Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Pragmatics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma

Managing multilingualism in a tourist area during the COVID-19 pandemic

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Intense mobility of people and languages driven by tourism, which propels "cultural transformation of places" (Urry, 1995:2) across the world, is manifested in their linguistic landscapes through varying regimes of multilingualism. Linguistic landscapes, which render themselves for "visual consumption" (Urry, 2005), emerge from the sedimentation and synchronization of diachronic semiotic processes which index current societal developments. The recent period of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a noticeable impact on linguistic landscapes globally through the emergence of a noticeable and coherent layer of pandemic regulatory signage. In a longitudinal study covering the period between the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 to its decline in August 2022, we trace the implementation of regulatory measures in a highly frequented tourist region in Slovakia whereby the actors involved in the tourist industry implemented the official pandemic legislature aimed at preventing the spread of the disease. Our overall goal is to explore the management of "pandemic regulatory discourse", i.e., how producers of regulatory signage manage multimodal resources to convey their authority and stance towards regulations, to legitimize regulatory measures, and to ensure compliance with them. The study is grounded in the theoretical-methodological approaches of ethnographic linguistic landscape studies, geosemiotics, sociolinguistics of globalization, sociopragmatics, and language management theory.

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1. Introduction

The pandemic situation caused by Covid-19 has had a considerable impact on the functioning of societies across the world. In order to prevent virus transmission, governments and other institutional organizations have imposed restrictions regulating people's mobility or conditions under which it is allowed. One of the most affected industries is tourism, along with its associated domains such as transportation, accommodation, and entertainment. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 regulations aimed at stopping the spread of the virus have become a visible component of tourist semioscapes. Composed of multimodal resources carrying out regulatory measures they were gradually implemented into visual contexts of public spaces as their most recent semiotic layer. Keeping social distance and using face masks as the most prominent

regulative restrictions have become not only parts of pandemic etiquette, but also indicators of the pandemic era as such. As a result, tourists' consumption of both material objects and "positional goods[1]" (Urry, 1995:129) has been altered by conditions imposed by national and local governments and implemented by tourist service providers.

In this paper, we examine the implementation and consequent alteration of tourist consumption as manifested in public signs occurring in the linguistic landscapes of the municipality of the High Tatras, specifically in the villages of Štrbské Pleso and Tatranská Lomnica, which represent prime tourist areas in Slovakia. The aim of our study is to identify features and strategies of mobility regulations which represent a distinct layer of linguistic landscape through which tourism participants implement pandemic policies. In our study of what we call "pandemic regulatory discourse" (PRD) we focus on language use (multilingualism) and scales on which languages operate and pragmatic means of conveying directive illocutions through which the authors of PRD construct and display their authority, ground entitlement to request, and impose directives as well as ensure recipients' compliance with these regulations. In our understanding, PRD of the examined area represents a "crucial nexus of meaning-making in the COVID-19 pandemic" (Lou et al., 2021).

The theoretical-methodological foundations of the study are socio-semiotic approaches of linguistic landscape and ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis, geosemiotics, sociolinguistics of globalization and interpersonal pragmatics (politeness theory). Our data are also approached through the perspectives of language management theory, disaster studies and crisis communication in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the following sections, we introduce the background of our work, present our dataset and the methodology. Next, we present our analysis and interpretation of the semiotic processes underlying PRD in the examined area and their prospective development.

2. Theoretical methodological background

Linguistic landscape studies deal with the representation of languages in public spaces. From the times when the concept of linguistic landscape (LL) was introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) into sociolinguistic studies to the present day, it has gone through changes reflecting scholars' interest in understanding the nature of the rapidly changing world through "a qualitative prism" and their reluctance to make finite conclusions based solely on the results of quantitative analysis. Its original definition stating as its object of interest the "language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government building" (Landry and Bourhis, 1997: 25) has been extended to encompass the "symbolic construction of the public space" (Ben-Rafael, 2009: 41). This is considered a "more mature semiotic approach in which signs themselves are given greater attention both individually […] and in combination with each other" (Blommaert and Maly, 2014: 3). In this ethnographic perspective, public spaces are perceived as tools for communicating (and manifesting) social power, for setting norms and thus for regulating behavior, which aligns with the object of the present study, viz. COVID-19 pandemic crisis communication.

Apart from linguistic landscape studies, public spaces in times of the COVID-19 pandemic can be approached as intersections of several other research interests, such as disaster research (e.g. Tan and Said, 2015; Uekusa, 2019; Doroja-Cadiente and Valdez, 2019) and crisis communication. Soon after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020 it became evident that the crisis is as much a global health, political, economic, social and moral issue as a linguistic and mass communication problem, which brought about a steady growth of the volume of research (e.g. Piller, 2020; Piller et al., 2020; Rizwan and Hilman, 2021; Ekwall et al., 2021; Peng and Hu, 2022). Since an important channel in crisis communication is public signage, much of its research deals with data coming from the world's linguistic landscapes. Research into pandemic linguistic landscapes has yielded studies which use ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis, multimodal analysis, corpus-based and content analysis and methodologies focusing on semiotic practices in specific areas of the world and also often comparing how public spaces accommodate global and local influences (e.g. Kalocsányiová et al., 2021; Marshall, 2021; Hopkyns and van den Hoven, 2021; Ogiermann and Bella, 2021; Bella and Ogiermann, 2022; Mitits; 2021). Also, a special issue of *Linguistic Landscape* called *The Linguistic Landscape of COVID-*19 has been published. In addition to the classic academic genres, several internet-based sites for collective research appeared, such as *The linguistic landscape of covid-19 workshop* (https://www.covidsigns.net/about-1), *PanMeMic, Interaction and communication in the pandemic and beyond* (https://panmemic.hypotheses.org/).

Another influential approach to LL is geosemiotics (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) which similarly understands space as an ethnographic object which indexes social action. Its main principle is thus indexicality of signs in relation to the real material world and to other signs as well. The Scollons (2003) link geosemiotics with Goffman's (1963, 1971) interaction order dealing with social indexicality and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) grammar of visual design, which focuses on the indexicality of framed visual images, and conceive of geosemiotics as the "the ways in which the placement of discourse in the material world produces meanings that derive directly from that placement" (Scollon and Scollon, 2003: 22). Using this perspective, we can approach public signs and their productive and represented participants as dialogically interconnected and physically indexical with space, which becomes a substantial factor in the production of meaning.

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[1] Urry (1995: 129) argues that in addition to material objects, services, especially tourist and holiday services, are also consumable. He calls them "positional goods" or social experiences which are different from everyday routine and are consumable through a visual tourist gaze which is often indicated by signs causing a concentration of tourists into particular areas and "themed environments".

The next research field we draw on is the sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert, 2010) which explains the presence of languages in (multilingual) linguistic landscapes as a result of globalization processes. Languages are understood not necessarily as ideological and political entities but rather as deterritorialized resources traveling on "vertical axes" across scales of stratified societies and reflecting tensions between homogenizing and heterogenizing forces of globalization and localization. Globalization, in tandem with English, allows for the flow of cultural patterns and causes systems of values and ideologies (reflected in semioscapes) to be similar in many parts of the world. These patterns (not entire languages but rather semiotic resources) are not uniformly adopted; rather, they are locally adapted and they transform existing forms into specific manifestations of global particularism (Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael, 2015). To clarify apparently "chaotic meaning negotiation" through translanguaging, Blommaert (2010) proposed a renewed notion of orders of indexicality suggesting power and authority as "ordering" force: "[i]f forms of semiosis are socially and culturally valued, these valuation processes should display traces of power and authority" (Blommaert, 2010: 38). Normative centers of power are multiple because meaningful components of society ranging from individual beliefs and values to institutions are not equal. The term polycentricity refers to such varying orientations of language users. Concerning directives and requests (of PRD), these centers are either accounted or not accounted depending on various factors, such as entitlement focusing on the speaker's ground, the probability of their request to be granted and contingency relating to the recipient's ability or willingness to do so (Curl and Drew, 2008).

