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Linguistic landscape and geopolitics: Crisis signage as an index of the war in Ukraine

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Abstract
The outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine has led to the emergence of a layer of multimodal signage in public spaces as a channel of newly establishing crisis communication in neighbouring states. Using photographic data collected by the authors in the Eastern Slovak town of Prešov, the paper documents, analyses, and discusses this new addition to the local linguistic landscape. Our corpus of signs consists of informational signs, notices, stickers, flags, fliers and graffiti, and documents both "top-down" in nature, i.e. official or semi-official crisis signage emplaced in authorized locations, and "bottom-up", i.e. unofficial, ad hoc, temporary signage found in unauthorized spaces across the town. Apart from their placement, the two groups of signs differ in their functions, temporariness, materiality, and the ways they use semiotic resources. Overall, the often transient, non-permanent, and fluid nature of the signs mirrors the ever-changing situation in Ukraine. The findings suggest that the signs have three primary functions: expressing solidarity, "on the ground" support/assistance and protest, and back up Shohamy and Gorter's (2009, p.4) claim that linguistic landscape "contextualizes the public space within issues of […] political and social conflict[s]". What is more, the use of signs involves users' categorizations which "fuel the dynamics of power in public space and [they] are core ingredients of social and political conflicts" (Blommaert, 2013, p.48). As the major theoretical-methodological approaches, linguistic landscape studies, sociolinguistics of globalization, migration studies, geosemiotics, and identity construction are used.

Key words
crisis communication; geosemiotics; linguistic landscape; migration studies; identity construction; sociolinguistics of globalization; war in Ukraine

1. Introduction
Over the entire history of humankind, human mobility has always entailed the mobility of semiotic resources, including languages, discourses, and discourse practices, which humans carried along the spatial and temporal trajectories of their migration. Although mobility is not a new phenomenon, recent socio-political, economic, and technological developments have contributed to its acceleration and intensification and brought about new forms of diversity and language contact requiring innovative vocabularies, research methods, and models to cope with its complexity (Canagarajah, 2017). As a consequence of this, mobility of people and their languages necessarily destabilizes the modernist understanding of language as being tied to given territories and invites the reconceptualization of its nature, forms of valorization, and roles in the identity formation of its users in their deterritorialized migrant settings. The outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine in February 2022 has brought about an unprecedented migration of people from Ukraine fleeing from the war, which caused Slovakia (as a neighbouring country) to find itself at the frontline of the humanitarian response as either a transit or a destination country. Indexing this migration, a layer of multimodal signage in public spaces emerged as an important channel of crisis communication in Slovak municipalities. The present paper documents, analyses, and discusses this Ukrainian crisis signage as a new semiotic layer of the linguistic landscape of the Eastern Slovak town of Prešov focusing on the flows of signage, its functions, multimodal

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semiotic resources used, and the identity construction of its authors, while noting the historicity of its fluctuation.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Sociolinguistics of globalization/mobility/migration

Although the relationship between people's mobility and language has been recognized as an important correlate of sociolinguistic phenomena from the start of sociolinguistic research (Labov, 1966), its static, language *and* mobility understanding, in which mobility is another context against which language processes take place, has been replaced by a more dynamic understanding of language-in-motion (Blommaert and Dong, 2010) which approaches language not as an autonomous object that "looks at linguistic phenomena from within [the] social, cultural, political and historical context of which they are part" (Blommaert, 2010, p.3). The recent wave of qualitative, ethnography-informed sociolinguistic research termed *sociolinguistics of mobility* (Theodoropoulou, 2015) views mobility of people as involving "the mobility of linguistic and sociolinguistic resources [in which] 'sedentary' patterns of language use are complemented by 'trans-local' forms of language use, and [...] the combination of both often accounts for unexpected sociolinguistic effects" (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p.367) in unexpected places (Pennycook, 2012). Mobility is defined as "the dislocation of language and language events from the fixed position in time and space attributed to them by a more traditional linguistics and sociolinguistics [...] and insertion of language in a spectrum of human action which is not defined purely in temporal and spatial location, but in terms of temporal and spatial trajectories" (Blommaert, 2010, p.21). From this, it follows that "[p]lace and locality are not so much defined by physical aspects of context, by tradition or origins but by the flows of people, languages, cultures through the landscape" (Pennycook, 2012, p.26).

