Multiethnic but multilingual as well? – The Linguistic Landscapes of Vilnius

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This paper focuses on the linguistic landscapes of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. The aim of this analysis is to define which languages are visible in public sphere in four of the city's' districts and constitute its linguistic landscape. Backed up by a corpus of 878 digital pictures of shop signs, placards, posters, graffiti and other displays of written language, the study determines the number of languages used on signs and the functions they fulfill in the given context. These findings are then compared with the number of speakers of different languages within the same area to find out if the linguistic landscape of Vilnius resembles the city's ethnolinguistic diversity. Furthermore, special attention is paid to the phenomenon of the spread of English.

Keywords: linguistic landscapes, multilingualism, Vilnius, Lithuania

1 Introduction: The Study of Linguistic Landscapes

The study of Linguistic Landscapes is a fairly new approach to analyse the phenomenon of multilingualism in urban contexts. Written signs visible in public sphere and accessible to everyone compromise the objects of research. When we refer to "Linguistic Landscapes" or "Cityscapes", it is foremost about the language of advertising billboards, commercial shop signs, placards, street names and any other displays of written language visible in public sphere (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25). Thus, a linguistic landscape refers to "any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location" (Ben-Rafael *et al.* 2006: 14).

Examining such displays of language accessible to everyone give us an insight into function, status and spread of a certain language. Within a confined

area, languages displayed on these signs give information about languages used, about possible differences between official practices in language policy and the linguistic reality as depicted on signs, about functions, different languages fulfil in different contexts and about the influence of ethnic and social factors on patterns of language use. Furthermore it enables the researcher to take the perspective of sociolinguistics further and study the phenomena of variation, language contact and code mixing from a different angle. In addition to that, cultural ideals and the status of different groups within a given society can be explored (Reh 2004: 38). Furthermore, overt and covert language attitudes, official language policies and power relations between different groups can be determined (Backhaus 2007: 11).

This study is subdivided into three main parts. At first the language situation in Vilnius and Lithuanian is assessed, focussing on aspects of language policy in past and present and on the actual number of speakers of different languages within the four city districts chosen as areas of research. We will then concentrate on the crucial questions of this analysis, namely (1) *Which languages are visible and where*, (2) *Do they represent the (ethno)linguistic reality as determined by the number of mother tongue speakers*, and (3) *What can be said about the spread of English*. Following, the areas of research are determined and methodological aspects are taken into account before we move on to the analysis itself.

The aim of this study is to determine power relations, attitudes and patterns of language use in a Post-Soviet setting. The analysis of the linguistic landscapes of Vilnius can serve as a good example here, as the city is home to speakers of many languages and – together with many other Eastern European cities – shares a multilingual and multiethnic past. As Ben-Rafael *et al.* (2006) demonstrated in their study of linguistic landscapes in Israeli towns, the analysis

of signs and other written displays of language in multilingual settings can tell a lot about the overall power structures in a given society. Considering Russian and – to a lesser extent – Polish in the case of Vilnius might yield interesting results and will tell if signs represent or to some extent even mirror attitudes towards different languages within a certain community.

2   The Language Situation: Vilnius and Lithuania

Vilnius is the main political, cultural and economic centre of Lithuania and the country's largest city with approximately 543.000 inhabitants living in 21 districts. As most of Lithuania is characterized by small towns and rural settlements, Vilnius is a notable exception both in terms of the social stratification, ethnicity and mother tongues of its inhabitants. Demographic data of the four urban districts used as areas of research in this study shown in *table 1* account for such a diversity both in terms of language use and ethnic background and show that Vilnius is a multilingual urban centre.

Vilnius as a whole is also the most diverse place in the country and draws on a large number of tourists, especially from other countries of the European Union, from Northern America and countries of the former Soviet Union including those transiting from the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad to Belarus and the Russian mainland. Since the opening of low-cost flights from the United Kingdom and Germany, tourism became an important economic factor leading to the emergence of new tourism infrastructure catering to the growing number of foreign visitors.

