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Speak Global, Sell Local? Digital Linguistic Landscape of Local Small Businesses in the Social Media

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the online presence of languages and linguistic patterns of local small businesses in a bilingual, Hungarian-Romanian ethnic community in Romania. By capturing linguistic diversity and creativity via netnographic research, patterns of linguistic landscape elements in the social media, such as marketing strategy of local small businesses, can be analysed. The findings suggest that despite the need to advertise by using the state language, Romanian, in order to maximize the target audience, the concentration of Hungarian landscape elements is the highest. Businesses construct their linguistic identity by their language choices and practices, aligned with the collective linguistic identity of a bilingual community and the need for a global representation, in order to secure a place in the local market.

Keywords: digital linguistic landscape, social media, small business, ethnic minority

Introduction

It is 2021; the second decade of the new millennium has just passed. We are sitting in front of our laptops in home office, working online, and checking on friends and the news in the online space. However, the immersion into the online world is not solely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the last two decades, the digital space has dramatically mutated. In 2021, more than 60% of the world's population is online,[1] and statistics[2] indicate a growing linguistic diversity. The

1 https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm: world Internet usage and population statistics, 2021 year-Q1 estimates.

2 https://www.statista.com/statistics/262946/share-of-the-most-common-languages-on-the-internet/.

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digital/virtual space has become the next dimension of communication where linguistic and non-linguistic elements intertwine.

This paper focuses on the online presence of languages and linguistic signs of local small businesses in a bilingual, Hungarian-Romanian ethnic community, Sepsiszentgyörgy (Romanian: Sfântu Gheorghe) in Romania. By capturing linguistic diversity and creativity via online ethnographic research, patterns of linguistic landscape elements, such as marketing strategy of local small businesses, can be analysed in "a translocal, online public sphere with which the local signs are profoundly connected" (Blommaert–Maly 2019: 4). How do businesses shape and redesign the digital linguistic landscape in order to exploit their positioning in the economy? Do they present the potential of creativity inherent in bi- and multilingualism? It can be concluded that the interpretation of the digital landscape has to consider the placement of such local signs in a social and cultural context, with a complex interaction of language(s), society, identity, economy, and power (Shohamy–Gorter 2009, Gorter et al. 2012, Csernicskó–Laihonen 2016). Findings suggest that despite the need for advertising in Romanian in order to reach a large target market, the concentration of Hungarian landscape elements is the highest. Businesses construct their linguistic identity via their language use, aligned with the collective linguistic identity of a bilingual community in order to secure a place in the local market.

The article is structured as follows: after defining digital linguistic landscape (LL) and its connection to the market, the corpus of the research – local small businesses with a bilingual ethnic social background in the online social media – is presented. This is followed by the description of the methodology and data. Then, the findings are presented, and, finally, the suggestions for further research – to extend the boundaries of digital LL studies to the economic field – are discussed.

Changes in the linguistic landscape. Moving online

Gorter (2018) approaches the topic of LL studies from an interesting point of view, proposing the question about LL: "Does it refer to language only or to additional things which are present around us: images, sounds, buildings, clothes or even people?" (Gorter 2018: 41). The author answers with a definite yes. Although the concept of linguistic landscape has been broadened since the well-known milestone research by Landry and Bourhis (1997), there are still many undiscovered fields regarding the complex relationship between language, place, and people. Linguistic landscape "provides a prism of languages embedded in societies and situated in humanistic, social and political ecology of those who share, form, influence and are influenced by it" (Shohamy–Waksman 2009: 314). The term "linguistic" is now no longer limited to verbal