The key sociolinguistic processes within the sociolinguistics of globalization are scalarity, orders of indexicality, indexical orders, and polycentricity. Sociolinguistic processes take place in space which is organized not only horizontally but is also vertically stratified as they occur at particular scale levels, whether local, trans-local, or global, and their mutual interaction gives meaning to these processes. Physical space is made social, i.e. it is socially constructed as "social, cultural, political, historical, ideological TimeSpace" (Lefebvre, 2003 cited in Blommaert, 2010, p.34). The scales are connected indexically, which means that acts of communication occurring at a lower scale-level point to meanings, norms, and expectations located at a hierarchically higher scale-level which represent "centres" of authority. Indexicality is orderly, and the sources of its orderliness are twofold. First, as indexical orders, social meanings are created in repeated and thus predictable situations leading to stabilized practices which are recognized as their types, such as standard languages, styles, registers and/or discourses. Second, as orders of indexicality, in which social meanings represent repertoires of indexical orders functioning within stratified semiotic regimes in which they are mutually valuated as *better* or *worse*. This results in different patterns of distribution of authority and power since people tend to differ as to their access to semiotic resources and practices. From this, it also follows that people moving across spaces also move across different orders of indexicality while orienting to different centres of authority, which makes "every environment in which humans convene and communicate [...] almost by definition polycentric" (Blommaert, 2010, p.40). Finally, rather than on entire languages being distributed across horizontal spaces, the sociolinguistics of mobility focuses on mobile semiotic resources which are deployed vertically on particular scale-levels.

2.2 Migration studies

Since the advent of the mobility turn in social sciences, researchers of language in the context of social mobility have tried to account for the mechanisms which produce social inequalities (Faist, 2013) caused by migration. The rise and growth of migration studies, a relatively new transdisciplinary research field of the study of an old phenomenon, has been marked by a gradual broadening of disciplinary diversity to also include language studies (Scholten et al., 2022). In contrast to, for example, tourism or commuting, migration is defined as "a specific form of spatial mobility, aimed at a certain minimum duration of residence in the destination and a similar minimum duration of residence in the place of origin" (Kraler & Reichel, 2022, p.443) and migrants as "individuals who change their place of usual residence across international borders […] for at least three months" (ibid., p.444). Also, several

different migration trajectories are distinguished, such as movement within an areal unit, i.e. internal migration; movement across an areal unit, i.e. "external migration" (Boyle et al., 1998); "rural-urban migration", i.e. from agricultural to industrialized places; "south-north migration", i.e. from a developing to a developed country; "north-south migration", i.e. from a developed to a developing country; and "south-south migration", i.e. from a developing to a[nother] developing country (Tovares & Kamwangamalu, 2017). When it comes to language, trajectories of migration always alter linguistic regimes of places, since migrants never move "across empty spaces" (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p.368), and their presence is associated with different degrees of their "linguistic visibility" – in new environments, their linguistic repertoires are redefined and re-evaluated in such a way that "ways of speaking that were useful and highly valued in one place can be meaningless in another" (Deumert, 2013; cited in Tovares & Kamwangamalu, 2017, p.207).

2.3 Geosemiotics and linguistic landscape studies

Geosemiotics represents the study of "the ways in which the placement of discourse in the material world produces meanings that derive directly from that placement" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p.22). Similar to the sociolinguistics of globalization, geosemiotics understands space as a socially constructed object of study and a site of social action. With indexicality of signs as its central concept, it subsumes visual and place semiotics, interaction order and several types of discourses to conceptualize how signs deployed in the material world are brought into relation with their users and their social actions. The metalanguage of geosemiotics, which includes the notions of emplacement, indexicality, types of semiotic space, types of discourse, interaction order (from Goffman, 1959), and visual semiotics (from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) enables us to deal with the semiotic processes accompanying the placement of signs in the material world.

Linguistic landscape studies, which was introduced into sociolinguistic studies by Landry and Bourhis (1997) as a mainly quantitative study of the representation of languages in public spaces, is used in the present paper as a complement to geosemiotics. Following a sharp quantitative rise of research interest and the ensuing criticism of its basic tenets, it has adopted "a qualitative prism" to look at semioscape as its object of study, which is approached as a symbolically constructed "decorum" of any public space which includes "every space in the community or the society that is not private propriety, such as streets, parks or public institutions" (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p.41). In its initial conceptualization as the "language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.25), the notion of linguistic landscape has been extended to cover the "symbolic construction of the public space" (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p.41). The shift has been welcomed as a "more mature semiotic approach in which signs themselves are given greater attention both individually [...] and in combination with each other" (Blommaert & Maly, 2015, p.3).