Table 1: Population by mother tongue in the four areas of research according to Lithuanian Statistics Department (• indicates confidential data)[1]

Mother tongue	*Seniūnijos (districts)*			
	Antakalnis	**Naujamiestis**	**Senamiestis**	**Snipiskes**
Lithuanian	27574	16691	12011	11211
Russian	5263	6587	4167	4131
Polish	4218	2223	2514	2488
Belarusian	330	261	274	194
Ukrainian	128	102	77	69
English	35	24	26	•
German	13	16	10	7
other/not indicated	2136	1988	1943	1221

But not only is the steady influx of visitors a factor to take into consideration when analysing the linguistic landscape of the city: A historical perspective reveals a remarkable linguistic diversity that has been common to many pre-war urban centres of Middle and Eastern Europe. Apart from the Lithuanian language, Russian, Polish, Yiddish and German are part of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the city. Lithuania's linguistic situation reflects that of its capital in most parts. Since the end of World War 2, the founding of the *Lithuanian Socialist Soviet Republic* and - albeit moderate - migration from other parts of the USSR mainly to urban centres, Russian emerged as the second language of the country. Following an intensified policy of Sovietisation in the

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[1] This demographic data was obtained directly from the *Department of Statistics to the Government of Lithuania* in Vilnius and provided by Mrs. Daiva Mikalopiene (daiva.mikalopiene@stat.gov.lt)

1970's, the status of the USSR's *lingua franca* even grew and manifested the status of Lithuania as a bilingual country till the end of the 1980's (Grenoble 2003: 106-107). But policies that led to large-scale migration of a Russian-speaking workforce from other parts of the Soviet Union as in Estonia and Latvia were not pursued and the number of native speakers of Russian never exceeded the 10 percent mark.

After independence in 1991, Lithuanian became the state's sole national language, resulting in a sharp decline of the status of Russian both as a language learned at school and as a medium of communication in public and private sphere. Although this loss of prestige can be attributed to political factors and shared memories of oppression and Russian hegemony during Soviet times, the actual number of inhabitants with Russian as their mother tongue remained relatively steady throughout the country after independence (Grenoble 2003: 110). Nevertheless, among younger generations of Lithuanians, Russian is perceived as a language of low prestige and the focus of Lithuanian foreign language education at school now lies on three languages: English, French and German. Among these, English is widely preferred (Grumadienė 2003: 219).

At present-day, out of Lithuania's 3.483.972 inhabitants, 2.907.293 are ethnic Lithuanians, 219.789 Russians, 42.866 Byelorussians and 22.488 Ukrainians.[2] As the region around Vilnius did belong to Poland during the interwar period and as strong political and cultural ties with the Polish nation existed over centuries, about 234.989 inhabitants claim to be of Polish descent. In addition to that, a small number of individuals from republics of the former USSR such as Georgia, Armenia and Latvia live in the country.

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[2] http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/pages/view/?id=1731

3   Research Questions

This paper analyses the relative use of different languages in four distinctive districts of Vilnius and in two western-style shopping malls, both located in close proximity to the city centre. By studying the linguistic landscapes of these areas, a clear picture about patterns of language use is expected to emerge, especially when concentrating on signs and other specimen of written language displayed by non-official *(bottom-up)* actors.

These are the research questions of this study:

(1)   Which languages are visible in the public sphere and thus constitute the linguistic landscape of Vilnius? Are there significant differences in patterns of language use between the four districts within the city?

(2)   Does a correlation between the number of speakers of a language and the linguistic landscape exist and is it possible to suggest that signs and other displays of language put up by private actors reflect the linguistic reality of a given district?

(3)   Which role is the present world language English playing in the linguistic landscape of Vilnius and which functions does it fulfil at present?