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communication, but landscape studies embrace the complexity of signs, and they include, as interest of investigation, a wide range of phenomena – giving birth to touchscape, smellscape, soundscape, schoolscape (Brown 2012, Scarvaglieri et al. 2013, Biró 2016, Laihonen–Tódor 2017, Laihonen–Szabó 2017, Krompák 2018). Moreover, the need of analysing the linguistic landscape phenomenon in the cyberspace (Ivković–Lotherington 2009, Troyer 2012), that is, the LL of the virtual or digital space (Kelly-Holmes 2019, Biró 2019, 2020), has become increasingly relevant. The offline linguistic landscape we are surrounded by is more and more complemented, or even substituted, by the digital landscape. Online interactions have multiplied, and they take place in a fluid space, such as Facebook's news feed. The web has become "a sociolinguistic machine – fuelled by online language practices and choices and by widespread and commonsense ideologies and beliefs about language" (Kelly-Holmes 2019: 25). Communication online has come a long way, and according to Kelly-Holmes we have already experienced four eras of digital communication. The birth of the Internet was characterized by monolingualism, with a clear dominance of English and with the beginnings of e-commerce. In the second phase, with the stabilization of the non-ASCII-supported alphabets, the presence of multilingualism has become visible, and the mainstreaming of e-commerce was secured. Kelly-Homes describes the next phase as hyperlingualism, with the start of the Web 2.0, which is characterized by greater visibility of "small" languages, and at the same time this period is marked by long tail markets,[3] crowdsourcing,[4] and gift economy.[5] The current and fourth stage is labelled as idiolingualism by the author, characterized by algorithmic mass individualization, artificial intelligence, and the market of one.[6] She also introduces the idea of linguistic filter bubble, "tailoring and personalizing of online language provision", which means that an intensified but isolated hyperlingualism and the gradual erasure of multilingualism is taking place, where users live in linguistic isolation (Kelly-Holmes 2019: 26) and focus on variety in marketing, and thus "companies are diversifying their products to respond to almost every conceivable customer taste" (Gilmore–Pine 2000). Linguistic customization has become possible, and the exposure of multilingualism is minimized. We, as users, have the illusion of an increased choice of languages, but it turns out that this choice is reduced, and

3 Long tail market refers to the strategy of targeting a large number of niche markets. Businesses that are dominated by a huge market leader can shift their focus to multiple niche markets that have less demand. They can realize significant profits by selling low volumes of hard-to-find items to many customers, instead of only selling large volumes of a reduced number of popular items.

4 Crowdsourcing refers to a way of obtaining work, information, or opinions from a large group of people who submit their data via the Internet.

5 Gift economy refers to economic activity where services and goods are offered to other members of the community without the expectation of financial reward.

6 Market of one refers to the response of the market to actual demand.

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at the very moment we experience the state of individualized multilingualism or hyperlingualism, as presented by Kelly-Holmes. Our language preferences or geographical locations are already known, we do not have to deal with some selected languages provided by the Internet: "we are being steered through the global, multilingual web in a monolingual bubble; we see only the language it is assumed we want to see based on past linguistic behaviour and choices, and we are cocooned from other languages" (Kelly-Holmes 2019: 34). Linguistic isolation is perfectly manageable in the digital space; we can reach out for any information given in an unknown language and be satisfied with the offered information.

Kelly-Holmes assumes "English is not part of multilingualism; instead, its association is that of neutrality" (Kelly-Holmes 2013: 138). In the digital space of multiple languages, English has a neutral role, "not indexical of any particular country" (Kelly-Holmes 2013: 138). That means that in the social media the use of English may take the role of a mediator language, not necessarily the role of a lingua franca, but functioning as a language which cannot be identified with any language ideology, thus becoming the language of neutrality. This is even more relevant in bilingual communities, where the use of language, offline or in the digital space, is always laden by linguistic ideologies. English is usually regarded as the symbol of globality, being the language of technology and modernity.

From another perspective, according to Jaworski (2015), there is a new register born, the "globalese", which is "not being immediately recognizable as English or any other 'ethnic' languages (…) may be more adequately considered to be instances of a multimodal, spectacularized and commodified register indexing the global, adaptable to any linguistic repertoire" (Jaworski 2015: 226). Moreover, the "commodification of language (…) has created an opportunity for 'small', minority languages and language varieties to gain symbolic and economic value, visibility, and vitality" (Jaworski 2015: 231). Small languages can be considered the local choice, they become symbols of locality. The relationship between economy and linguistic landscape has already been at the centre of interest, and Laihonen highlights the importance of "how the local, state and global are indexed in the commercial linguistic landscape" (Laihonen 2015: 281).