2.4 Identity construction

Ukrainian crisis signage is also approached in the present paper as comprising acts of identity whereby its actors display their positioning towards the war in Ukraine. We employ Bucholtz and Hall's (2004; 2005; 2008) approach, who define identity as "the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p.586) and understand it as "a relational and a sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories" (ibid., pp.585-6). Although the emergence of identity proceeds at multiple levels, they consider it primarily as a linguistic, discursive construct. Their framework is based on five principles. First, the *emergence* principle approaches identity as an intersubjective achievement in that it is produced within semiotic practices rather existing prior to them. Second, the *positionality* principle posits that identity categories range along the micro-macro continuum between stable demographic categories through local ethnographic positionings to temporary stances/roles specific to situated interactions. Third, the *indexicality* principle views indexicality as a central semiotic process through which identities emerge and which link semiotic resources with social meanings. These semiotic resources include explicit uses of categories, implicit hints to them via presuppositions and/or implicatures, evaluative and epistemic orientations to talk, interactional footings and roles, and styles and discourses. Fourth, the *relationality* principle states that identities are

constructed intersubjectively through mutually overlapping and complementary intersubjective relations called tactics of intersubjectivity. Finally, according to the *partialness* principle, identity is inherently partial and may result from intentional individual agency or collective agency of more individuals and which may be partly conscious or habitual. All these principles can be seen to apply to the dataset in the present paper and their applications are refered to throughout the discussion.

Although identity tends to be generally associated with macro-level social categories (race, gender, age, etc.), it is micro-level temporary positionings which make stance "fundamental to identity construction" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008, p.153). Placement of a sign is considered to be an act of stance-taking through which actors position themselves to the crisis and the phenomena instigated by the war (refugees) and use semiotic resources to construct intersubjective relations, such as adequation and distinction, authentication and denaturalization, authorization, and illegitimization.

3. Data and methods

Our corpus of 150 signs collected in the Eastern Slovak town of Prešov between February 2022 and May 2023 consists of billboards, informational signs, notices, stickers, flags, fliers, and graffiti, focusing on the Ukrainian crisis signage which they display, and which are approached as indexing the underlying semiotic processes.

We look at the signage as results of interaction between its producers and receivers who have their own perspectives on the meaning. To approach them, we use Culpeper and Haugh's (2014, p.127) participation framework which captures speaker and hearer "footings", i.e. participants' roles and responsibilities which they assume during interaction. On the production side of sign placement, production roles are those of utterer (who writes a sign), author (who designs a sign), principal (who is responsible for the content of a sign) and figure (who is represented in a sign). These footings can, but need not, overlap within a single participant. The application of this categorization onto the signage means aligning these footings with the categories traditionally used in linguistic landscape research. In the paper, we adhere to the conventional, albeit slightly broad and often hard to precisely establish, classification of top-down and bottom-up signs which, in more recent research, has been complemented by focusing on other aspects of signage, such as multimodality, language policy, and power (cf. Gorter & Cenoz, 2023). The difference is based on the direction of exercise of authority to manage the implementation of language policies and placement of signage by relevant agents. Broadly speaking, the agents of top-down, official signage are bodies representing different levels of state administration: at the central level they are the national (state) government; at the regional level they are regional government offices (superior territorial units) and district offices; and at the local level they are municipal offices. On the other hand, bottom-up, non-official signage is represented by private businesses, non-governmental organizations, grassroots initiatives, and individual citizens. Given the number and variety of individual agents, non-official signage is much more diverse. Since some agents are not easily categorizable in terms of this two-fold distinction, a third category of "semi-official" signage (Demaj & Vandenbroucke, 2016) is helpful to include those institutions, such as the local university, which are publicly owned and which manage their language policies within the scope of their authority.

