions with pupils and individual interviews with the educators. The paper offers a detailed description of the schoolscapes' general characteristics, and a thematic analysis of these landscapes; it also presents the representations of local identity and patterns of language use as they are displayed and constructed by the visual configuration of the given spaces.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape; Schoolscape; Bilingualism; Language attitude; Hidden curriculum

1. Linguistic landscape and schoolscape

The study of the linguistic landscape, as a separate research field, is a relatively recent development. It continues, completes and – adding a new perspective – it re-analyses the main issues related to the so-called traditional linguistic research on minorities, such as language shift, linguistic revitalization, language loss, language socialization, language knowledge etc. (Gorter Durk, Heiko F. Marten, Luk Van Mensel, 2012). The most frequently quoted (and earliest) definition of the term linguistic landscape is that of Landry & Bourhis (1997: 25) according to who the linguistic landscape of a territory, region or locality comprises the official road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings.

Studying the peculiarities of visual language use has both a communicative (informative) and a symbolic function (Burenhult & Levinson, 2008; Shohamy & Shoshi, 2009, Pavlenko, 2012) and that is the reason why more and more linguists have become interested in it. Entering a certain space or locality all the signs, boards and displays encountered, including the use of symbolic elements, can reveal much about the linguistic profile and linguistic characteristics of the given place, the status of the languages used and the value system of the given place.

The extensive use of certain languages (not only in private spheres but public and business spheres as well) strengthens and/or positively affects the prestige of the respective language. Linguistic landscape has also a mediator role (Shohamy, 2006) among the different language policy levels as it represents the specific and concrete manifestations of the language ideologies in power, the direct or indirect elements of the experienced and practiced language behaviour. This is why the analysis and interpretation of visual language use can only be

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carried out in relation to the language users' linguistic behaviour and their language attitudes where the cultural, historical and socio-political contexts gain an important role. In this sense, the linguistic landscape is a semiotic landscape (Jaworski & Thurlow eds. 2010), which carries meta-cultural messages and the elements of this linguistic landscape can be understood as "iceberg" texts.

The linguistic environment of formal education i.e. "schoolscape", represents a specific space of visual language use and refers to the totality of visual materials, such as notice boards, tableaus, displays, teaching materials, maps, building signs, marks, etc. that can be found within a school and serve the communicational needs and expectations of the respective space (Dagenais; Moore; Sabatier, Lamarre, Franҫoise, 2009). This type of linguistic landscape, that includes the totality of visual materials in a given educational setting, means also a visual linguistic expression of official language ideologies and their local interpretations. In several linguistic landscape studies the authors argue for the multimodality (Jaworski & Thurlow eds. 2010) of the linguistic signs based on the assumption that the message of the linguistic landscape is conveyed not solely by the content of the written text itself but the use of colours, text font, background colours and supplementary symbols also contribute to its understanding and meaning construction.

Within discourses of space it often occurs that a given symbol becomes the central element of the space, such as a flag, a cross, coat of arms etc. thus more recent studies differentiate between the written texts and other semiotic elements of the linguistic landscape (Sloboda, Szabó- Gilinger, Vigers, Simicic, 2010). Studying linguistic landscapes in general and, particularly, schoolscapes, requires a joint and complex presentation of both written and other semiotic elements in order to arrive at a more profound understanding and to gain a more detailed and varied collective reflection.

2. Schoolscape: mental map and reflection

Based on the different approaches and perspectives present in the linguistic landscape research, the present paper understands the term linguistic landscape as the written (more enduring than the oral), visual linguistic representation of language behaviour (including language ideology) at a given time, space, political and socio-cultural context. Linguistic landscape is the visual representation of the individual and collective understanding of the experienced language policy and traditions of language use.

According to Brown D. Kara, the characteristics of an educational setting represent in fact the given "pedagogical space's" implicit, hidden curriculum and at the same time they reflect the institutions' more or less conscious educational philosophy (Brown, 2012). Thus, a detailed and complex research regarding the linguistic landscape of schools can offer valuable insights into the specific dimensions of school life.

The study of linguistic landscape in educational settings has been the subject of only a few studies, as research on linguistic landscape mainly focused on describing and interpreting visual signage of larger regions, cities, squares and streets. The present paper draws on the characteristics of a community which has already been presented in Laihonen's (2012) articles and Horváth I. (2013) and his research team's work. However, in contrast to previous research, the present paper intends to analyse a specific space, namely the school context from the perspective of its hidden curriculum. In what follows, a brief description of this specific context and its population will be provided.