Nevertheless, Laihonen argues that the original Landry and Bourhis (1997) LL research approaches can be criticized for oversimplification (Laihonen 2015: 178); they cover a lot more than simply categorizing and explaining language choices in signs. Regarding commercial signs, the "statistical account fails to examine the signs as images and it implicates a false picture of easily definable languages, whereas in practice it is particularly difficult to classify business names according to a language" (Laihonen 2015: 280). In bilingual or multilingual settings, LL data may clarify the complex interaction of language, society, identity, and power.

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Sociolinguistic context. Small businesses online

In Romania, the only official state language is Romanian, while Hungarians represent the largest ethnic minority living in the country. Sepsiszentgyörgy is the capital city of Covasna County, located in the central part of the country. In the census of 2011, 74% of the city's inhabitants declared themselves to be ethnic Hungarians, 21% Romanians, 0.7% Roma, and 2,562 of other ethnicities,[7] and 74% had Hungarian and 21% Romanian as their first language. The linguistic landscape of the region is mostly bilingual. Furthermore, due to the fact that English signs are more and more present, globalization and the new register, the "globalese" (Jaworski 2015), heavily affects the linguistic landscape of the businesses and the market.

In the digital space, businesses have the opportunity to reach out, interact, and communicate with customers. The growing relevance of Facebook as a platform for online marketing has already been highlighted; social media use is described as a hybrid element of the promotion mix (Mangold–Faulds 2009), a new marketing tool for companies to enhance their brand awareness (Ramsaran-Fowdar–Fowdar 2013). Facebook allows small businesses to be discovered in local circles. The Facebook profile of the business is seen by the customers as the human side of the business which helps engagement with that particular brand. It is an inexpensive marketing possibility, and as such it has huge potentials for small businesses lacking financial resources. As a structured social network, Facebook provides the same features for all companies, no matter their size or financial resources. Businesses have a streamlined way of posting content on their Facebook pages and share a common design. However, they have a unique content, filled with their profile pictures, photos, videos, posts, and links; and the language(s) they use can also represent their business values. Online interactions between customers and businesses make the former feel empowered, and the number of Facebook *likes* can indicate popularity and encourage customer engagement, which means that *liking* is comparable to word of mouth, one of the most important marketing strategies (Swani et al. 2013).

In the case of global, multinational companies, providing multilingual options is a must, although it is an impossible task to satisfy all possible linguistic demands. As Wee points out, "it is simply not possible for any institution to be completely neutral in the sense of not favouring any particular language, and by extension, the speakers of that language" (Wee 2010: 421). National companies or small businesses, however, face a simpler dilemma. They may opt for the state language of the particular country to be heard and understood by all customers of that country. However, in regions with ethnic minorities, this blanket decision might not work as a favourable marketing strategy. On the one hand, customers

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sf%C3%A2ntu_Gheorghe.

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can rely on the fact that in this age of hyperlingualism (Kelly-Holmes 2019) they traverse the multilingual Web in a monolingual bubble, and AI will secure the translated information needed by them. On the other hand, online platforms allow the interaction between customer and businesses, and thus require more personalized language choice and use. According to a survey carried out in 2014, more than 75% of global consumers in 10 non-Anglophone countries in Europe, Asia, and South America prefer to buy products in their native language. In addition, 60% rarely or never buy from English-only websites.[8] There is a substantial preference for the customer's mother tongue, and more local-language content leads to a greater likelihood of purchase, which also means that language and language choice have become one of the most significant marketing tools.

In the public offline space, linguistic landscape is usually controlled by the top-down and bottom-up rules of the society, which are based on different ideologies, language policies, and identities. The online social media is profoundly public, still less controlled by top-down rules of the society or the language policies of a particular state. Thus, the online linguistic landscape of small businesses can inform about the current, real-time bottom-up rules of a particular community as we "move from the street to the computer, and we follow the online information displayed in the signs" (Blommaert–Maly 2019: 4). Facebook is a public space, and as such it is a normative space and a field of power. It is relevant to find out whether Hungarian, Romanian, or rather a global language, e.g. English, is used by small businesses, and in what ways and to what end. Therefore, the linguistic landscape of local, small companies can indicate what languages are locally relevant.