We maintain that in the default interpretation of the signage all participant footings are overlapping; for example, a sign placed on the entrance door to the municipal office (Fig. 21) indexes the utterer (municipality), the author (municipality used their own resources to create it), the principal (municipality is responsible for the content, i.e. the offer of assistance), and figure (municipality addresses Ukrainians as the target of assistance). There are possibilities, though, of certain nuances of signage management which go beyond the scope of present research. For example, the degree of the freedom of individual entities/actors to act independently as principals – it is unclear whether, in the case of private corporate business, a sign is sanctioned by the whole business or it is a decision of a branch or store manager, or whether an employee wearing a ribbon in the colours of the Ukrainian flag as a token of solidarity is the result of top-down or bottom-up management. Moreover, in the university sphere, it is unclear to what extent a university sign promoting a Ukrainian concert is a manifestation of the (semi-)official top-down flow or a bottom-up expression of support by a grassroots initiative. Similarly, it is unclear whether the Ukrainian flag placed on the façade of a house facing *Hlavná ulica* (Main Street) stands as a full bottom-up example authored by an individual acting as a principal, or, as the building may be owned

and/or maintained by a municipal company, whether it manifests a bottom-up sign authored by the municipal office.

On the reception side, the corresponding "hearer" footings are recipient (who reads a sign), interpreter (who interprets a sign), accounter (who holds the principal socially responsible for the meaning of a sign) and target (who is represented in a sign). Within the role of the recipient, we need to further differentiate whether they are ratified participants, i.e. addressees and/or side participants, unratified non-participants, viz. bystanders and/or overhearers (listeners-in, eavesdroppers). We can observe how, in the default interpretation of the signage, these participant footings are overlapping, although in a less straightforward way. We claim that it is through the use of language whereby sign recipients, whether Slovaks or Ukrainians, are ostensibly sorted as ratified participants – by using Ukrainian, sign producers approach Ukrainians as recipients/addressees who are expected to interpret signs, identify themselves as their targets and act on them as accounters (e.g. Fig. 10). In a parallel fashion, the addressees of the Slovak language are Slovaks (e.g. Fig. 11 indexing the discourse of protest). In parallel Slovak-Ukrainian bilingual signs (Fig. 6), speakers of the given language are sign addressees, who are, with regard to the other language, side participants (they assume what the message in the other language is about). The addressees of monolingual English signs (e.g. Fig. 19), whose symbolicity prevails over informativeness, are participants with adequate knowledge of English at both (trans-)local and global scales (Blommaert, 2010). The choice of language is thus a form of simultaneous inclusion of recipients as addressees while excluding others and relegating them to non-participant status (for a finer distinction of the non-participant categories of bystander, overhearer, listener-in and eavesdropper see Verschueren, 1999).

Three research questions are posited which aim at elucidating the nature of these processes, the semiotic resources used, and semiotic practices carried out by its authors:

1. What types of indexicality can be identified in the examined semiotic space? What semiotic scales do they operate on? What orders of indexicality and indexical orders do they represent?
2. How are semiotic resources, whether spatial, linguistic, discoursal etc., employed in service of these semiotic processes?
3. What types of semiotic practices are employed to construe user's identities?

As a research methodology, qualitative methods of ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis are employed. The ethnographic method consists of repeated, short, and intensive walks through multiple locations of the town's public spaces, viz. its main square and streets adjacent to it during which photographic data of crisis signage were collected and (dis)continuities in the semiotic practices were observed with the purpose of developing an insider/emic perspective, which is a method akin to *multisited ethnography* (Canagarajah, 2017). A historical perspective of the processes was adopted by going beyond the synchronic view of the semioscape and perceiving it as a "layered simultaneity" (Blommaert, 2005, p.237) of semiotic practices and thereby attempting to observe its historicity, i.e. emergence of the crisis signage, its incorporation into the existing semiotic regimes as well as its fluctuations over time.

4. Analysis and discussion

Once it emerged in February 2022, Ukrainian crisis signage entered the linguistically organized semiotic space of the town and altered its complexity by rearranging the existing system of indexicality and expanding its polycentricity. The signage was deployed mainly in the town's passage spaces and special use spaces (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and represented its regulatory and infrastructural discourses (ibid.). With a view to answering the above-stated research questions, in the following analysis, the processes of indexicality and types of discourses are addressed, then the semiotic resources used and speech act and identity construction practices are looked at.