3. Subjects

In the Romanian educational system 5.12% of the total school population went to Hungarian schools.[1] For learners who attend these institutions the process of linguistic

[1] Data above concerns the 2010-2011 academic year, source: Murvai, L. (2011). Erdélyi magyar oktatás 2004-2011 [Hungarian education in Transylvania 2004-2011]. In *Új Magyar Szó*, 04.10. 2011.

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socialization differs from that of a Romanian learner since we can speak about the interaction of two languages and structuring their linguistic competences in their mother tongue (in our case it is mostly the minority language) and a second, non-native language (in our case, Romanian).

Bilingualism is understood here in its holistic (Grosjean, 1982; Bartha, 1999) and pragmatic meaning, according to which, a person is considered to be bilingual or multilingual if he/she uses two or more languages on a daily basis according to his/her communicative and socio-cultural needs.

Based on previous research regarding the population under study (Horváth, 2009), the following types of bilingualism can be differentiated: a. minority monolingualism, b. minority dominant bilingualism, c. balanced bilingualism, d. Romanian dominant bilingualism and e. Romanian monolingualism. According to their language knowledge, the Hungarian adult population in Romania can be categorized into the following forms of bilingualism (Horváth, 2005, 2008): a. balanced bilingualism, b. asymmetric bilingualism, c. monolingualism, d. subtractive bilingualism and semilingualism.

The first type of bilingualism stands for the equal, approximately same level of knowledge of two languages, and according to the speakers' self-assessment it characterizes 28.8% of the Hungarian mother tongue adult population. Asymmetric bilingualism, which refers to 58.8% of the Hungarian mother tongue adult population, means a better knowledge in one of the two languages – in our case, the mother tongue – while their second language competences in most cases are non-functional, meaning mostly knowledge about the language. In the case of this latter type of bilingualism, everyday language use (home, school, friends, environment) is mostly restricted to their mother tongue which forms the basis for further second- (Romanian, in our case) and third (foreign) language acquisitions.

Monolingualism (7.6%) means according to speakers' self-assessment that they are able to perform their communicative acts in only one language. Subtractive bilingualism (1.8%) means that a second language takes over the functions of a base language. In our case, primarily due to linguistic environmental effects, the language that is most used becomes the base language of the individual. Although it hardly appears (1.4%), speakers who can be characterized as semilinguals, feel that they cannot express themselves in either of the languages, that they are not able to express themselves "completely".

Naturally, the specifics of a given linguistic environment, linguistic habits, models and methods of language acquisition are all major factors that contribute to the shaping of the above mentioned types of bilingualism.

The study analyses three educational institutions from a Hungarian dominant, asymmetric bilingual linguistic environment, to reveal the characteristics of its linguistic landscape and to better understand the message these signs convey.

4. The study

The research was carried out between 2012 and 2013[2]. Data was collected in three schools of a single locality with the aim to reveal the characteristics of their linguistic landscape, their language attitudes, tendencies of language choice, and to categorize the pedagogical messages, the hidden curriculum of these signs. Fieldwork was carried out in the educational institutions of a Transylvanian municipality – Sândominic – Csíkszentdomokos) from Harghita County, with a population of 6048 people, out of which, according to the 2011 census[3], 98% are ethnic Hungarians.

[2] This work was supported by the Sapientia Foundation – Institute for Scientific Research, Romania in 2013, under Grant IPC 7/12/2013.

[3] http://ro.scribd.com/doc/86885327/CESCH-Recensamant-Populatie-2011-CV-Hr

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Adopting an analytical perspective towards the selected educational settings, it can be stated that these settings reveal the representative features of a majority Hungarian-language school from the countryside. In order to understand the issue under investigation, a triangulation of research methods was compiled including both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, namely, observation (documenting the linguistic landscape), focus-group discussion with the learners and structured individual interviews with the teachers. Thus, the data consists of 205 units of analysis (photos taken at the site), discussion with 69 learners and 7 teacher interviews.