Research framework of online linguistic landscape

Classic LL research was dominated by quantitative approach, where visible languages were counted, and it turned out to be a useful tool to detect the major patterns of LL development. Studying the presence of languages, connected with the particular communities and the relationships between them, requires different approaches; thus, qualitative and ethnographic research has risen. Moreover, the space itself has opened up to new horizons. As Blommaert and Maly point out, "when we follow the leads from locally emplaced signs towards the online sphere they point towards, we begin to see vastly more" (Blommaert–Maly 2019: 4). They argue that the agents and elements of online linguistic landscapes turn out to be "far broader and more diverse than what an exclusively offline LL analysis would show" (Blommaert–Maly 2019: 8). Research frameworks of "linguistic netnography" (Kozinets 2006), also known as "Internet/online ethnography" (Androutsopoulos

8 https://csa-research.com/More/Media/Press-Releases/ArticleID/31/Survey-of-3-000-Online-Shoppers-Across-10-Countries-Finds-that-60-Rarely-or-Never-Buy-from-English-only-Websites.

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2006), have become useful tools in LL studies. Blommaert and Maly suggests a detailed approach, named ELLA 2.0, in order to analyse the online ethnography of linguistic landscapes. They focus on superdiversity, which is opposed to "the sedentary diaspora demographics", and "multi-ethnic neighbourhoods become the locale within which social actions by their populations must be confined, or privileged analytically" (Blommaert–Maly 2019: 8). The digital ethnographic research of linguistic landscape analysis (ELLA 2.0) is a qualitative research method that adapts ethnographic research techniques in examining the culture of online communities, emerging through computer-mediated communications, which includes the systematic observation of online activities, the collection and linguistic analysis of screen data, and additional data elicited through contact with users. Methods may include semiotic, visual, or content analysis, participant and non-participant observations, as well as interviews. It also involves screenshot taking, which turns out to be a unique opportunity to study the ongoing change in online media. Comments, new posts, videos, photos may be added, which can also deliver certain new messages or trigger new interpretations. ELLA 2.0 is based on three major elements. First of all, it concerns small details in concrete empirical cases of momentary events in the material world. Second, it approaches these cases "as an interplay between systemic and non-systemic, local and translocal, online and offline features", and thirdly it moves the research focus to "social action in a networked and post-digital society", where the linguistic landscape is "an effect of social life, of collaboration, response or conflict with others offline and online" (Blommaert–Maly 2019: 4).

The present study is based on the Facebook content of 10 local small businesses in Sepsiszentgyörgy. All data included in the analysis were collected during a five-month period, between December 2020 and April 2021, which was considered a suitable length of time to capture details of the linguistic landscape of these businesses. The timing was also relevant due to the fact that it covered two major holiday events, namely Christmas and Easter. These holiday periods request an even more intense interaction with the customers, therefore an increased possibility for linguistic data. The research methodology followed the steps offered by the digital ethnographic research of linguistic landscape analysis (ELLA 2.0), meaning the collection and linguistic analysis of screen data, including content analysis and non-participant observations. It focused on small details in concrete empirical cases, which offered the interpretations for the relationships between local, state, and global references, and it helped to focus on the sociocultural and economic actions of the community. Throughout the analysis, the individual posts of small businesses' Facebook pages were categorized, as well as signs, symbols, or other linguistic landscape elements, based on the language choice or sociocultural references. Five categories of the analysis were defined. Each category represents a distinct aspect of the phenomenon being studied. Finally, the various categories

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were interconnected in order to uncover any fundamental underlying trends and patterns for the interpretation. The ethical procedure of GDPR standards was not relevant since these Facebook pages are available to the public.