Considering the demographic data shown in table 1 it is assumed that Vilnius features a relatively diverse linguistic landscape that includes both Russian as a local and English as a global language of wider communication. Question (1) will be answered in *5.*and *5.1.*, question (2) in *5.2.*and point (3) will be analysed in *5.3.*

4   Methodology

The corpus contains 878 digital pictures in total. Each picture serves as a unit of analysis. As the density of signs differs significantly in each of the four districts

and the two shopping centres, the individual number of units of analysis varies between the areas of research. *Antakalnis* features 148 units of analysis, *Naujamiestis* 334, *Senamiestis* 271 and *Šnipiškės* 55 units. The two shopping centres include 44 units of analysis combined. In the following we will touch upon some methodological aspects that have to be considered before such a study. In the same time, these aspects emblematise the decisive questions in contemporary research on urban linguistic landscapes.

4.1 Location

Defining the area of research as precisely as possible is crucial in the study of linguistic landscapes (Williams & Van der Merwe 1996). In this study, four districts of the city of Vilnius in Lithuania with distinct geographical and socio-demographical features are chosen as sample areas: *Antakalnis*, *Naujamiestis*, *Senamiestis* and *Šnipiškės*.

Antakanlis (pop. 39697)[3] is located north-east of the city centre and is largely a residential area with a couple of supermarkets as well as small shopping-centres catering to local residents. It stretches along the Neris River towards the north-eastern city limits.

Naujamiestis (pop. 27892) on the other hand is the largest of the four districts in this study in terms of geographic size. It spreads from the train-station area north towards the main thoroughfare of the city, *Gedimino Prospektas*, an area also referred to as *Centras*. *Naujamiestis* (literally "New Town") is both a residential area and the city's main commercial centre. Public institution such as government ministries and the parliament are situated here as well as shopping centres, boutiques, hotels and nightclubs. Although generally

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[3] Population figures provided by Mrs. Daiva Mikalopiene (*Department of Statistics to the Government of Lithuania)*

perceived as wealthy, urban and cosmopolitan, the southern parts of *Naujamiestis* around the train-station area are less affluent, accounting for a very diverse socio-demographic picture within this district.

Senamiestis (pop. 21022) is the historic heart of the city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the same time it is still a residential district. Most infrastructures relevant for tourists are located here such as small hotels, hostels, restaurants, bars, souvenir-shops and upmarket boutiques. It is one of the most prestigious places to live in Vilnius but because of its lively pub and bar scene draws on a mixed crowd of young Lithuanians as well.

Šnipiškės (pop. 19321) is somewhat in the middle: it neighbours *Naujamiestis* and is separated by the *Neris River* from the main commercial centre around *Gedimono Prospektas*. *Šnipiškės* is mainly a residential area but due to its close proximity to the centre, large commercial areas are found in its southern parts close to the river. In addition to that, data obtained in two western-style shopping centres, "Europa" and "Gedimino9", is analysed separately.[4]

Obviously it is not possible to include *all* signs and displays of language depicted in these neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, as many signs as possible were documented in each of the four districts. Geographical factors were taken into account as well, meaning that peripheral areas of each district were also documented. Especially in the case of *Naujamiestis* this is very important, as concentrating on *Gedimino Prospektas*, the "core" area of this neighbourhood, would yield to different findings than an approach that covers this district as a whole, including less affluent and linguistically diverse areas.

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[4] *"Europa"* is located in *Snipiskes*, whereas *"Gedimono9"* is located in the very heart of the city in *Naujamiestis*. Data obtained in both places are not included in the datasets of the respective districts but constitute a separate entity in this study.

4.2 Signs

All displays of language visible to the public are included in this study. The most common signs included are above or in front of shops, restaurants, bars and offices; in addition to that, language depicted on kiosks and on market stalls is taken into account. Furthermore, placards, posters, graffiti and messages put up by individuals on walls and buildings count as single units of analysis as well. Advertisements depicted on moving objects like trains, buses, trucks and cars are not included, as it is hardly possible to assign a specific geographical area to them.