Finally, the approach of language management (LM), which deals not only with "how people use language but also how they interact with it" (Jernudd and Neustupný, 1987: 1), helps us understand authors' motivation when composing requests and directives in a plurilingual tourist area. LM encompasses institutional management (organized/off-line management) and individual interactions (simple/online management), the latter being "starting points" for large-scale language planning. Simple management consists of four stages in which its actor notices a deviation from a norm, evaluates it, plans its adjustment and implements it. A repaired deviation can serve as a starting point for a new management cycle. Organized management covers more interactions carried out by organizations which put various theories and ideologies into practice and manage the language system (Nekvapil, 2010). The cyclical character of LM is also reflected in the distinction between pre-interaction management and post-interaction management. While the former takes place "in anticipation of a future interaction or, more precisely, in anticipation of potential problems in a future interaction" (Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009: 185), post-interaction management occurs "after the given interaction" (Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009: 185). Pre-interaction management can include "looking up words and phrases in a dictionary or textbook, consulting language concerns with a language expert or, even 'avoidance strategies' such as preferring written communication to oral communication, bringing along an interpreter or avoiding the interaction altogether" (Nekvapil and Sherman 2009: 185). In the case of PRD in tourist areas, pre-interaction management in a broader sense may involve consulting official decrees ordaining restriction measurements or linguistic policies of the state. In this work, we follow Marx and Nekula's (2015: 152) understanding of semiotic landscapes as "as visual composites that are the result of pre-interactionally organized language management, and ... as spaces where linguistic and metacommunicative activities (both oral and written) take place in interactions that are aimed at discursive re-production of the semiotic design of the organization."

Concerning the notion of discourse, we approach it from several perspectives. In a broader sense, we approach it as a meaningful symbolic behavior (Blommaert, 2005), as a situationally bound usage of language (Fairclough, 1992), as a social practice where the discussed objects are not only constituted (Foucault, 1972) but also function as a means of power execution and re/production of social order (Jäger, 2001). In a narrower sense, we understand discourse as pandemic "regulatory discourse" (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) to which we add a regulatory function to mark multimodal semiotic resources which LL sign producers use to carry out a regulatory illocution. Still, in the narrowest sense, we perceive discourse as "a current instance of communication [...] a communication event here and now[2]" (Dolník, 2013: 311).

Following the perspective of LM theory, we approach regulatory discourse in linguistic landscape as a product of pre-interaction organized management[3] which is centered around the choice of language but which also encompasses the management of situation, means of expression, function, content, form and communication channel (Nekvapil, 2016) as well as the management of authors' identities with regard to their positioning vis-à-vis the pandemic crisis. We can illustrate LM in anticipation of possible problems and prospective stages of simple LM cycle from the addressee's perspective as follows:

…→ adjustment →) **linguistic landscape** (→ deviation → evaluation → adjustment plan →…

Finally, we base our study also on the pragmalinguistic Politeness Theory, which since its onset in 1970s has evolved in three waves (Kádár, 2017) - from viewing politeness as "a rational theory of human behaviour" (Watts, 2010: 55) during its now classical, modernist 'first wave' (Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987) through a "quality of emergent social practice" (Watts, 2010: 55) which emerges in the moments of evaluation by the hearer as conceptualized within the post-modernist, 'second wave' period developing since the 2000s (e.g. 'politeness as a discursive struggle' in Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005) to its 'third wave' elaborations seeking to incorporate the practices of production and evaluation on

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[2] The original wording is "aktuálny prípad komunikácie […] komunikačnú udalosť tu a teraz" (Dolník, 2013:311).

[3] The suitability of this approach is also confirmed by the answer of a hotel manager, who, when asked about the purpose of the regulatory signs stated that the reason for their emplacement was to "avoid possible complaints from guests" and added that the hotel management attempts to "be active rather than re-active". Source: author's email communication.

the macro-level of interaction (e.g. politeness as a social practice; Kádár and Haugh, 2013). To address politeness as rational behavior of sign producers, such as taking into account recipients' faces and trying to avoid face-threatening acts by considering the relative status, power, and weightiness of a (speech) act, we draw on the Brown and Levinson's (1987) approach to politeness a modernist approach whose tenets have undergone serious criticism. Although its premise that politeness as an inherent part of language expressions is now taken as outdated, we nevertheless employ it because it is consonant with our perception of PRD signage as one stage in the LM cycle which displays authors' pre-interaction management and do not thus trace its interpretation and evaluation by the readers/interpreters. We are interested in the rational strategies which are, in the case of PRD, mostly directive illocutions formulated to a varying degree in conventionalized negative politeness strategy, viz. politeness of social distance and respect.

With this paper, we hope to contribute to our understanding of the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis communication in linguistic landscapes of tourist areas which so far remain under-researched settings as well as to connect it to our previous research of the peripheral tourist areas in Slovakia (Ferenčík, 2018) done in the pre-pandemic times.

3. Data and methods

The corpus of our data consists of PRD signage in the form of inscriptions, notices, and instructions which represents an autonomous and coherent layer of the LL of Štrbské Pleso and Tatranská Lomnica in the municipality of High Tatras located in a mountainous region in north-eastern Slovakia which offers year-round opportunities for tourism and recreation. Employing the principles of walking ethnography (Marshall, 2021), we collected our multimodal data in the form of snapshots of public signs (app. 500+) located in passage spaces (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) which capture the rise and the development of the pandemic situation in the tourist area between March 2020 and August 2022. Starting in March 2020, the corpus was regularly updated with new data depicting regulatory processes several months apart.

We consider an inscription as a unit of qualitative analysis (derived from the abovementioned concepts) because it seems to capture the dialogicality of public signage (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) better than the notion of sign which is too simple to represent the complex social reality of signage placed in the material world. We understand inscription as a (part of) semiotic aggregate (Scollon and Scollon, 2003) which is mostly multimodal, i.e., composed of a written text and iconographic signs, and which is clearly distinguishable from its surroundings within a certain type of discourse in place. We focus on inscriptions that primarily fulfill regulatory function and whose location implies communication participants - authors/producers and recipients.

Following the premises of ethnographic research of linguistic landscape, we analyze inscriptions in terms of what resources they consist of and how they function. From the perspective of LM theory, they are the results of LM in a narrower sense, viz. the management of a particular language. In a broader understanding of LM, we also deal with the management of other aspects of communication - we analyze codes, particularly the choice of language, variety, style and phonological, graphological, morpho-syntactic and lexical-semantic resources as well as non-linguistic resources while taking into account their context, emplacement and their informative and symbolic functions. Depending on the status of language, we distinguish between three sociolinguistic scales: local, translocal and global (Table 1.) on which the producers operate. We also devise a cognitive framework of PRD in relation to the implementation of the measures aimed at solving the problem (Table 2). To provide a holistic picture of the PRD, we address the content of inscriptions, e.g., mobility, distance, protection and pandemic "props" such as disinfectants, barriers, corridors, etc. Finally, we also examine how producers manage their authority and entitlement to ground regulations, their legitimization, and anticipation of addressees' compliance. We perceive producers as pre-interaction LM actors who are represented by local governments (official organized LM) and operators of tourist infrastructure facilities providing transport, accommodation, catering, shopping, and sports services (non-official organized LM). Addressees or recipients are residents of the municipality of the High Tatras, employees of offices and facilities, visitors, tourists, etc. whom we consider the actors of simple LM. Through our analysis we focus on producers' construction of regulatory discourse and aim at investigating resources and processes of the management of language use, the management of authority to impose regulation in relation to recipients' status on a scale from low to high, the management of deontic stance on a scale from weak to strong (Downing and Locke, 1992), and the management of (the anticipation of) compliance with and the legitimization of regulatory illocution conveyed by inscriptions. We aim to address three research questions.