Small businesses and their LL

The selection of local small businesses was well-defined: all 10 small businesses are locally established, operating in the city, and fairly well-known by the inhabitants due to the demographic features of a small city as well as to the newspaper articles which promote these small businesses in print and online media from time to time. These businesses are all in the food sector. Five of them are cake shops: *Erika Csoki*, *Flour Power*, *M&M Cake Express*, *Marie's*, and *Orka*. The other five are fast-food small businesses: *Csíra*, *Döner House*, *Eleven Street Food*, *Gado*, and *Salento Pizza*. They are popular small businesses, and due to their services they cover a large segment of the local target market. The units of analysis included the following: name and logo of the small businesses; the content, photos, and symbols posted on their Facebook pages.

The names of the small businesses

Choosing a name for a company can be challenging in any circumstances. A name cannot be too general or too long, too difficult to understand, hard to spell or pronounce. In the local market, the choice of the language carries further connotations. Out of the ten businesses, only two use Hungarian brand names: *Erika Csoki* [Erika Choco] and *Csíra* [Sprout]. However, the name *Erika Csoki* is a mix of an international female name – being also the name of the owner – and the shortened version of the Hungarian word for chocolate, which, again, has international, global reference. At the same time, it is easy to understand, remember, and pronounce by the locals. According to Laihonen (2015), "even though proper names can be classified according to language, in different contexts they may be assigned to different languages" (Laihonen 2015: 286) because the language choice in name signs connects to the sign producers aligning with the top-bottom rules of the society, but it also reveals the identity these businesses wish to construct. The use of Hungarian in name signs is legal and not avoided in the region; however, English or globalese business names are probably easier to be officially registered than Hungarian ones. Another business name example, *Csíra*, is a Hungarian term for sprout, indicates the vegan style of the fast-food business, and due to its shortness it can be easily remembered by non-Hungarian customers as well. Some businesses have chosen English or global names, i.e.

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Gado (with a probable reference to Indonesian cuisine) or *Döner House*, which is a mix of the well-known Turkish food name and an English word, thus indexing the global, using globalese. Business owners created fictional names such as *Orka* (using the names of the owners as an anagram). These can be regarded as globalese because, according to Jaworski, they are not immediately recognized as English (Jaworski 2015: 232). Interestingly, the cake shop's name, *Flour Power*, uses a homophone as wordplay, referring to the basic ingredient of the cakes and to the famous flower power movement at the same time – they offer gluten-free products, well-known by people on specific diets. In this local market, where the majority of the customers would never understand this subtle message, English delivers global references, connects the local market with the global one. The global reference in a bilingual community carries a neutral role, as it is not indexical of any particular country or nationality. An interesting comparison, however, is with Laihonen's (2015) findings regarding the LL of Dunaszerdahely. He sums up that "symbolic elements, e.g. business names, are typically global, more functional elements are most often in Slovak" (Laihonen 2015: 290), which is also common in the case of these business names in Sepsiszentgyörgy – they are indexing the global. The use of Hungarian can be interpreted as indexing the local, while the use of Romanian indexes the state. Globalese or English are accepted by the local inhabitants, as their association is that of neutrality.

The logo of the small businesses

A logo is strongly connected to company identity. Logos help customers recognize the brand; therefore, logos can make or break the business. They usually tell a story about the business and communicate its unique value proposition. The choice of language can emphasize the identity created by the company. None of the logos designed by the small businesses are Hungarian-only. The choice of English or globalese can be explained by the wish to stay neutral and to be connected to global values.



Figure 1. *Examples of neutrality*

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As the logos in *Figure 1* suggest, these local small businesses have opted for the use of English and globalese. Some companies, for example, *Flour Power* have chosen an English-only name and logo for their businesses, while *Gado* is rather a reference to an Indonesian salad. This reference brings the global cuisine and gourmet closer to the local inhabitant. The third logo appears to be global as well, where the name – *Marie* – could be borrowed from English or French, or even Romanian, while the inscription – *Factory of dreamcakes* – definitely helps to construct a non-specific linguistic repertoire. This is an ongoing trend among small businesses, and a further interpretation could be that it not only connects but also enhances the local values with global ones, presents the products and services in a fashionable manner, attractive for the younger generation, and, finally, avoids getting classified as a company which serves only the members of an ethnic minority. They also display hashtags occasionally, in form of bilingual texts: e.g. #*tastesofourcity* appearing in some of the logos.