4.1 Indexical orders, orders of indexicality and types of discourse

Prior to February 2022, the migration of Ukrainians to Slovakia was driven chiefly by economic reasons (cf. the economic driver dimension; Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022) and followed the "south-north" trajectory, i.e. from a developing country to a developed country (Tovares & Kamwangamalu, 2017) since it was motivated primarily by socioeconomic reasons. While encountering new cultural practices, Ukrainians developed linguistic repertoires on the spectrum of Ukrainian-Slovak bilingualism and code switching/mixing in which their language was devalued – from the national/central language of their homeland, it was relegated to the position of a peripheral/local language to be used only in private domains of their lives. In public, Ukrainian was mostly "invisible", and it did not feature in the linguistic landscapes of public places. However, following the outbreak of the war in February 2022, a different type of Ukrainian migration appeared, viz. refugee migration whose driving force was security (cf. the security driver dimension; Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022). This migration was significantly different from the previous one in terms of its manifestations in the form of the emergence of novel indexical orders, which can be called "Ukrainian crisis signage", in public spaces. This was accompanied by a shift in the existing linguistic order of indexicality, viz. in the rise of new forms of multilingualism in Slovakia's linguistic landscapes, which was characterized by the establishment of Slovak and Ukrainian bilingualism and Slovak and English-as-a-lingua-franca bilingualism as well as with the emergence of novel indexical orders, i.e. functions to which semiotic resources were put.

Within the crisis signage, two orders of indexicality emerged arising from the two directions of its flow from the centres which control "the general systems of meaningful semiosis valid at any given time" (Blommaert, 2013, p.39). The two types of signage were "top-down" signage coming from official agents, such as the municipality and state organizations which are emplaced in authorized locations, and "bottom-up" signage authored by non-official agents aggregated from non-governmental organisations, third-sector organizations, and individuals. Within these orders of indexicality, "particular indexical orders relate to others in relations of mutual valuation – higher/lower, better/worse" (Blommaert, 2013, p.39). Depending on the functions to which the crisis signage was put, three indexical orders can be discerned representing three types of discourses: the discourse of assistance (Fig. 1, Fig. 2), the discourse of solidarity (Fig. 3), and the discourse of protest (Fig. 4).

Figure 1. Official (municipality), assistance

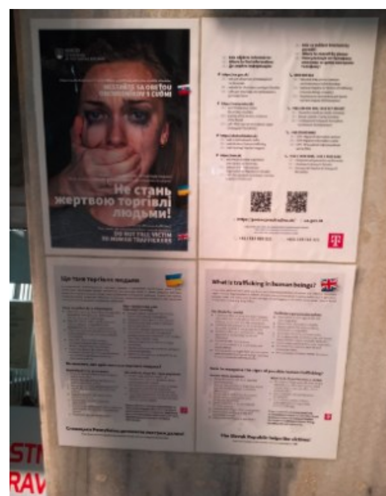

Figure 2. Official (state), assistance

Figure 3. Non-official (university), solidarity

Figure 4. Non-official (individual), protest

The emergence of these discourses brought about the emergence of novel identities of the social agents operating in the public space that were stimulated by the crisis, which had not existed prior to the crisis (cf. the emergence principle; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and which may be provisionally called "assistant", "supporter", and "protester". Regarding the positions which actors take vis-à-vis the crisis (cf. the positionality principle; ibid.), these identities can be viewed as encompassing meso-/micro-level temporary positions and specific stances. The three indexical orders/types of discourse realized by semiotic resources emanate from their respective centres in somewhat different ways: the data suggest that while the official centres tend to initiate and sustain discourses of assistance (via the top-down signage), the non-official centres follow the tendency to carry out the discourses of solidarity and protest (via the bottom-up signage), although we noted an overlap between them (Table 1). The power associated with these centres then validates the discourses differently – on the one hand, the discourse of assistance is valued more as "better", while the discourse of protest tends to be valued less, which transpires in the richness, degree of elaboration, and complexity of the semiotic resources used.