During the research process, an essential criterion has been identified concerning linguistic landscape studies, namely, that investigating such a complex topic of research requires the combination of both emic and etic perspectives. It is necessary to have both insider and outsider researchers as it often occurs that, due to the different viewpoints, different signs might be discovered and highlighted and the two researchers might allot different meanings to a given sign. This is why, during field observations I continuously consulted and sought the input of an outsider expert (Petteri Laihonen, University of Jyväskylä, Finland) who knows the present research setting and is also engaged in linguistic landscape research. Even though the main goal of the study was to analyse the relationship between language behaviour and linguistic landscape, during the research process it became clear that investigating educational settings brings about a more complex message of the linguistic landscape. The present paper analyses the empirical data from a specific point of view[4], namely, it focuses on the messages of the "walls" and the way they can be interpreted – what, more or less conscious, messages do they suggest to the receptors of the school environment and how do they reflect upon school life, and its teaching and learning practices.

Before turning to the data analysis it is worth mentioning that the specificity and uniqueness of a given educational setting is defined by its teachers' personality and their value system, the cultural determinants of the school's immediate environment, the students' age and individual characters and many other factors. However, there are some fundamental aspects (readings) which, if described and written, could turn the organization of the educational setting into a more conscious and reflective practice.

5. Results and discussion

a. Language choice and language use within the school context

In Romania, before the revolution in 1989, the linguistic landscape of schools was very carefully regulated and controlled. For example, it was a crucial aspect to place the portrait of Nicolae Ceaușescu on the wall of every classroom above the board and on its right and left sides there were several quotations from the president's speech (usually said during congresses). At the same time, there were obligatory tableaus such as presentation materials on traffic information, reports illustrating patriotic work, notice boards etc. In case of Hungarian schools, texts displayed on the walls had to be in Romanian language, their contents being thoughts, quotations that reflected the regime's ideologies.

A few months after the revolution these walls remained empty – recalls one of our respondents, a retired teacher. Then filling these walls with content was subject to local decisions, became the task of teachers and the school. Centralized regulations were taken over by local initiatives and local values. How will new meanings be constructed? What contents were assigned to the school space? What strategies of language choice can be detected? – these are some of the questions the study tries to answer.

[4] Results of the research were partly published in Pieldner - Pap - Tapodi - Forisek (eds): *Kulturális identitás és alteritás az időben* [Cultural Identity, Alterity and Time] Debrecen, 2013, 451-459p

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In the schools under investigation, the results of the interviews with teachers show that after the revolution we cannot speak about a controlled conception of school „decoration". Since then, the decoration of classrooms has usually been the responsibility of the teachers and educators, while the decoration of the school's public spaces (e.g. corridors) has been a joint task and the result of a collaborative decision making. Within the educational settings visited, the classrooms and the school in general were mostly decorated representing certain events connected to seasons, public holidays and celebrations. However, teachers consider that presenting school events and some important episodes of school life are also necessary. Teachers value the presentation of those things and events which they consider to be useful and beautiful and which they are proud of, but they are open to display other recent events and new works as well. There were teachers who changed the quotations on the classroom's wall every month depending on the "actual mood of the class".

In terms of the schoolscape components, two different levels can be distinguished: there are *permanent* „messages" and regularly *updated* information. Permanent messages consist of quotations, the portraits of writers and poets, regulations, maps etc., which decorate the walls over the years, while exhibitions of the students' works are regularly updated (paintings, drawings, poems etc.) together with students' attendance certificates and diplomas reflecting their results on different contests, competition plaques or even the test items of different competitions.

Another important aspect concerning Hungarian schools characterized by asymmetric bilingualism – constituting the subject of our research –is the matter of *language choice*. What is written in Romanian, what is presented only in the students' mother tongue, when do they consider bilingual language use to be important? To what extent does foreign language appear in these communications?

In the Hungarian schools visited the following structure of language choice could be outlined: the majority (68%) of the linguistic landscape components were Hungarian monolingual, 6% was Hungarian-Romanian bilingual and 7% Romanian-Hungarian bilingual, while 18% of the signs were Romanian monolingual and only 1% in a foreign language (French, English).

Analysing the relationship among language choice, language use and the thematic content of these texts there can be detected a certain degree of separation and specialization of the linguistic registers which is not a conscious but rather a spontaneous form of attitude. Thus, Romanian is mainly the language of official notifications, regulations, the language of external messages, in other words the language of the formal register, while Hungarian is the language of other, usually informal linguistic representations. The separation of languages and specialization of the linguistic functions reflect the school population's linguistic behaviour and language choice in their everyday language use.