Shops, restaurants, kiosks and other comparable establishments are considered units of analysis in itself. As shops usually show the name on the front but additional displays of written language on windows or at the door, this approach is not uncontroversial, but a shop functions as a single entity, giving an overall impression of patterns of language use especially in multilingual settings (Cenoz & Gorter 2006: 71). This means that one has to observe a front of a shop very carefully to include all specimen of language, even those that signal opening hours.

4.3 Languages

Decoding the units of analysis according to languages displayed is a decisive task in the study of linguistic landscapes. At first one has to differentiate between monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs. When considering all four districts as a whole, a general distinction between *all Lithuanian*, *all English* and *all Russian* is made when dealing with monolingual signs. Bilingual

signs are categorized as Lithuanian-English and Lithuanian-Russian[5]; in addition to that the categories *other* and *multilingual* (three languages or more) are established. When considering units of analysis from one district alone, additional categories such as *Lithuanian-French* or *Lithuanian-Polish* are established. Such a strategy is necessary when dealing with areas of research that show a much diversified linguistic landscape. Both of the shopping centres as well as *Naujamiestis* and *Senamiestis* account for such diversity.

Otherwise, units of analysis showing infrequent combinations of language such as bilingual *English-Italian* or trilingual *Lithuanian-English-German* are subsumed under the categories *other* or *multilingual (3+)* respectively. As the scope of this study is rather limited, signs that feature code-mixing or instances of borrowing are categorized as bilingual or multilingual if applicable. Those that show variation of some sorts (for instance wrong spelling of English words) do not constitute an independent category in this study.

4.4 Further Remarks

A main dichotomy in the study of linguistic landscapes has always been the distinction between public and private signs and displays of language *(top-down vs. bottom-up)*. In this paper, such a distinction will not be made, as a regular pattern in the use of languages depicted on signs installed by public bodies emerged: Within the inner-city districts of *Naujamiestis* and *Senamiestis*, signs giving directions to places of general interest such as museums, theatres, churches and transport hubs are always bilingual, showing a Lithuanian inscription on top and an English one below. The other two districts *Antakalnis* and *Šnipiškės* feature the same signs, but just with a Lithuanian inscription.

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[5] When establishing these categories prior to the study with the help of the demographic data shown in *table 1*, it was assumed that Russian is an integral part of the linguistic landscapes of Vilnius. Results in *5.* will show if this assumption can be maintained.

Other traffic signs just bear a Lithuanian inscription throughout the city. The reason for this pattern is obvious, as the districts of *Naujamiestis* and *Senamiestis* are the main cultural and economic centres of the city and of most interest to tourists.

Thus, traffic and street signs are not included in this study. The only exceptions are those signs installed by public bodies that commemorate a certain event.[6]

5   Results – The Overall Picture

In the following section the research questions of the study will be answered. Furthermore, a general picture of the languages used on signs in the four districts emerges and tells about the role and function of the city's different languages.

At first we will look at the overall picture and consider the districts of *Antakalnis*, *Naujamiestis*, *Senamiestis* and *Šnipiškės* as one entity. It seems that the Linguistic Landscapes of Vilnius show a remarkable diversity; the outcome as shown in ***table 2*** was not expected. Interestingly, English seems to be fairly widespread within the city as a whole, especially in combination with Lithuanian. Lithuanian is obviously fairly widespread, but the number of 51 % monolingual Lithuanian signs also suggests that roughly one-half of signs include another language apart from Lithuanian or in conjunction with it. Considering the relatively peripheral location of Vilnius within the European Union and the relatively low rate of foreign language proficiency apart from Russian, this is remarkable. Not only English, but also other languages (such as

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[6] These are plackets commemorating visits by foreign dignitaries and artists or remember historic events in general. As a rule, these always seemed to be bilingual, depicting Lithuanian and a language attributed to the person or the event.

German, French and Italian) are visible in certain contexts, almost always in conjunction with Lithuanian.