Table 1. Centres of signage and types of discourses

<table>
<tr><th>Flow of discourse</th><th>top-down</th><th>bottom-up</th></tr>
<tr><td>Type of discourse</td><td colspan="2">assistance, solidarity</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>protest</td></tr>
</table>

4.2 Semiotic resources

The agents-of-crisis signage utilizes a host of semiotic resources from the pools of spatial, material, visual, linguistic, or discoursal repertoires to carry out communicative intentions whereby they index their identities (cf. the indexicality principle; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). In the use of these resources, the following tendencies can be observed. The official signs placed on municipal offices (notice boards) or officially approved exhibit/display spaces (doors, windows) tend to use more professional designs and are more structurally elaborate. The non-official signs are largely situated in passage spaces and areas with high volumes of footfall, i.e. on *Hlavná ulica* (the Main Street) as well as side streets off *Hlavná ulica* and close to busy intersections and pedestrian crossings, and are mostly placed on municipal infrastructural property, such as lampposts, fuse-boxes, traffic lights, and building facades. By occupying these unofficial spaces, they redefine them to provisionally function as display spaces, which effectively categorizes them as transgressive semiotic practices (e.g. Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 7). As such, their ad hoc design and temporary materiality causes them to be ephemeral since they are susceptible to being removed, damaged, or simply worn out.

Figure 5. Official, assistance

Figure 6. Non-official, assistance

Figure 7. Non-official, protest

As to the linguistic resources used, the examined crisis signage rearranges the linguistic order of indexicality, or linguistic regime, of the place by the inclusion of Ukrainian language written in Cyrillic script into the local linguistic landscape and assigning it the role of a second language, following Slovak as the official language, in the hierarchy of languages on multilingual signs (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). A noteworthy exception to this hierarchy is the reversal of the order in an official Ukrainian-Slovak bilingual sign (Fig. 5) produced under the auspices of the Prešov and Košice self-governing regions in which Ukrainian was given precedence over Slovak, presumably with the motivation of showing hospitality and welcoming attitudes towards refugees. Slovak-Ukrainian bilingualism characterizes both official (Fig. 1) as well as unofficial signage (Fig. 6) and carries out the discourse of assistance. The complexity of the linguistic order of indexicality of the crisis signage is added to with the presence of English in both top-down and bottom-up signage which is either a foreign language (Fig. 2; this status is declared by the presence of the British Flag) or as a lingua franca (ELF) by virtue of its functioning in lingua-franca situations "among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p.7), as in Fig. 4.

Another tendency in the linguistic regime to be observed is the monolingualism of non-official discourses of support and protest, which employs ELF (Fig. 8), Ukrainian (Fig. 9, Fig. 10) or Slovak (Fig. 11).

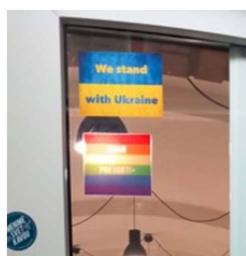

Figure 8. Solidarity

Figure 9. Assistance

Figure 10. Solidarity

Figure 11. Protest

Some of the less orthodox uses of "languages" resist easy categorization as belonging to any particular language as a pre-given entity and rather invite a different, language-as-a-local-practice interpretation (Pennycook, 2010) since they draw on the uses of isolated resources and their fragments. They do it either singly, e.g. in the slogan *MORE LOVE LESS WAR* (Fig 12), or in the practices of code-switching or code-mixing. This applies primarily to English, whose presence is identifiable in instances of English-to-Ukrainian code-switching (Fig. 13, Fig. 14), but also in situations where the ludic potential of English is employed resulting in the cryptic message *FCK PTN* spread across the examined area (Fig 15). Here, we can observe a situation in which "English" emerges ad hoc from the context of the use of fragments of resources; for it to have any meaning, it has to be located in the local practice. This is akin to Canagarajah's (2007) and Pennycook's (2010) Lingua Franca English (LFE) which "does not exist as a system out there [but] is constantly brought into being in each context of communication" (ibid., p.94).

Figures 12, 13, 14. Solidarity *Figure 15.* Protest

Crisis signage is multimodal in that it employs, apart from visual linguistic resources, a host of visual non-linguistic resources including materiality and placement, which are integrated in the joint multimodal semiosis. These are perceived non-linearly and synergistically as holistic complexes, gestalts in which the whole is not the sum of its individual parts (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016). In this aspect, crisis signage is highly diverse and ranges between visual full-text posters representing the discourse of assistance (Fig. 2) through carriers of solidarity messages with minimum language (Fig. 20) and material objects, or artefacts relying on symbolic meanings of visual (yellow and blue, Fig. 16) and material objects (national flag, Fig. 2) representing the discourse of protest and/or solidarity. The symbolicity of colour appears to be a constant theme which permeates all types of discourses, whether that of assistance (Fig. 5, Fig. 9), solidarity (Fig. 8), or protest (Fig. 15).