1. How do producers manage the use of languages?
2. What resources do producers use to manage their authority and deontic stance?
3. What resources do producers use to legitimize the regulation, i.e. to display their entitlement to perform it, and ensure addressees' compliance with it?

4. The stable (pre-pandemic) linguistic regime of the examined area

Previous research of the linguistic landscape of the area (Ferenčík, 2018) points to its lasting multilingual regime, which is derived from the position of a language in a global language system (de Swaan, 2001) that hierarchically distinguishes

between peripheral, central and supercentral languages or minority languages, state languages and lingua francas, respectively. The system also mentions English which is the only language on the fourth, hypercentral scale. We complement this system with Blommaert's (2010) distinction of sociolinguistic levels (scales) which refers to Wallerstein's (1983) modern world system theory and its key terms, a center and a periphery. Table 1 shows the scalar multilingual regime of the LL of the municipality of the High Tatras.

Table 1
Multilingual regime of the LL the municipality of the High Tatras.

Modern World System (Wallerstein, 1983)	Sociolinguistic scale (Blommaert, 2010)	Global language system (de Swaan, 2001)	Multilingualism in the municipality of the High Tatras
Periphery Semi-center/semi-periphery Center	Local Translocal Global	Peripheral Central Supercentral Hypercentral	S S E G H R P E G R E

Note: S = Slovak, E = English, G = German, H = Hungarian, P = Polish, R = Russian.

When comparing statistical data about accommodation from 2018 to 2019 in the area with its multilingual regime we can observe that the multilingualism copies the composition of countries from which tourists came into the area. In 2018, the order of visitors based on their country of origin was as follows: Slovakia, Czechia, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Israel, Ukraine, South Korea, Great Britain, Austria, the USA, Romania, Lithuania, Russia, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Latvia, Italy, and Slovenia. The data from 2019 show similar distribution: Slovakia, Czechia, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Ukraine, The USA, Austria, Romania, South Korea, Lithuania, France, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Latvia, Italy, and Slovenia.[4] The most dominant language of inscriptions is Slovak followed by English, despite the fact that visitors using it as a central language in Great Britain and the United States form only 0,61% and 0,43%, respectively in 2018 and 0,64% and 0,48% in 2019. From this finding, it is clear that hypercentral English functions as the most prominent lingua franca in the area. Other lingua francas are German and Russian and are used to address linguistically competent visitors from the Central European and post-Soviet territories. Since Slovaks and Czechs share a common sociopolitical history, the absence of Czech is explained by the mutual intelligibility of the languages.

In March 2020, a relatively stable multilingual regime was extended by the addition of monolingual Slovak PRD which was gradually complemented with Slovak-English bilingual signage produced by non-official agents of tourism, which confirmed the place of English in the world's linguistic hierarchy as both global lingua franca and as the global language of the pandemic crisis (Piller et al., 2020). The following analysis shows the development of PRD in the municipality of the High Tatras.

5. Analysis and discussion

5.1. Management of the official PRD

In March 2020, the municipal office of Štrbské Pleso prompted official PRD and established itself as an official LM actor by placing a banner at the entrance to the area (Fig. 1) which remained the only instance of official Slovak-monolingual PRD throughout the whole period of the pandemic situation. This can be accounted for by the fact that, under "normal", i.e., non-pandemic circumstances, the local municipality's overall share in the regulatory discourse is smaller than that of private, non-official agents of tourism (the target of regulation being parking, smoking and entry), and even that is conveyed to a significant extent in the official Slovak language (Ferenčík, 2018). When the pandemic started, the monolingualism of the official sign was justified by the assumption on the part of the municipality that its addressees were Slovak citizens rather than foreign visitors who were restricted from travelling abroad. The inscription consists of a title and three blocks of text. The upper block legitimizes the regulation in two ways - causally (cf. causal account; Svennevig, 2021), by referring to the current pandemic legislation (… *Na základe Opatrenia Úradu verejného zdravotníctva* .../Based on the Regulations of the Public Health Office …*)*, and functionally (cf. teleological account; Svennevig, 2021), by presenting the reason for the regulation, which is the increased concentration of tourists and vehicles from all over Slovakia (… *zvýšenej koncentrácii turistov a vozdidiel z celého Slovenska*/an increased concentration of tourists and vehicles from all over Slovakia*)*. The central block contains a regulation of mobility carried out by a performative speech act (*Obec … ŽIADA VŠETKÝCH NÁVŠTEVNÍKOV A TURISTOV, ABY… OBMEDZILI NÁVŠTEVNOSŤ* .../The Municipality … REQUESTS ALL VISITORS AND TOURISTS TO REDUCE TRAFFIC …*)*, and a directive illocution requesting the use of personal protective equipment (*POUŽÍVAJTE POVINNÉ OCHRANNÉ RÚŠKA!*/USE MANDATORY PROTECTIVE MASKS!*)*.

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[4] The complete set of statistical data is available at:https://www.tatry.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2019_12_%C5%A0trukt%C3%BAra_ubytovan%C3%BDch_n%C3%A1v%C5%A1tevn%C3%ADkov_v_RVT-2019_vs2018_naweb.pdf.

The formulations of the accounts justifying the closures can be approached as acts of identity (Bella and Ogiermann, 2022) which the municipality project. By framing the closure in terms of a cause (the government's legislature) and an effect (the closure of the area) they display their compliance with the state's policy (and their alignment with the dominant macro-level official pandemic discourse) as well as their supportive stance of an agent who directly implements the official policy and imposes restrictions within their administrative territory. To do so, they employ the linguistic resources of impersonal bureaucratic style which include nominalization (*UPOZORNENIE*/WARNING), a performative speech act, a general addressee (*Obec … ŽIADA VŠETKÝCH NÁVŠTEVNÍKOV A TURISTOV ABY… OBMEDZILI NÁVŠTEVNOSŤ*/The municipality … REQUESTS ALL VISITORS AND TOURISTS … TO REDUCE TRAFFIC) and the V-usage in personal constructions (*POUŽÍVAJTE*$_{Vpl}$/USE), which is the norm in communication in the public space. The urgency of the regulation is reinforced through the semantics of restrictiveness (*OBMEDZILI NÁVŠTEVNOSŤ*/REDUCE TRAFFIC*)*, exceptionality of the situation (*MIMORIADNEJ SITUÁCII*/EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION) and obligation (*POVINNÉ OCHRANNÉ RÚŠKA*/MANDATORY PROTECTIVE MASKS).

In the lower block, the municipality legitimize the regulation by referring to the moral aspect of compliance with the regulations (*Je to v záujme ochrany zdravia nás všetkých*/It is in the interest of health protection of all of us; cf. the cognitive framework of the pandemic discourse; Table 2). We can notice a shift in identity construction from a bureaucratic agent who appeals to the citizens' complying with the measures (the principle of conformity; Bella and Ogiermann, 2022) to a collectively-oriented member of the community (cf. the use of the inclusive plural *my*/we) who cares about the collective well-being (the principle of benevolence; Bella and Ogiermann, 2022). The community-building agency of the municipality is revealed in their thanking for the compliance (*Ďakujeme, že ste zodpovední!*/Thank you for being responsible!) which is a manifestation of the "third position act" (Svennevig, 2021) in an adjacency structure[5] through which the addressees' compliance constructing them as cooperating actors is anticipated.