Data collection focused both on teachers' and students' language use. The questions referred to the respondents' language use in their immediate and wider social environments. Students generally use Hungarian for their daily communicative purposes, so they use Hungarian at home, with the neighbours, on the street etc. while the highest percentage of second language use occurs during travelling (38% of respondents) and during their communication with the local police officer (35%) if it happens at all, usually around the age of 14 when children apply for their identity card. Another situation which provides an opportunity for second language use is shopping (26% of respondents) obviously in the city or other localities, as in the local shops the use of Hungarian is unquestionable. In case of administrative questions connected to school, even if they are official matters, the use of Romanian language is not typical. In some exceptional cases where Hungarian cannot be used, students are offered help and support.

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It is worth noting however, that the above mentioned data on language use do not refer to the frequency of using these languages, and do not reflect the extent to which these communicative acts are efficient or not. The above mentioned situations merely show the most frequent challenges in our respondents' daily life, when Romanian language knowledge is needed.

Focus-group discussions revealed that the research subjects have endured many failures in their everyday life, and it also occurred that they needed the help of a translator (interpreter) or they were ridiculed and mocked at for not being able to express themselves. Moreover, they also recalled some situations when they did not speak, because they could not. Below there are some examples of such situations:

"…While I was travelling by train, someone asked whether the seat next to me was taken…and then they chatted about me, complimented on my jacket…but I did not talk with them…this is as much as I understood." (pupil, 7th grade)

"We were at the seaside, and we had to point with our fingers to the things we wanted to buy…" (pupil, 5th grade)

"We were travelling by train when the conductor came and asked for our tickets. We could not tell him that they are at the teacher…so we pointed with our fingers. Then the conductor started to speak in Hungarian…telling us to learn Romanian." (pupil, 8th grade)

Teachers' linguistic behaviour was investigated with the help of interviews. According to the interviews, teachers' everyday life is also marked by the use of Hungarian. They speak almost exclusively Hungarian in their social environment –"we rarely speak in Romanian", claimed one of the interviewee. From teachers' perspectives, if they do not hold any leadership, organizer or administrative positions, the use of Romanian is practically reduced to only a few situations of administrative matters within or related to school. Teachers prepare their Hungarian work plans based on the Romanian ones (exception being the case of teaching Romanian language), they write the reports in Romanian and Hungarian: "…which are sent to the centres they have to be in Romanian, the others in Hungarian."

It becomes evident, that teachers' language use can also be characterized by the separation of languages. In their immediate social environment they use Hungarian on a daily basis, while during administrative tasks or travelling they use Romanian as well. Thus, their informal communication situations are characterized by Hungarian language use, while official (mainly written) communication situations, require the use of Romanian.

From what our teacher subjects can recall, they have used Romanian to fill out official documents such as: job descriptions, questionnaires, data of pupils applying for social welfare benefits, performance reports etc.

Organizing and designing educational work results in specific language behaviour. As official information is, in most cases, communicated in Romanian, expressions related to certain official matters are stored in this language and these Romanian expressions are accessed more quickly in different communication situations. Thus, we can observe the code-switching phenomenon, when speakers use Romanian expressions in a given sentence or utterance (see example (a.) below). In some cases these expressions are borrowed and adapted, thus it may happen that, because of the high frequency of using these expressions, (see example (b.) below) speakers are not aware of the mother tongue equivalent of the given word. Below there is an example from one of the respondents: (a.) "Jött egy *foaie de parcurs*…"/ [A travelling warrant has arrived]; (b.) "*Brosurakat* küldtek…*Somer* osztály"/ [We were sent some brochures…the unemployment department].

In the case of the administrative personnel (principal, accountant, secretary) the communicative situations presented in the examples above are more frequent. The principal's and secretaries' communication within the institution (with pupils and parents) is in Hungarian, but the official administrative work is carried out in Romanian or sometimes