Two other semiotic resources which correlate with the direction of the flow and type of discourse is the quality of typography, viz. writing/printing vs. handwriting, and endurance of material carrier, viz. permanence vs. temporariness. On the one hand, top-down discourses of assistance and support employ high quality print, professional design, durable material carrier while bottom-up discourses of support and protest resort to ad hoc handwritten design and low durability material (Fig. 19) which, due to its placement in outdoor passage spaces, is prone to wear and tear or being intentionally damaged (*PUTINOVI NEVER*, Fig. 11).

Figures 16, 17, 18. Support *Figure 19.* Protest

The use of visual resources in the crisis signage can be analysed using another component of the geosemiotic framework, Kress and Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual design. Due to the large diversity of their uses, no single pattern of visual design underlying the discourses can be identified, yet there are certain tendencies to be observed. All discourses are describable in terms of their employment of three components of design, viz. visual semiotics, composition, and modality, all of them contain picture as a unit which consists of several components/participants which can be represented as interactive, conceptual, and narrative. However, there is a large variation of design varying between compositionally rich multimodal designs and simple, mono-modal samples which tend to co-vary with functions and the flow of discourse. For example, the monomodal regulatory sign (Fig. 20) representing the discourse of assistance issued by the state-run railway company uses lingual and paralingual (bold print) resources. It follows an overall top-down organization within which the two blocks of text duplicating the message in Slovak and Ukrainian are themselves organized in a top-down, left-right direction. A contrasting example is the multimodal sign (Fig. 18) placed by a private commercial agent representing the discourse of support. It utilizes a centre-margin design whose centre is occupied by an iconic participant (a heart) representing an act of donation which symbolically represents goodwill and, metaphorically, financial support. The upper textual block complements the central iconic part

by performing the pragmatic function of invitation to make a financial donation, the lower block identifies the host institution as a principal organizer of the campaign and the non-profit agency participating in it.

Some signs are indeterminate as to any particular pattern underlying their visual design. For example, the sign placed on the entrance door to the municipal office (Fig. 21) can be interpreted as centrally designed by placing the Ukrainian flag into its centre which appeals to the addressees of the assistance. The top line presents the emblems of the Slovak state and the municipality as two institutional agents offering their assistance and advice and the word *HELP* from the ELF resource pool. At the bottom, a stylized character "*i*" set against a blue background is used as a translingual resource to index the place as that of offering their assistance to Ukrainian nationals.

Figures 20, 21. Assistance

Figures 22, 23. Solidarity

4.3 Speech act practices

The agents-of-crisis signage uses discourse practices which are aimed at attaining its illocutionary goals of providing assistance, demonstrating solidarity, and expressing protest. It is approached in the present paper using the classic categorization of speech acts (Searle, 1976) which are distinguishable on the basis of illocutionary point/force, direction of fit between speakers' words and the world, speakers' psychological state, and the propositional content of the speech act (Mey, 2001; Culpeper & Haugh, 2014).

The discourse of assistance is carried out by speakers' employment of commissives, directives, and representatives. While they all share the same content, viz. the task associated with providing their assistance to the addressees, they differ in other criteria for distinguishing between speech acts. In commissives, speakers undertake an obligation to fulfil the content of the act and "adapt" the world to their words. They include offering (e.g., Fig. 5, Fig. 9, Fig. 21) and inviting (making a donation, Fig. 18). The same world-words fit applies also to directives, but the obligation to fulfil the content of the act is created in the hearers; in the observed crisis signage, they typically include instructing (e.g., Fig. 2, Fig. 6). Representatives assert the content of proposition which fits the (external) world; for example, in the municipal sign in Fig. 21 the announcement is conveyed via the elliptical structure *(We provide) HELP* and *(We provide) i(nformation)*.

To convey solidarity, actors employ representative speech acts which can be modelled on the underlying implicit assertion "We support Ukraine". This applies to explicit displays of support, as in the announcement *WE STAND WITH UKRAINE* (Fig. 8), *Modlíme sa za Ukrajinu!* ('We pray for Ukraine'; Fig. 22), *(We support) DONBASS* (Fig. 23), as well as to the non-verbal sign representing two hearts in the Ukrainian national colours whose underlying proposition can be paraphrased as "we support Ukraine" (Fig. 16), or the national flag (Fig. 17).