The producer also employs paralinguistic resources such as capitalization, exclamation markers, the colour red, professional design, and durable physical support. The urgency of the measure is enhanced by using a warning sign which is imported from traffic signage. The combined effect of high authority and strong deontic stance indexes the manifestation of the power of the administrative authority over the area, or the discourse of authority (Mitits, 2021).

Fig. 1. Official PRD (municipality of Štrbské Pleso)

UPOZORNENIE! Obec Štrba na základe Opatrenia Úradu verejného zdravotníctva SR zo dňa 12.3.2020 ohľadne šírenia ochorenia COVID-19 a z dôvodu, že dochádzalo k zvýšenej koncentrácii turistov a vozidiel z celého Slovenska

ŽIADA VŠETKÝCH NÁVŠTEVNÍKOV A TURISTOV, ABY V SÚČASNEJ MIMORIADNEJ SITUÁCII OBMEDZILI NÁVŠTEVNOSŤ ŠTRBSKÉHO PLESA. POUŽÍVAJTE POVINNÉ OCHRANNÉ RÚŠKA!

WARNING!

The municipality of Štrba, based on the Regulations of the Public Health Office of the SR [Slovak Republic] from 12th March 2020 regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus and due to the fact that there was an increased concentration of tourists and vehicles from all over Slovakia RESQUESTS ALL VISITORS AND TOURISTS IN THIS CURRENT EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION TO REDUCE TRAFFIC IN ŠTRBSKÉ PLESO. USE MANDATORY PROTECTIVE MASKS!

It is in the interest of health protection of all of us. Thank you for being responsible!

When formulating the inscriptions of PRD, authors can be seen as tacitly referring to the underlying cognitive framework, a mental structure which conceptualizes the pandemic crisis as a problem which needs to be addressed and which is used as a resource to define its different aspects. In Entman's (1993: 52) words, "[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition,

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[5] The conversation-analytical concept of an adjacency pair (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998) which is evoked in this act is actually a triplet, of which the first two parts, i.e., the producers' request for responsible behaviour and the recipients' compliance with it, remain implicit. The use of thanking for the compliance commonly used in pandemic RD is a carryover from a general cultural, non-pandemic regulatory practice and represents a conventionalized tactic of mild coercion whereby the addressee is made feel guilty when not performing the requested act (Norrick, 1978). In their business closure signs, Ogiermann and Bella (2021:11) identified this type of proactive thanking offered in advance as one in which the object of gratitude is assumed to exist.

Table 2

PRD in the cognitive framework of pandemic discourse.

Problem definition	COVID-19 virus is a problem for public health
Causal interpretation	Since the COVID-19 virus is infectious, it is spread by personal contact
Moral interpretation	Health and life are important values, so limiting contact and mobility is a sign of responsibility
Recommended steps	Preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus by restricting contact and mobility
Recommended measures	Anti-pandemic legislation aimed at regulating contact, mobility and the use of protective equipment
Resources to implement measure	Multimodal semiotic resources of pandemic RD and their location in LL = **pandemic regulatory discourse**

causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". We approach PRD as a set of multimodal resources used to implement the measures with the purpose of solving this problem (Table 2).

5.2. Management of non-official PRD

In this section we trace the scaled processes of the evolution of non-official pandemic signage over the period of two years since its introduction and incorporation in the local semioscape focusing on the processes of standardization as well as "vernacularization" (Blommaert and Maly, 2014) of semiotic practices in which they become locally "accented".

5.2.1. First-wave pandemic signage

Non-official PRD is much more numerous and considerably diverse in terms of its composition, expressing stance and authority and its material resources. As the first example (Fig. 2) we present a duplicating Slovak-English inscription from April 2020 placed at the entrance to the Hotel Kempinski that contrasts in several aspects with the official inscription (Fig. 1).

Fig. 2. Non-official PRD (hotel, Štrbské Pleso).

Vážení hostia, V súčasnej situácii, kedy vírus COVID-19 postihuje viacero medzinárodných destinácií, sú pre nás najväčšou prioritou zdravie a bezpečnosť našich hostí a zamestnancov. Z nariadenia vlády Slovenskej republiky sú zatvorené všetky medzinárodné letiská, niekoľko hraničných priechodov, všetky wellness centrá a lyžiarske vleky. Aktuálne informácie nájdete na webovej stránke www.health.gov.skNašich vzácnych hostí by sme chceli informovať, že Grand Hotel Kempinski High Tatras bude z týchto dôvodov uzatvorený do odvolania. Ďakujeme za pochopenie a tešíme sa na vašu budúcu návštevu.

KATHRIN NOLL GENERAL MANAGER

Dear Guests, In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus that is currently affecting several international destinations, we would like to reiterate that the health and safety of all our guests and employees is of paramount importance at all times. Due to far-reaching restrictions of government of the Slovak Republic, all international airports, several border crossings, wellness centres and ski lifts are being closed. For more information, please visit the website www.health.gov.sk Therefore, we would like to inform our valued guests that Grand Hotel Kempinski High Tatras will remain closed until further notice. We sincerely thank you for your understanding, and we look forward to your future visit.

KATHRIN NOLL GENERAL MANAGER

When compared with the high authority level of the official banner (Fig. 1) arising from bureaucratic state-citizen communication, the authority of this inscription constructs a type of commercial host-client relationship, which is established through the use of address term (*Vážení hostia*/Dear Guests) and the author's name and professional status. The authoritativeness of the force of the regulation is downplayed by using the semiotics of commercially-motivated negative politeness[6] (*Našich vzácnych hostí by sme chceli informovať .../...* we would like to inform our valued guests …). To legitimize the regulation, two accounts are used. First, a reference to the moral aspect of the COVID-19 framework (*… sú pre nás najväčšou prioritou zdravie a bezpečnosť našich hostí a zamestnancov*/health and safety of all our guests and employees is of paramount importance), which indicates the use of positive politeness strategy[7] by expressing an interest in visitors' safety and health. The second account is a reference to the official legislation (*Z nariadenia vlády Slovenskej republiky …*/Due to far-reaching restrictions of government of the Slovak Republic …) through which the author aligns with the official pandemic discourse. The same types of accounts are used in the official case (Fig. 1) as well, but in reversed order; it thus seems that ordering indicates the type of relationship between the parties in RD and the identity of the addressee, be it a citizen, or a client, respectively. The regulatory illocution itself is expressed indirectly by a representative speech act (*… by sme chceli informovať, že Grand Hotel Kempinski High Tatras bude z týchto dôvodov uzatvorený*/… we would like to inform our valued guests that Grand Hotel Kempinski High Tatras will remain closed …), which represents a conventionalized resource of negative politeness.[8] The ordering of the two accounts suggests that in their identity work, the business owner prioritizes benevolence before conformity (Bella and Ogiermann, 2022), which contrasts with the official municipal pandemic sign discussed above.

Here, too, the conclusion of the inscription contains the 3rd-position thanking act (*Ďakujeme za pochopenie…*/We sincerely thank you for your understanding …), which is accompanied with the formula *…tešíme sa na vašu budúcu návštevu*/… we look forward to your future visit, representing a resource from the inventory of commercially motivated politeness which enhances the desirable identity of a business agent who cares about long-term customer relationships. In addition to authority downplaying, this inscription contrasts with the official RD (Fig. 1) in that it contains the weakening of deontic stance and its transfer to the iconographic resource placed in the central position of the inscription which is "a loan" from the inventory of traffic prohibitory signage. Together with the composition, the overall design, its quality, and emplacement demonstrate a thoughtful management of service provider-customer communication and the corporate identity of a global hotel network which construct the place as a "site of luxury" (Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009).