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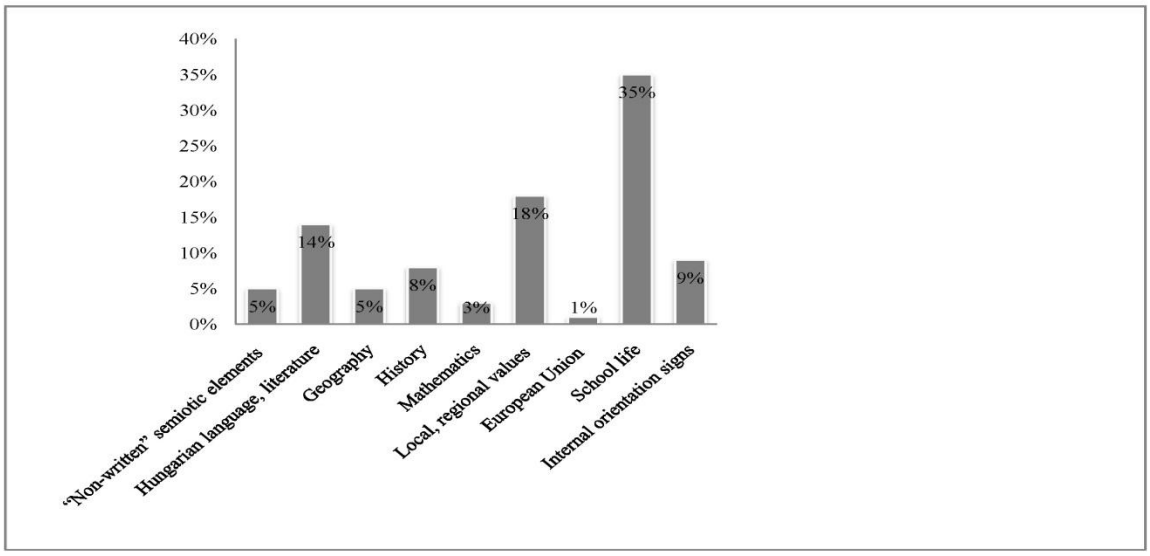
bilingually. Based on the observations it can be stated that a greater exposure to administrative situations yields a more frequent use of borrowings or even code-switching.

b. Topics, questions, messages

Components (signs) that could be seen and read within the investigated educational setting were classified into different groups, according to their topic, their particularities and their dominant elements.

Classifying and grouping these signs required a hard work as there were many cases when a given item (picture, poster, tableau etc.) could be classified into more than one group. For example, materials presenting local geographical characteristics could be categorized into geographical, environmental protection or even local specific topics. Thus, focusing on the thematic content of the texts, these were categorized into topics to which they were related the most. The results can be seen in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: *The message of the walls (n=214, data collection: January-April 2013)*



The so-called *landscape-elements* contain all the "non-written" semiotic elements that are present in the school life and they are valuable expressions of the educational institution and its intellectuality. We classified into this topic the flags, coat of arms, crosses which can be found in almost every classroom complemented by students' non-textual works (drawings, carvings etc.). It is worth mentioning here that items such as carvings and embroidered table covers, carrying local symbols, are also part of schools' linguistic landscape and they carry even higher values when quotations and school messages are worked into these items. Folk motifs, folk costumes, traditional handicrafts, presenting local values, reflect a *local, regional value consciousness* and a *volitional undertaking of these values*. All visual linguistic signs that related to teaching, learning, evaluating and school behaviour were tagged under the *school life* topic (e.g. the psychologist's timetable, teachers' funny timetables, school-leavers' tableau, birthday calendars etc.). *Internal orientation signs* refer to signs showing the location of classrooms and of important places within the institution.

The visited educational institutions' linguistic landscapes outline an interesting picture of the schools' hidden educational/pedagogical attitudes, some of which will be presented below. Messages found within the school settings mainly convey local values, such as local customs, folk costumes, carvings, needlework, and present local specific motifs. Among the local values, an important role is assigned to the personality, teachings and the cult of Bishop Márton Áron after whom the school is named.

Permanent items consist mainly of literary and historical figures' portraits, metalinguistic rules, general knowledge presentations, collages and maps. Students' words

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(voices) are represented by their works – a great number of diplomas, attendance certificates and plaques decorate the school's walls, and students' drawings and poems are also present.

It is worth noting that in the educational settings investigated, information regarding humanities were more abundant than those representing science. I believe this is the result of the different aspects the above mentioned disciplines carry as each type of text requires distinct reading strategies and approaches. Nevertheless, the type of school and educational levels can also play a crucial role in this matter. 20% of wall decorations consist of students' works and presentations which are the results of individual and group works carried out within the school. In case of didactic resources, it needs to be mentioned that although there are several educational materials given by the central educational institutions (e.g. maps, writers' portraits etc.), still there is a large number of individual materials created by teachers (tables, syntheses etc.). These latter resources are created to help a better understanding of the lessons (e.g. the teacher compiled a small dictionary for teaching Geography, where he included the Hungarian and Romanian equivalents of the important terminology) and some contain rules and information serving long-term memorization.

It is interesting to note that a great number of these materials reflect the norms of mother tongue and Romanian language use upon which it can be concluded that linguistic performance is due to a rule-centred approach in education. It can be stated that pedagogical materials referring to language knowledge are dominated by *metalinguistic* discourse. Nevertheless, during fieldwork visits, interesting examples were encountered regarding students' language use during project works where the end results of the project work were also exhibited.