Table 2: Languages on signs in all four districts [7]

Language	*Number of signs*	*(%)*
all Lithuanian	446	51
all English	89	10
all Russian	7	1
Lithuanian-English	223	25
Lithuanian-Russian	11	1
other	85	10
multilingual (3+)	17	2

The number of non-Lithuanian units of analysis could have been even higher, as in a lot of instances Lithuanian was just visible in small print on many shop signs (for example signalling opening hours) whereas English or other European languages were depicted in a more prominent position especially on restaurant and shop signs.

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[7] This table includes 45 units of analysis that have not been assigned to any of the four districts mentioned below yet, because their geographical location is in-between districts. It still has to be determined which area of research they will be assigned to.

But the most remarkable finding seems to be the absence of Russian. We will consider this phenomenon in *5.3.*, but already now it has to be noted that Russian disappeared from most signs. Most of the units of analysis referred to as being *monolingual Russian* were specimen of graffiti, those classified *bilingual Lithuanian-Russian* were almost exclusively located in or around the train station in *Naujamiestis*, an area frequented by speakers of Russian transiting from Kaliningrad to the Russian mainland.

5.1   The Four Districts

Within the city, the four districts differ significantly in their linguistic landscape and each of the four neighbourhoods feature a distinct pattern of languages depicted on signs. *Senamiestis* proved to be the linguistically most diverse part of the city, whereas *Antakalnis* showed little diversity with most signs being depicted in Lithuanian alone.

When considering each district and its linguistic landscape as a single entity, *Senamiestis* shows a very diverse picture as indicated in **table 3**. However, this diversity is mainly based on English and not on any other language. The prominent position of *Senamiestis* as the main tourist centre of the city explains this pattern fairly well and most shops and other establishments within this district cater for visitors from abroad. Here, restaurants, bars and nightclubs usually depict both Lithuanian and English. In case such an establishment offers French, Italian or Spanish cuisine, English is replaced by any of these languages. Hotels and hostels show a similar pattern, but often Lithuanian is omitted altogether. Languages that are clearly connected to the past of the city such as German, Polish and Russian are clearly underrepresented in the Old Town of Vilnius. German only appears together with Lithuanian and/or English at souvenir shops selling amber and locally made handicrafts. Polish on the other

hand is just used in religious contexts on placards and banners in front of museums and religious sites. This is easily explained, as both Lithuania and Poland are catholic nations that share strong religious and cultural ties. Russian is almost non-existent in *Senamiestis* as well. Only posters and placards announcing concerts or offering second-hand cars feature Russian, but certainly four units of analysis that depict Russian is a marginal number.

Table 3: Languages on signs in Vilnius Old Town (Senamiestis)

Language	Number of signs	(%)	Language	Number of signs	(%)
all Lithuanian	93	34	Lithuanian-German	3	1
all English	43	16	Lithuanian-Polish	3	1
all Russian	4	1	Lithuanian-Latin	3	1
Lithuanian-English	80	30	Lithuanian-Russian	2	1
Lithuanian-Italian	10	4	other	9	3
Lithuanian-French	10	4	multilingual (3+)	7	3
Lithuanian-Spanish	4	1			

Antakalnis on the other hand shows quite different patterns as seen in **table 4**. Lithuanian is by far the language used most here. As this district of the city is largely a residential area and not visited by tourists, *Antakalnis* is probably a prototype of an urban linguistic landscape in Lithuania, where Lithuanian is clearly the dominant language. Most shops only depicting Lithuanian were supermarkets, grocery stores, hairdressers and hardware stores catering to the

residents of the districts. The moderate use of English can be attributed to fast-food joints, gyms or pubs using an English name or an English slogan as a catch-phrase. Here, English is usually depicted in conjunction with Lithuanian. As in the Old Town, Russian is marginalized and just seen as graffiti. Polish is nonexistent.