Compared to this professionally made inscription, discourse practices of other non-official, mostly Slovak-monolingual PRD in the first wave are reminiscent of the "sites of necessity" (Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009) by using lower standards of production, minimum economic investment and manual production, which was caused by the need to respond promptly to the unprecedented situation by means of the available semiotic resources. This mainly concerns expressing directive illocutions in the indicative mood using verbo-nominal constructions, which is a standard (unmarked) way of expressing directiveness, and of conveying deontic authority, in the Slovak public sphere and which can thus be considered as a non-polite, politic type of behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005). We can observe this strategy in the bilingual sign in Fig. 3 in which the standardness of authority combines with evasiveness by giving an all-purpose, non-committing account (*Z technických príčín zatvorené*/Closed for technical reasons) which refers to the pandemic circumstances only vaguely. This kind of euphemization, i.e., naming the grave pandemic situation as "technical reasons", which is not an uncommon practice in Slovak public signage in the segment of services, is open to the interpretation as negatively marked, and thus impolite.[9] Its English version, which is a calque of the Slovak text, conveys the same propositional as well as socio-pragmatic meaning, which suggests the author's orientation to English as a lingua franca normativity.

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[6] A host of negative politeness strategies employed by the global-scale tourism operator in a commercially defined situation seem to go beyond the non-polite/politic (Watts, 2003) norms of communication in the public and border on overpoliteness, hence negatively marked behavior (Locher and Watts, 2005). In her study of the changing politeness practices within the processes of Westernization and commercialization in the post-Soviet Russia in the 1990s Rathmayr (2008) contrasts this Western "commercial politeness" with a genuine Russian openness and considers it to be a general principle of communication in Western European market economy societies, and not a matter of service encounters only. The processes of restructuration of politeness practices following the collapse of the Communist bloc were studied in Estonia (Keevallik, 2005), Poland (Huszcza, 2005; Ogiermann and Suszczynska, 2011), Hungary (Bencze, 2005), the Czech Republic (Nekvapil and Neustupný, 2005) and Slovakia (Ferenčík, 2015).

[7] Notice, Attend to H[earer] (his interests, wants, needs, goods); (Brown and Levinson, 1987:102).

[8] Be conventionally indirect (Brown and Levinson, 1987:131).

[9] In the Slovak socio-cultural context, this practice has been traditionally used by commercial agents as an evasive, all purpose tactic to avoid spelling out the actual reason for the closure of their premises. The authors' obscuring their responsibility by removing their agency is conveyed via impersonal construction and quoting the opaque "technical" reason. By making a vague reference to the pandemic situation this possibly socio-culturally idiosyncratic form of account belongs to the fourth category of accounts which was identified in the corpus of PRD in Athens and London compiled in the study by Bella and Ogiermnann (2022), the first category being references to the government guidelines, the second references to businesses' concern about their employees' or the general public's health and third the combination of the two. Finally, since this type of formulaic inscription denies their clients to be properly informed about the causes, which is in this case the pandemic situation, it can be seen as a violation of the following principle: "Convey 'X is admirable, interesting and notice, attend to H[earer] (his interests, wants, needs, goods)" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:102).

Fig. 3. Non-official PRD (hotel).

*HOTEL SOLISKO**** Z technických príčin zatvorené. Ďakujeme za porozumenie.*

HOTEL SOLISKO**** Closed for technical reasons. Thank you for understanding.

Further Slovak monolingual examples of the "first wave" of pandemic signage in Figs. 4−6 demonstrate the employment of existing practices to respond to a new situation using the available immaterial resources, i.e., expressing standard (unmarked) strength of deontic stance through indicative illocution and nominalization (*VSTUP*/ENTRY) and authoritativeness through the absence of any account. By providing no accounts for the closure, producers project themselves as self-directed agents who construct their legitimizing identities (Bella and Ogiermann, 2022) by aligning with the dominant discourse only implicitly (see also Fig. 8). Finally, the low-cost materiality of signs indicates minimum economic investment − messages are handwritten or printed on a white sheet of paper and taped to doors or windows.
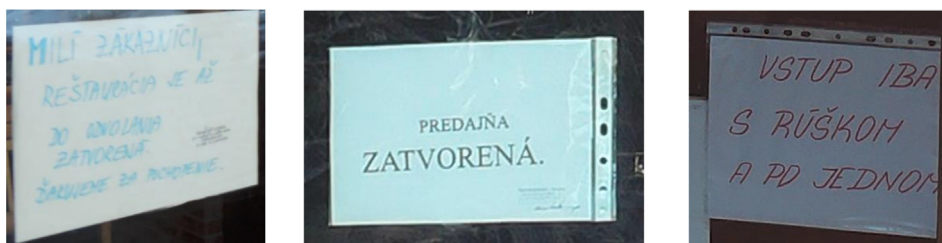

Fig. 4, 5 and 6. Non-official PRD (restaurants and shops).

Fig. 4. *MILÍ ÁKAZNÍCI, REŠTAURÁCIA JE AŽ DO ODVOLANIE ZATVORENÁ. ĎAKUJEME ZA POCHOPENIE. /*DEAR CUSTOMERS, THE RESTAURANT IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING.

Fig. 5. *PREDAJŇA ZATVORENÁ* / SHOP CLOSED

Fig. 6. *VSTUP IBA S RÚŠKOM A PO JEDNOM.* / ENTRY ONLY WITH A MASK AND ONE AT A TIME.

5.2.2. Consolidation of pandemic signage

The beginning of a gradual lifting of restrictions in April 2020 and the end of the state of emergency in June 2020 were reflected in PRD as local producers anticipated increased mobility of people. Their being better prepared for the new situation was manifested in significant qualitative and quantitative changes in PRD, namely in its expansion, multiplication, standardization of design, increased use of iconographic resources, quality improvement of material resources, and Slovak-English bilingualism. Also, material pandemic props, such as physical barriers, disinfection containers and stands, appeared in the visual landscapes. Our research of PRD from August 2020 shows its gradual integration into the local LL.

Discourse practices indicating their actors as operating on a scale varying between the global, as manifested in the bilingual inscription in front of the Hotel Kempinski (Fig. 7), and the local, as represented in the monolingual inscription on a food stall (Fig. 8), were gradually crystalized, and continued to differentiate the "sites of luxury" and the "sites of necessity" (Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009). Both signs represent communication oriented at linguistic as well as pragmatic norms of its respective scale. In both cases, the strategy of negative politeness is used, albeit with a differing level of formality − in the bilingual inscription, the resources are accumulated to achieve an almost over-polite effects (… *si Vám dovoľujeme dať do pozornosti …;* literally, we allow ourselves to bring to your attention …), which is presumably meant to construct globalized commercial politeness, the latter makes use of V-usage, along with pragmatic particle *prosím*/please, which (re)produce the standard level of Slovak public politeness. Although this particle is a stable resource of Slovak (trans)local negative politeness, its pragmaticalization sharply accelerated after the 1990s, due to the influence of globalized English-based patterns of negative politeness (Ferenčík, 2018), which is reflected in the absence of punctuation to separate it from the neighbouring text (Fig. 8). Its presence in both commercial PRD signs can be felt as redundant, and thus overpolite, given the fact that the standard norm of conveying social distance in Slovak public discourse is V-usage.

As to the identities projected by the two signs, we observe the construction of a law-abiding author referring to the government's guidelines (Fig. 7) and self-directed autonomous social actor (Bella and Ogiermann, 2022) giving no account but not challenging the dominant macro-level pandemic discourse either.