Figure 2. *Bilingual hashtags accompany the logos*

These hashtags would refer to the local values of the products and services and, nonetheless, target both linguistic communities, Romanian and Hungarian, living in the city. Besides the textual elements, the visual, non-textual signs are designed to carry neutral references. The fonts used in the logos, the stamp-like element of the *Eleven* fast-food business, or the symbols of the cake and baking utensils of the *Flour Power* cake shop leave no room for "nationalized" connotations. There is no "locality" implied, local is not indexed. The logos blend into a pool of global expectations, which might come from the customers, the local inhabitants as well, not just from a broader target market strategy of the businesses.

The content of posts on the Facebook pages of the small businesses

The choice of language in the posts clearly indicates the relevance of the language(s) used by the majority of the customers. All the posts were analysed, based on the

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language they used and on the frequency of the posts. Interestingly, there is a clear difference between the cake shops and the fast-food businesses regarding the use of monolingual or bilingual posts. Cake shops are 90% monolingual, except the *Erika Csoki*, while fast-food businesses are 97% bilingual. The number of posts differs from business to business; the table below presents the added number of posts during the five-month period of survey and the frequency of bilingual or monolingual posts. The cake shop businesses are customer service businesses, meaning that cake shops usually take the orders directly from their local customers. On the other hand, the fast-food businesses serve a larger customer group, whose members often come from other regions. Furthermore, two details are worth mentioning. Fast-food businesses include English words or share photos with English inscriptions in 25–30% of their posts. For example, *Eleven* fills almost 50% of its posts with English texts. Cake shops, however, do not post in English, but their products may be decorated with English texts: i.e. *How did I get so lucky to have you in my life?* or *Happy Valentine's day!* etc. The next detail refers to a single linguistic data, still worth mentioning. The time gap between Western Christianity's and the Orthodox Easter holiday made possible for the businesses to address both holidays and to prepare special treats for the Hungarian and the Romanian customers separately. The *Flour Power* cake shop prepared a Romanian dessert speciality, called *mucenici*, which cannot be translated. The text appeared in Hungarian, using code-switching with a special reference to the Orthodox Easter holiday: *Az idei böjti időszakban sem marad ki kínálatunkból a „mucenici", a tej- és tojásmentes román hagyományos sütemény* [During this Lent season, we will also be serving "mucenici", the traditional dairy- and egg-free Romanian pastry.].

Table 1. *Number of posts and frequency of languages in the posts*

Company/ Posts	Orka	M&M	Marie's	Flour Power	Erika Csoki	Salento	Gado	Döner House	Eleven	Csíra
Hungarian-only	110	66	43	32	11	-	4	-	-	-
Bilingual posts	-	7	4	-	41	76	45	98	72	121
Romanian-only	2	3	2	4	-	6	-	-	-	-
Total number of posts	112	76	51	36	52	82	49	98	72	121

The texts can be considered as functional texts, and the more functional or informative they are, the more likely they are to be bilingual. These posts, however, cannot be considered official signs; therefore, it is not likely that they display the official state language, Romanian, exclusively (see Laihonen–Csernicskó 2019).

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Among these bilingual posts, there are contests and job advertisements shared. The posted contests have a clear marketing purpose, to promote the brand, the products. They need to target as many customers as possible, regardless of the language or nationality. The language choice of job advertisements may vary. Job advertisements posted in Hungarian-only can be explained as targeting Hungarian speakers as potential future employees, while bilingual ones have no prerequisites regarding the nationality of them. As part of the marketing strategies, Easter and Christmas wishes may appear bi- or multilingual. The choice of English may be interpreted as a strategy to create a neutral and global register.