Table 4: Languages on signs in Antakalnis

Language	*Number of signs*	*(%)*
all Lithuanian	122	83
all English	7	5
all Russian	2	1
Lithuanian-English	14	9
Lithuanian-Russian	2	1
multilingual (3+)	2	1

Naujamiestis supports the claim that a correlation between the number of foreign visitors and the diversity of the linguistic landscape exists. Evidently, languages used on signs resemble the picture of *Senamiestis* in general, although more signs are exclusively in Lithuanian. Here, geographical factors play a crucial role as this district is rather big and home to many social strata. *Gedimino Prospektas* on the one hand is the core of the city, the country's main shopping boulevard and quite popular by Lithuanians. In the same time it is a very prestigious place to live and work. The area south of *Gedimino Prospektas* on the other hand is a less affluent neighbourhood mainly showing signs only in

Lithuanian and neither tourists nor middle-class Lithuanians shop or stay in this area. To exemplify this dichotomy, *table 5* shows the overall linguistic landscape of the district but excludes the *Centras* area around *Gedimino Prospektas*, whereas *table 6* shows the linguistic landscape of the area of *Centras* alone.

Table 5: Languages on signs in Naujamiestis (excluding Centras)

Language	*Number of signs*	*(%)*
all Lithuanian	67	65
all English	9	9
Lithuanian-English	19	18
other	6	6
multilingual (3+)	2	2

Table 6: Languages on signs in Centras (Naujamiestis district)

Language	*Number of signs*	*(%)*
all Lithuanian	113	55
all English	12	6
all French	4	2
Lithuanian-English	58	29
Lithuanian-Latin	4	2
Lithuanian-German	3	1
other	15	4
multilingual (3+)	3	1

Especially table 6 indicates very diverse patterns of language use and to some extent resembles the picture of *Senamiestis*. Interestingly, also Latin seems to be used in Vilnius, but it fulfils relatively little functions. Latin can be seen in areas with close proximity to the city's university, where it is depicted in front of book shops and pubs frequented by students. Otherwise, German is used at souvenir shops and French at boutiques and restaurants. When considering the district without the area around *Gedimino Prospektas*, the picture is still quite diverse although more signs just show Lithuanian. These are mainly grocery stores, other small shops and cheap eateries. English is the preferred foreign language here with 27 % on mono- and bilingual signs, but unlike in the Old Town or in *Centras*, other languages such as French or Italian are not to be found.

The last district analysed is *Šnipiškės*. As this neighbourhood is largely a residential area, its linguistic landscape resembles that of *Antakalnis*. Of all signs surveyed here, most featured just Lithuanian scrip, but as in all other districts, bilingual signs depicting Lithuanian and English are relatively widespread (see *table 7*).

Table 7: Languages on signs in Šnipiškės

Language	*Number of signs*	*(%)*
all Lithuanian	32	58
all English	4	7
all Russian	1	2
Lithuanian-English	14	25
Lithuanian-French	2	4
other	2	4

As in *Antakalnis* this is mainly due to the fact that *Šnipiškės* is home to fast-food joints, gyms and pubs; in addition to that, the districts' geographical location plays a role as well: its southern parts border the *Centras* area in *Naujamiestis* and it appears that the linguistic landscape of *Šnipiškės* may take on the same patterns of language use on signs as the *Centras* area.

Another fact pointing in this direction is the distribution of languages on signs in the "Europa" shopping centre, also located in the southern part of *Šnipiškės*.[8] Within this shopping centre, the distribution of signs shows is remarkable: 38 % are bilingual depicting Lithuanian and English, 28 % monolingual English, 17 % monolingual Lithuanian and 17 % of signs featured three or more languages. The high frequency of languages other than Lithuanian is explained by the large number of international commercial chains which prefer English over Lithuanian. Furthermore, cafes and cocktail bars within the centre also preferred English or Italian as catch-phrases.