Fig. 7 and 8. Non-official PRD (a luxury hotel and food stall).

Fig. 7. Grand Hotel Kempinski HIGH TATRAS SLOVAKIA

VÁŽENÝ HOSŤ, V nadväznosti na aktuálne nariadenia vlády Slovenskej republiky si Vám dovoľujeme dať do pozornosti nasledovné dočasné opatrenia:

PROSÍM VSTUPUJTE CEZ OTOČNÉ DVERE PROSÍM VSTUPUJE S RÚŠKOM

DEAR GUEST, Following the current regulations of the government of the Slovak Republic, we would like to inform you of the following temporary measures:

PLEASE USE THE REVOLVING DOOR PLEASE ENTER WIH A FACE MASK

Fig. 8. *DODRŽUJTE PROSÍM ODSTUP 2m* / PLEASE KEEP 2m DISTANCE

To illustrate the great variety of practices occurring in the area, we select the producers of PRD operating on a translocal scale. The inscription on the hotel door (Fig. 9) contains a performative speech act (*Žiadame Vás o dodržiavanie opatrení Úradu verejného zdravotnícva*/We ask you to comply with Public Health Office measures), nominalization (*Vstup do budovy len s prekrytím nosa...*/Entry to the building only upon covering your nose …) and imperative (*Používajte dezinfekciu rúk*/Use hand sanitizers), which conveys a high level of authority and strong deontic stance. This producer uses only a causal account for the legitimization of regulation and ensures compliance with it by reference (threat) to a financial penalty (*V prípade nedodržania... riskuje klient pokutu.../*In case of non-compliance … the client risks a fine) while, disclaiming their liability for non-compliance/violation (*personál...nezodpovedá za povinnosť klienta dodržiavania nariadenia*/the staff...are not responsible for the client's obligation to comply with…the measure). This strategy, which may be perceived as a violation of positive politeness[10],

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[10] It appears to violate the principle: "Convey 'X is admirable, interesting and notice, attend to H[earer] (his interests, wants, needs, goods)" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:102).

contrasts with the practices of producers of commercial pandemic RD in Fig. 7 and resembles those of the official inscription in Fig. 1. What is more, it constructs the author's legitimizing identity of a strong supporter of the government's measures while minimizing their self-directed independent action. This example represents one of a few cases (see also Figs. 13 and 22) of identity projection of a law-abiding citizen who presents the government's decision as a cause of the closure without expressing the author's stance.

Fig. 9. Non-official PRD (hotel).

*Hotel SOLISKO**** www.hotelsolisko.sk VÁŽENÍ ZÁKAZNÍCI Žiadame Vás o dodržiavanie opatrení Úradu verejného zdravotníctva: 1.Vstup do budovy len s prekrytím nosa a úst 2.Používajte dezinfekciu rúk*

V prípade nedodržania nariadení Úradu verejného zdravotníctva riskuje klient pokutu vo výške 1.000eur.

*personál hotela Solisko**** a reštaurácie Al Lago nezodpovedá za povinnosť klienta dodržiavania nariadenia Úradu verejného zdravotníctva* [adresa, telefónne číslo, fax, e-mail]

Hotel SOLISKO**** www.hotelsolisko.skDEAR CUSTOMERS

We ask you to comply with Public Health Office measures: 1. Entry to the building only upon covering your nose and mouth. 2. Use hand sanitizers

In case of non-compliance with Public Health Office measures the client risks a €1000 fine

the staff of hotel Solisko**** and restaurant AL Lago are not responsible for the client's obligation to comply with Public Health Office measures. [address, phone number, fax, e-mail]

In contrast, producers of the inscription on a restaurant door (Fig. 10) use quite a different strategy − they employ a positive politeness tactic[11] when listing five areas in which they demonstrate their care about the visitors' need to stay healthy and thus commit themselves to keeping their premises safe. Next, they invite their customers to participate in the co-construction of their establishment as responsible through 3rd-position thanking (*Ďakujeme, že aj vy ste zodpovední…/*

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[11] The tactic reveals author's orientation to the strategy of positive politeness "Convey 'X is admirable, interesting and notice, attend to H[earer] (his interests, wants, needs, goods)" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:102).

Thank you that you too are responsible …); this discursive practice for obtaining receivers' compliance legitimizes a certain level of imposition from the presumption that it is based on the moral aspect of the pandemic measures (Table 2). As for the resources of authority in these two inscriptions, the most prominent difference between them is its explicit presence in the inscription in Fig. 9 indexed by framing devices in the header and the footer (the name, logo and address), and its absence in the inscription in Fig. 10 in which the authority is not derived from the producers' status, but from the severity of pandemic situation implied in the semantics of the words *zodpovednosť a bezpečie*/responsibility and safety. This example represents a case of identity construction in which the authors' self-directed agency is accentuated when presenting themselves as "self-appointed guardians of the well-being of the community" (Bella and Ogiermann, 2022:21) by "establishing trust and providing comfort" (Piller et al., 2020:510) while inculcating in their clients the sense of obligation.

Fig. 10. Non-official PRD (restaurant).

Zodpovedná prevádzka Takto sa staráme o Vaše bezpečie

1. ODSTUP Medzi stolmi doržiavame bezpečnostný odstup. 2. HYGIENA Pravidelne dezinfikujeme celú prevádzku, najmä miesta ako kľučky, kde dochádza k sústavnému kontaktu. Máme pre Vás k dispozícii dezinfekciu rúk 3. BEZHOTOVOSTNÉ PLATBY Preferujeme bezhotovostný spôsob platby 4. PERSONÁL Prísne doržiavame všetky hygienické zásady, čo tiež pravidelne kontrolujeme. 5. PIVO A INÉ NÁPOJE Pravidelne sanitujeme všetky technológie a dôkladne umývame pohári.

Ďakujeme, že aj vy ste zodpovední a myslíte na zdravie. Na zdravie!

A responsible establishment. This is how we take care of your safety

1. DISTANCE We keep safety distance between tables. 2. HYGIENE We regularly disinfect the whole establishment, mainly places like door knobs where permanent contact occurs. We have hand sanitizers for you 3. CASHLESS PAYMENTS We prefer cashless payments. 4. STAFF We strictly follow all principles of hygiene which we also regularly check. 5. BEER AND OTHER BEVERAGES We regularly sanitize all technology and thoroughly clean glasses.

Thank you that you too are responsible and think about health. Cheers!

The following examples of PRD document a gradual standardization of verbal resources expressing regulation in three areas, viz. distance, nose and mouth covering, and hand disinfection, which repeatedly occur in pandemic inscriptions. This standardization co-occurs with their iconization, which results from the process of transduction (Kress, 2003) in which meaning conveyed in a linguistic semiotic mode is reconfigured into the iconic mode, and with that of nominalization, in

which verbal formulations are replaced by nominal ones. The effect of nominalization is depersonalization of communication where people (authors of messages, agents of regulation) become excluded from the situation, with the result of not being able to be held accountable. Jeffries (2010) perceives this strategy as an ideological process of reality construction and as a means of its reification, materialization (objectification) through which reality acquires independent existence as an objectively existing social fact. We illustrate this process with two bilingual inscriptions of providers of sports services (Fig. 11) and accommodation (Fig. 12), which both have the same parallel text-icon composition with the textual part relying exclusively on nominal expressions. The tendency to leave out accounts at this stage of the pandemic situation documents the process of gradual establishment of the PRD in public semioscapes and projects the positionings of business agents as aligned with the dominant discourse framing COVID-19 as a health threat while projecting their identities as responsible and considerate agents (the principle of benevolence; Bella and Ogiermann, 2022) aligning themselves with dominant macro-level discourses. The signs may thus also be seen as representing the "grassroots messages of hope, solidarity, and social care" (Marshall, 2021:4) and as contributing to the discursive convergence of different agents "in promoting the same discourses of pandemic control, limitation, hope and solidarity" (Marshall, 2021:23).