Figure 3. *Bilingual posts of job advertisements and Christmas wishes*

The placement of the languages delivers further connotations. The job advertisement in *Figure 3* presents Romanian first and then Hungarian, which indicates the local relevance of these languages, implying the offline language policies the business aligns with. However, other businesses place Hungarian texts first and then the Romanian one. The order of languages displayed suggests that the business or the owner addresses mainly Hungarian customers. The digital space allows such freedom; these bottom-up signs are communicated by the economic actors, not by the state.

The photos shared on the Facebook pages of the small businesses

The possibility to deliver visual inputs to the customer is significant for these businesses. Visual content enhances the effectiveness of digital marketing by attracting a clearly defined target audience. Businesses share photos, which may

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be accompanied by captions and inscriptions. These can be monolingual, bi- or multilingual, and the choice of the language(s) seems to be triggered by certain events, such as Christmas holiday or an advertising contest, which tries to reach out to as many customers as possible.



Figure 4. *Multilingual inscriptions*

The global event, Women's Day, enriches the local event with global references; hence the English text in the photo, accompanied by bilingual event descriptions. Individualized multilingualism characterizes the inscriptions used on cakes or pralines with messages. As seen in *Figure 4*, Valentine's Day triggered different inscriptions in this cake shop, *Erika Csoki*. These chocolate pralines become personalized due to their decorative patterns and to the messages written on them. The photo bringing together all the languages displays multilingualism, while customer satisfaction will be achieved with the help of individualized messages in different languages. An explanation for this individualized multilingualism can be sought in the marketing strategy of small businesses, where they deliver personalized products and services as part of the market of one.

Symbols appearing on the Facebook pages of the small businesses

Symbols mostly appear in photos or product promotions shared on Facebook pages. Moreover, symbols can also be included in the logos themselves, and the emojis, accompanying the shared posts, are symbolic representations as well. The signs with a text in English, especially the logos, are multimodal, including universal symbols or icons indicating the type of businesses, e.g. baking utensils for *Marie's* cake shop, an icon symbolizing the sprout for the *Csíra* vegan fast-

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food business, or the cocoa bean icon inserted in the logo of the *Erika Csoki* cake business. These can be interpreted as neutral symbols. The targeted audience is a mixed audience, and again they mostly call for the "globalese", where the local is not indexed, and these "English-only signs can be seen to add to the image as modern or global" (Laihonen–Csernicskó 2019: 157).



Figure 5. *The use of Hungarian national colours*

Among the photos shared by the *M&M Cake Express* cake shop before the Christmas season, there is one (*Figure 5*) with little Santas in it, dressed up in colourful clothes featuring the Hungarian national colours, which can be interpreted as the indication of the linguistic and ethnic identity of that particular small business.

Conclusions

What results from this brief analysis of local small businesses online is that there is in fact an opportunity for small businesses to continuously reconstruct their digital LL in order to position themselves on the local market. As 74% of this local community is Hungarian, these businesses construct their target market based on the local ethnic community. The larger target group, however, includes Romanian customers as well; therefore, bilingual digital linguistic landscape signs index the state or the global. The Internet has secured the greater visibility of the small languages, and algorithm-based translations offer further possibilities to be seen by a larger audience. Linguistic isolation is manageable in the digital space, but in a bilingual community the inner rules of the market affect language choice. The analysis based on the categories of signs suggests how these local

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small businesses construct the digital LL and tells us about the bottom-up rules they adhere to, which are mostly justified by the market and its inner practices, and not by the state language policies. The presence of English does not foster multilingualism but rather it refers to a safe territory, to neutrality, accepted by the members of the local community regardless of nationality. English is the neutral way for businesses to position themselves, not the global talk, and it can also target the younger generation. However, the creativity inherent in bi- and multilingualism seems to be the strategic effort of local businesses to reach out for potential customers. The study presented in this paper demands further research. It could directly examine the language choice in comments as well, to study the business–customer interaction online.

Languages and economy in the digital space seem to create their own playground, set their own rules, which are about the market of one, satisfying individual needs and delivering personalized products, rather than about the rules and regulations issued by actors on the top of the power relations in the offline space.

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