From a content analysis approach of the linguistic landscape, it can be asserted that attention paid to certain topics is reflected also in the size, colours and position of the signs, not to mention the rigorous/precise and high quality presentation of these items. In the latter case, I think of linguistic accuracy, for example the use of accented letters and the aesthetic design of these materials.

c. Teachers' voice and students' voice

Students' voice can be "heard" primarily through their results and their works; a large number of diplomas, certificates of attendance, plaques are decorating the school's walls, while their drawings, poems, birthday calendars and photos taken during trips also contribute to the wall decorations.

Landscape items visible in classrooms and corridors mainly reflect the teachers' voice, the students' contribution to them being of only 30%. In case of the exhibited items, it has to be noted that the majority of them reflect results and achievements, namely performance, and there is only a small number of works and materials focusing on the learning process.

d. Education and learning

In analysing the schools' attitudes and beliefs concerning teaching and education in general, I would like to take into account the fact that the aspects of an individual's linguistic behaviour are determined by linguistic socialization offered by his/her immediate environment.

Based on this premise, it was considered important to collect the most frequent quotations from the schools under investigation. In the schools visited, the central, main message was articulated through quoting the words of the Catholic bishop Márton Áron, who was born in the locality and after whom the school was named. In all institutions the first central element referred to the bishop's life, work and his thoughts. In the central school, besides the already mentioned information, portraits and statues, the following quotes also appear: (a.) „Non recurso laborem" (Márton Áron), (b.)"Az idők mérlegén annyit nyomunk, amennyi értéket önmagunkban, magatartásunkban, feladatunk teljesítésében felmutatunk" (Márton Áron).[On the balance sheet of life we weigh as much as many values we can

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demonstrate in ourselves, our behaviour and in our completion of tasks] The following quotation is carved into the central school's wooden gate: (c.) "A tudás gyökerei keserűek, de a gyümölcsei édesek" [The roots of knowledge are bitter, but its fruit is sweet](quote from Socrates carved into the school's wooden gate).

The message of the selected quotes lead us to conclude that the school offers and presents the learning process not as an easy activity, but as a consistent work, sometimes full of struggle, which results in moral and intellectual benefits. School makes us wise, teaches us the good and teaches us to respect ourselves and others. Some further quotes: (d.) „…erősek oldalán harcolni nem virtus„ [Fighting on the strong side is not a virtue](Benedek Elek)/ (e.) „Az iskola azért van, hogy segítsen" [School is there to help], (f.) „Ha tanulsz okosodsz" [If you learn, you become wiser], (g.) „Az iskola nevel, oktat és téged jóra tanít. [School educates and teaches you the good]", (h.) "Óh, ne mondjátok, hogy a Könyv ma nem kell,/ hogy a Könyvnél több az Élet és az Ember;/ mert a Könyv is Élet, és él, mint az ember –/így él: emberben könyv, s a Könyvben az Ember. [Oh, don't say that there is no need for Books,/that Life and Man are more than Books;/because Books are Life, and they live, like men do –/they live like this: book in man, and Man in the Book]" (Babits Mihály: Ritmus a könyvről[Rythm about the book], fragment), (g). „Minden ember lelkében dal van, / és a saját lelkét hallja minden dalban/ És akinek szép a lelkében az ének/az hallja a mások énekét is szépnek. [There is a song in every man's soul,/and man finds his soul in every song/and whose soul has a beautiful song/finds other's song beautiful too]" (Babits Mihály).

6. Conclusion

The linguistic landscape of educational settings seems to be natural and taken for granted; however, the aspects, aesthetics and messages of this space are reflections and defining elements of personal development.

The present paper analysed the linguistic landscape of some educational settings focusing on its topics, contents, educational messages and the way they reflect behaviours of language use. These perspectives might become important structuring and organizing criteria in the future in consciously designing the space of schools. Moreover, they reflect upon the relationship between the school population and the messages of the institutional context – between the theoretical principles of pedagogy and the actual pedagogical practices.

Besides home education, schooling and the educational environment play an essential part in forming students' language behaviour and language attitudes. This is why behaviours and language practices experienced within the school context, the different aspects of student and teacher relationship have a great impact on the individual's socialization process, changing it or even re-building certain values and attitudes. That is why the linguistic landscape of schools, i.e. schoolscapes, should be built up and interpreted as a meta-cultural, "iceberg" discourse.

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