5.2 Linguistic Landscape and Mother Tongues

Arguably the most interesting phenomenon in the analysis of the linguistic landscape of Vilnius is the absence of a correlation between the number of mother-tongue speakers in an area and the distribution of languages in public sphere. In *table 8*, the number of signs that depict Russian or Polish alone or in conjunction with Lithuanian is shown, whereas *table 9* depicts the number of speakers of Lithuanian, Russian and Polish by districts in percent.

The pattern shown in tables 8 and 9 is remarkable. The actual number of units of analysis depicting either Russian or Polish is marginal and never

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[8] The findings in the "Europa" shopping centre are not included in the *Šnipiškės* survey but analysed separately in *5.3*.

exceeds the one percent mark, but nevertheless all four districts have a large

	Antakalnis	*Naujamiestis*	*Senamiestis*	*Šnipiškės*
Lithuanian-Russian	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	0
all Russian	2 (1)	0	4 (1)	1 (1)
Lithuanian-Polish	0	0	3 (1)	0
all Polish	0	0	0	0

number of speakers of the two languages.

Table 8: Number of signs that include Russian/Polish according to district in total (% in brackets)

Table 9: Number of mother tongue speakers of Lithuanian, Russian and Polish by district in percent (based on table 1)

	Antakalnis	*Naujamiestis*	*Senamiestis*	*Šnipiškės*
Lithuanian	70	60	58	59
Russian	13	24	20	21

Polish	11	8	12	13

Naujamiestis for example is home to a large minority of Russian speakers (24 %) but just two signs in this study included Russian, which were found in the train station area. Otherwise, no shop, restaurant, placard or graffiti depicted Russian in this part of the city. Here one might argue that political factors play a role and that the same patterns of prescriptive language policy that are prevalent in Latvia and Estonia also show here. But unlike in these countries it appears to be possible to use two or more languages on placards, posters or shops as the high number of bilingual signs in both Lithuanian and English suggest. A plausible explanation for such inequality might be the orientation of Lithuania towards the European Union and the firm rejection of cultural influences from Russia and other countries of the CIS that go together with nationalistic chauvinism based on ethnicity and religion. Furthermore, English, French and Italian do not carry the same negative connotations Russian has for many Lithuanians. Unlike Russian, these languages convey notions of internationality and in the same time cater to a growing number of western tourists.

All signs featuring Russian in the residential areas of *Antakalnis* and *Šnipiškės* were specimen of graffiti; those depicting Russian and Lithuanian were informal posters or leaflets attached to walls or lamp poles and in one case a Russian restaurant. Within all four districts, just two shops used Russian for advertising: one tattoo studio in *Senamiestis* and one book store adjacent to the central train station. Thus it appears that no correlation exists between the number of mother tongue speakers of Russian and the linguistic landscape of their neighborhood. Here, the approach of Itagi & Singh (2002) in linguistic landscape research might yield different results, as this approach also includes newspapers, magazines, business cards and other specimen of print media.

Nevertheless this analysis reflects the general tendency of the marginalization of the Russian language and Russian culture in general in Lithuania and the Baltic States as a whole.

Polish on the other hand is equally underrepresented in the linguistic landscape of Vilnius. But as Poland and Lithuania share strong cultural and economic ties and as the Polish minority in Vilnius lives in the city already for centuries, the absence of the Polish language in public sphere might very well be attributed to a certain degree of assimilation by ethnic Poles. The only instance where Polish is visible in public sphere is in religious contexts.

5.3   English in Vilnius

The study of commercial signs and other informal displays of written language in Vilnius suggest that a relatively large number of establishments and individuals choose English as a mode of expression. Altogether 35 % of units of analysis feature English. Out of these, about 10 % depict English alone and another 25 % of signs feature both English and Lithuanian. "Special places" to look for signs in English and other non-native languages in Vilnius are large western style shopping centres such as the aforementioned "Europa" and "Gedimino9", depicted below in *table 10*.