Fig. 11 and 12. Non-official PRD (sport service provider and hotel).

Fig. 11. *POBYT BEZ OBÁV* / HOLIDAYS WITHOUT WORRIES

nosenie ochranných rúšok / face masks - *2 m odstup* / 2-metre distance - *dezinfekcia rúk* / hand disinfection - *dezinfekcia priestorov* / room disinfection

Fig. 12. *ĎAKUJEME, ŽE DODRŽIAVATE* / THANK YOU FOR FOLLOWING

rúško pri ubytovaní − odubytovaní / mask during check in − check out - *bezpečná vzdialenosť* / social distancing - *dezinfekciu* / disinfection - *zákaz návštev cudzích osôb* / no strangers visits

5.2.3. Historicizing and reification of pandemic signage

In March 2021, a year after the onset of the pandemic situation, the developmental trends of PRD described thus far were confirmed while some new ones appeared. First, a diachrony began to show in pandemic semiotic aggregates − new inscriptions were added to the existing ones, which led to the emergence of layers of inscriptions with long and short histories (Blommaert, 2012) documenting the persistence of the pandemic situation and responses to its development.[12] This is manifested in the sign regulating the entrance to the railway station (Fig. 13) in which the updated regulation requesting the use of a respirator is added to signage requiring entry with a face mask. The inscription displays a high degree of self-directed authority and strong deontic stance using a conventionalized nominal illocutionary structure (*ZÁKAZ VSTUPU BEZ RÚŠKA*/NO ENTRY WITHOUT A FACE MASK), which copies a prohibition-command paradigm of the social politeness ethos which dominates Slovak public signage (Ferenčík, 2015). The inscription *Povinný respirátor FFP2*/Mandatory respirator FFP2 represents the highest degree of objectification and reification of the pandemic situation, which is also confirmed by its high level of standardization and iconization. The inscription in Fig. 17 shows the completion of the iconization process in which language resources are taken over by the entirely iconic representation of meaning, which, following the "pictorial turn" (Mitchell, 2005: xiv; cited in Ekwall et al., 2021:2), reflects a shift of the contemporary societies away from writing towards a higher role of pictures in our understanding of the world.

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[12] After a period of restriction lifting and the end of the national state of emergency, the new wave of the pandemic was confirmed in Slovakia at the beginning of summer 2020. A so-called "traffic-light" system of regulating the pandemic regime according to the current situation in individual districts was introduced. As the epidemic situation worsened, in October 2021 national state of emergency was declared again and the restrictions involving traveling and face masks were tightened. In the following months, a curfew was declared. Also, a mass testing of citizens was launched, along with the regulation to wear respirators rather than face masks. Parallel to these new measures issued by health authorities causal accounts started to appear on signs (Fig. 13) prompting the identity of sign authors as law-abiding agents.

Fig. 13. Non-official PRD (entry to the railway station).

ZÁKAZ VSTUPU BEZ RÚŠKA / NO ENTRY WITHOUT A FACE MASK

Povinný respirator FFP2 V platnosti od 15. Marca 2021 vo všetkých interiéroch / Mandatory FFP2 respirator In effect from March 15, 2021 in all interiors

The following signs (Figs. 14–16) document the advancing nominalization towards acronymization and the formation of the sign word *ROR*, the trajectory of which can be traced as follows:

použite ochranné rúško → nosenie ochranných rúšok → rúško → R

dodržujte 2 m odstup → odstup → O

použite ochranný prostriedok → ruky → R.

use face mask → wearing face masks → face mask → R (m)

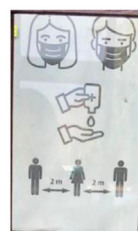keep 2m distance→ distance → O (d)

use protective equipment→ hands → R (h)

Fig. 14, 15, 16 and 17. Non-official PRD (food stalls and sport infrastructure).

Fig. 14. *Ďakujeme, že ste zodpovední rúško odstup ruky* / Thank you for being responsible face mask distance hands

Fig. 15. *!! ZÁKAZ KONZUMÁCIE !! JEDLA A NÁPOJOV PRI PREDAJNOM STÁNKU A V PRIESTORE PRED STÁNKOM !!!! RÚŠKO – ODSTUP – RUKY !!!! Ďakujeme za rešpektovanie opatrení a nariadení* / !! NO CONSUMPTION !! OF FOOD AND DRINKS NEAR SALES STAND AND IN THE AREA IN FRONT OF THE STAND !!! FACE MASK – DISTANCE – HANDS !!! Thank you for respecting measures and orders

Fig. 16. *R – O – R VSTUP IBA S RÚŠKOM - DODRŽUJ ODSTUP MIN. 2m - POUŽÍVAJ RUKAVICE ALEBO DEZINFEKCIU* / R (face mask) – O (distance) – R (hand cover/disinfectant) ENTRY ONLY WITH FACE MASK - KEEP DISTANCE AT LEAST 2m - USE GLOVES OR DISINFECTION

Our data from January–August 2022 further document iconization as a common semiotic process, with the face mask becoming the most represented pandemic object to the point where its representation reached a certain degree of symbolization - the icon of a face mask stands as a synecdochic representation of all regulatory activities and as a symbol of the pandemic period. We can observe this in the inscription (Fig. 18) which contains an icon of a face mask in the central position

surrounded by text *prosím rešpektujme zdravie ostatných*/please let's respect the health of others. Here, the downplayed authority is conveyed by inclusive plural (we) constructing compliance as a matter of common interest (see the moral dimension of the COVID-19 framework; Table 2).

Fig. 18, 19 and 20. Non-official PRD (hotel and inn).

Fig. 18. *prosím rešpektujme zdravie ostatných* | please let's respect the health of others

Fig. 19. *VSTUP LEN S RESPIRÁTOR FFP2* / ENTRY ONLY WITH A FFP2 RESPIRATOR

Fig. 20. *Vážení zákazníci, podľa platných opatrení od 16.8.2021 Furkotka funguje v režime OTP Konzumácia je povolená iba s: 1. POTVRDENÍM O OČKOVANÍ 2. PLATNÝM NEGATÍVNYM TESTOM 3. PO PREKONANÍ COVIDU (MAX. 180 DNÍ) Pri stole max. 4 osoby alebo rodinní príslušníci Ďakujeme za pochopenie RÚŠKO ODSTUP RUKY* / Dear customers, according to current measures in force from August 16, 2021 Furkotka operates in the OTP mode

Consumption is allowed only with: 1. VACCINATION CERTIFICATE 2. VALID NEGATIVE TEST RESULT 3. AFTER RECOVERING FROM COVID (MAX. 180 DAYS AFTER) Max 4 people or family members at a table Thank you for understanding FACE MASK DISTANCE HANDS

Our sample from August 2021 illustrates a noticeably novel set of semiotic practices of pandemic RD which emerged as a response to restrictions regarding the mobility of people resulting from the worsened pandemic situation.[13] They included the introduction of a mode of access which allowed for the entry of guests who were vaccinated, tested with negative results, or who had already had Covid-19 (*očkovaní, testovaní, prekonaní - OTP*/vaccinated, tested, recovered − OTP, Fig. 20). Because of its newness and complexity, two measures were taken − using full texts to communicate the meaning of the acronym OTP and giving an account in which the macro-level discourse of Covid-19 as an administrative problem resurfaced (Fig. 20) which prioritized the author's identity of a law-abiding agent. In the Slovak-English bilingual inscriptions in Figs. 21 and 22, the OTP mode is fully detailed in both languages in a duplicated fashion without the use of the acronym. Both inscriptions employ nominalization and impersonal passivization as the standardized resources of unmarked high authority and strong deontic stance (*Vstup povolený*.../Entry allowed …; *PRI VSTUPE JE POTREBNÉ PREUKÁZAŤ SA*.../TO EMBARK THE CABLE CAR PLEASE SHOW …). The inscription in Fig. 21 contains this strategy in both languages; however, as Fig. 22 shows, the downplay of authority and the weakening of stance in English is conveyed through the verbal construction (imperative) embedded within a negative politeness strategy (PLEASE SHOW).

5.2.4. Restoration of pre-pandemic semioscape

The semiotic processes described thus far were in progress until Spring 2022 when the pandemic situation in Slovakia improved and the majority of pandemic restrictions were removed. Accordingly, this resulted in a sharp drop in PRD in the researched areas which we observed during data collection carried out in August 2022; the remaining messages echoing the pandemic era were either removed from the centers of gatekeeping spaces and positioned to their peripheries (Fig. 22) or left

[13] From August 16, 2021 tourist service operators were obliged to choose their operation modes according to the rules of the "COVID-automat". The website of the High Tatras Tourism Association provided (https://www.tatry.sk/vysoke-tatry-chcu-zostat-otvorene/) signs which tourism operators could adopt and by placing them in entrance areas, they could communicate their operation mode.

Fig. 21 and 22. Non-official PRD (hotel and sports infrastructure).

Fig. 21. HOTEL FIS ŠTRBSKÉ PLESO Vstup povolený len pre očkovaných, testovaných a osoby s potvrdením o prekonaní Covid-19. | Only vaccinated, tested, and Covid-recovered clients are allowed to enter (literally, Entry allowed only for vaccinated, tested, and persons with Covid-19 recovery certificate).

Fig. 22. Pri vstupe na lanovku je potrebné preukázať sa negatívnym výsledkom AG, alebo PCR testu, alebo potvrdením o plnom zaočkovaní proti Covid-19. /TO EMBARK THE CABLE CAR, PLEASE SHOW A NEGATIVE AG OF RT-PCR TEST OR A CERTIFICATE AFTER FULL COVID-19 VACCINATION.

dormant to be re-installed Fig. 23), if necessary. The removal of the pandemic layer of semiotics also resulted in the re-instalment of the "normal", albeit post-pandemic, linguistic landscape along with a return to a stable regime of multilingualism.

Fig. 23 and 24. Non-official PRD (guesthouse and COVID-19 testing facility).

Fig. 23. *DODRŽUJTE ODSTUPY* / keep distance from others *POUŽITE RÚŠKO* /please use face mask *POUŽITE DEZINFEKCIU* | please use hand sanitizer

Fig. 24. *LEKÁREŇ*/PHARMACY

COVID-19 TESTING

6. Discussion and conclusion

We conclude our analysis of the management of PRD in the LL of the examined area by revisiting the three research questions. As an answer to the first question regarding the management of languages we conclude that the linguistic regime of PRD in the municipality of the High Tatras indexes the sociolinguistic scales on which the producers operate. During the initial stage of the pandemic, we identify a trend towards Slovak monolingualism on the part of producers operating (trans) locally, which is manifested especially in the official pandemic regulations issued by the municipal office. However, after the

initial period of monolingualism, commercial producers operating on the translocal-to-global scales switched to English bilingual regulatory signage, which was characteristic of the "normal", i.e., pre-pandemic regime of stable Slovak-English bilingualism in which English functions as a lingua franca. The absence of other languages indexing the presence of foreign tourists from lingua-cultures which traditionally form the backbone of the foreign clientele is perceived as noticeable, and thus marked.

The second question addresses the semiotic resources used to carry out PRD, which we consider as a specific register through which its producers convey regulatory measures imposed by state authorities by employing different levels of administrative style. Integration of symbolic (language), iconic (pictograms) and indexical (emplacement) elements in sign aggregates indicates transmodal semiosis (Pennycook, 2007) in which meaning emerges from the mutual dialogicality of the employed modes. Among the remarkably diverse practices coming from the multitude of producers we observe the processes of transmodalization, which is achieved through a gradual reduction of linguistic resources in favor of iconic resources which accompany linguistic texts as equal parts of inscriptions or even replace them altogether. The result of iconization and acronymization is the multimodal character of PRD which, together with the material resources used (quality of design, durability of the material support) reifies the presence of the pandemic in the LL.

Concerning the management of authority and deontic stance towards regulations, we observe a tendency towards their strengthening, especially on the part of the official (municipality) and some non-official locally-operating commercial producers, by employing the existing conventionalized practices already established in public sphere, such as nominalization and passivization. On the other hand, non-official producers operating on a translocal and global scale tend to downplay their authority and stance by employing globally circulating Anglo-world politeness practices, which may be motivated by framing their communication with the addressees as with potential clients.

Finally, we asked about resources of legitimization of regulations and of ensuring addressees' compliance with them. We have identified authors' references to the macro-level discourses emanating from the official authorities and references to their concern about the addressees' health and safety, which Bella and Ogiermann (2022) present as conformity and benevolence respectively as two principal values to which authors adhere when legitimizing their regulatory practices. It appears that the legitimization of regulation by referring to officially-issued decrees, viz. causal account, is not only a resource of strengthening the authority, and of construing the author's identity as a law-abiding actor (no identity construction resisting the dominant discourses and/or disaligning with them were spotted in our corpus), but also a standardizing practice used across the examined linguistic landscapes. This uniformity is attested in other studies of COVID-19 pandemic (Mitits, 2021; Bella and Ogiermann, 2022), which indicates the global character of the Covid-19 pandemic and indexes the globalized macro-level discourses. In our data, the highest degree of conformity is present in cases where regulations are explicitly referred to as direct effects of government's decisions, the lowest degree is present in signs where COVID-19 circumstances are implied or where a vague account is provided. Between these two poles on the scale are cases of regulatory signs in which authors combine conformity to official regulations with safety concerns, while prioritizing one over the other, or where authors act as self-directed agents and construct their self-image of business owners who care only about their customers' health. In our corpus we find a significant number of regulatory signs which refer to the pandemic circumstances indirectly, which may be caused by authors' presumption that addressees are aware of the continuing validity of the measures which arises from the shared orientation to the cognitive pandemic framework during the pandemic period. While the uniformity of regulatory practices connects the examined linguistic landscape with the globalized patterns of pandemic discourses, the diversity in the use of semiotic resources available to the authors, whether material or immaterial, create a "locally accommodated globality" (Mitits, 2021:186). As far as ensuring addressee's compliance is concerned, a well-established practice is the use of formulaic thanking for it through which the fulfillment of the regulatory act is anticipated and the identity of the addressee as a co-operative agent is projected.

In our longitudinal study we have tried to trace the development of PRD, producers' management of semiotic practices and resources since the onset to the end of the pandemic era in a tourist area which has been the focus of our long-time research interest. The short and compact period has given us an opportunity to study the dynamics of the evolution of public semioscapes against the backdrop of the overall societal developments which they sensitively index. In the imminent future, our continuing research will focus on the extent to which the pandemic signage will continue to form a distinct layer of the LL following the receding pandemic crisis, whether it will remain its permanent component, and if it does, how will the semiotic processes of multimodalization continue to contribute to the reification of PRD vis-à-vis globalization. Finally, in a long-term perspective, it will be of great interest to examine the processes of the reconstruction of "normal" shape of the linguistic landscape and restoration of multilingualism in the new, post-pandemic era.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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