Table 10: Languages on signs in "Europa" and "Gedimino9" shopping centres

Language	Number of signs	(%)
all Lithuanian	8	19
all English	14	32
all French	2	5
Lithuanian-English	14	32
Lithuanian-Italian	2	5
multilingual (3+)	3	7

English is by far the most dominant language in both shopping centres and the number of shops just depicting English on their signs exceeds the number of shops that use Lithuanian alone by far. Shops using English alone offer clothes, electronic appliances, music or sports gear, those that solely rely on Lithuanian sell books, flowers or moderately priced presents. International commercial chains seem to depict both Lithuanian and English; here, English usually is the catch-phrase whereas Lithuanian signals opening hours and special discounts given. Two upmarket furniture shops were just depicting French, whereas two cafes used an Italian term as a catch-phrase and Lithuanian on a board showing what specialities they have to offer. Both centres cater for local residents and tourists alike, but most customers seem to be middle and upper-middle class Lithuanians. Unlike in

Senamiestis, the high rate of English cannot be attributed to a large number of western tourists alone.

Obviously Vilnius neither has a sizeable minority of mother tongue speakers of English who might promote the use of the language nor do any cultural or historic ties exist. But English is by far the most popular foreign language learned at school and in the same time an opportunity for younger Lithuanians to work abroad or benefit from a steady influx of western tourists.

Another factor has to be taken into account as well: English is the global lingua franca and its position "as the globally dominant language seems entrenched very firmly" (Mair 2006: 10). Many studies of linguistic landscapes already observed this phenomenon in different parts of the world and suggest that the importance of English is growing further. The reason for this is not only explained by growing international mobility, a rising proficiency in English or identification with Anglophone cultures. In fact, English equals prestige, success, upward mobility and *up- to-datedness*; it is about new ideas and trends (Ross 1997: 31).

6   Outlook

The study of the linguistic landscape(s) of a geographically confined area proved to be a useful tool in analysing patterns of language use in Vilnius. Although this paper understands itself as an introduction to the linguistic landscape of Lithuania's capital and is just one part of a PhD project, three important findings were made:

The most interesting pattern is the decline of Russian in Vilnius and arguably, in Lithuania as a whole. Within 20 years, the Russian language "ceased to exist" in the public sphere, at least in its written form. Language policy, power structures within society and ethnocentric nationalism are some of

the many reasons for this pattern and it is doubtful, whether Russian will regain its status in the foreseeable future. Although it is still a *lingua franca* in most parts of the former Soviet Union and certainly a language of wider communication in Eastern Europe, no functions can be attributed to it within the framework of linguistic landscape research. Considering the relatively high number of Russian speakers in all of the four areas of research the findings reveal a pattern of discrimination based on language and ethnicity.

The absence of Polish on the other hand can be attributed to the assimilation of Polish speakers into mainstream Lithuanian society. Considering the strong cultural and religious ties Poland has with Lithuania it is hardly possible to identify this situation as discrimination based on language *per se*, but especially in the case of Polish in Lithuania, further research is necessary.

The second finding worth further exploration in subsequent studies is the rise of English in the country. Although proficiency in English is low throughout Lithuania (especially amongst older generations), it is a language widely used on signs throughout the city and even residential areas feature a relatively high number of signs that depict English. Here, English is in stark contrast to Russian and viewed as the language of upward social mobility, as new, prestigious and desirable to learn. As the analysis of signs in the two shopping centres showed, English is not only used to cater to tourists as in *Senamiestis*, but appears to take on the same domains assigned to Russian in the past.

The third finding of this study is more broad and has been observed by other researchers of linguistic landscapes in different locations as well, namely the difference in the distribution of languages on signs in core and peripheral areas of an urban agglomeration. We saw that the number of signs depicting any other language instead (or in addition to) Lithuanian rises, the closer these are to the main commercial, cultural and administrative centre of a city. Not only the

steady influx of tourists is a reason here, but the desire of middle and upper middle classes to be part of western consumer culture.

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