To voice their protest, the authors of crisis signage use expressives, in which words fit the speaker's psychological world whereby they convey their negative attitude towards the war and its perpetrators. To do that, one subgroup of protest signage which uses uniform design (handwritten block letters) and material carrier (sticker) uses the form of an imperative sentence (e.g. *END THE WAR OR IT WILL END US*, Fig. 19). Another uniform subgroup of protest signage uses the imperative sentence form to convey a pseudo-directive (*PUTINOVI NEVER*/ 'do not trust Putin', Fig. 11; *FCKPTN,* Fig. 15). It should be stated that protest crisis signage (Fig. 19, 11) and some solidarity signage (Fig. 23) is placed in non-semiotic, unapproved spaces (lampposts) and thus represents illegal, transgressive discourse (Scollon and Scollon, 2003). Needless to say, these acts subverting regular semiotic practices come from bottom-up anonymous actors whose identity is meant to remain unrevealed.

4.4 Identity construction

Crisis signage may also be approached as an area where its actors position themselves vis-à-vis the war in Ukraine, and individual signs as acts of identity, or "social positioning of the self" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) whereby its agents position themselves as "for assistance" and/or as "against the war". Through these positionings at the micro-level, they align themselves with the dominant, macro-level discourses distributed from (state, municipality) institutional centres and thereby construct legitimizing identities (Castells, 2010) and the identity relation of adequation (cf. the relationality principle; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Overall, legitimizing identity construction is uniform across the entire crisis signage since no indicators of the construction of resistance identity which is opposed to the dominant discourse were identified. However, within the discourse of protest, signs which bear traces of damage were recorded (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12), which could indicate acts of resistance identity construction, the identity position of distinction (cf. the relationality principle; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) by anonymous agents.

It should be noted that these identity positions are partial (cf. the partialness principle; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) in the sense that they may be shifting with regard to the "contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other" (ibid., p.605). This means that potential identity shifts on the macro-level indicating the changing current official policy of the state towards the crisis are expected to transpire into the crisis signage, although no such shifts in the discourses and the associated identity construction have been noted.

Finally, some identity positions may overlap – assistance, whether official or non-official, may be taken as an implicit declaration of support. However, since the municipal discourse of assistance implements the official, macro-level political-ideological processes at the state level, municipality displays of assistance or support are not the results of their deliberate and autonomous agency. On the other hand, in the case of crisis signage authored by commercial agents, their alignment with the dominant discourses may be seen as a fully conscious effort to take this as an opportunity to "construct a positive self-image or a desirable identity for the business owners" (Bella & Ogiermann, 2022, p.2) in the eyes of their customers, whether Ukrainian ones who are addressees of crisis signage, or non-Ukrainian customers who are bystanders (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014) in the act of communication. On the other hand, acts of micro-level protest by anonymous individuals acting as self-directed social actors (Bella & Ogiermann, 2022) are also inherently acts of support.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present paper documents and analyses new additions to an emerging layer of the linguistic landscape of Prešov – crisis signage connected to the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine, and the resulting migration of people away from the conflict. The 150 examples of collected data show varying orders of indexicality ranging from highly organized, regulated, and professionally produced "top-down" inscriptions, which are often emplaced in close proximity to state, municipal, or official locations, to more ad hoc, unofficial, and unregulated "bottom-up" inscriptions, which are often emplaced in unauthorized locations and produced using less professional material carriers. The inscriptions in the data sample perform three main types of discourse: solidarity, assistance and support, and protest. The inscriptions discussed in the paper use a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic resources (e.g. mono-, bi- and multilingualism, ELF, LFE, and commissive, directive, expressive, declarative, and representative speech acts, and re-semiotization of the Ukrainian flag and national colours both in isolation as well as in combination with other semiotic and linguistic resources) to achieve the stated aims. Furthermore, the choice, use, prominence, order, and placement of language (Slovak, Ukrainian, and English) in the inscriptions help to perform the stated discourses as well as re-arrange or re-define the linguistic order of the local linguistic landscape. The presence of Ukrainian, in the official "top-down" signage creates a new layer of multilingualism in the local linguistic landscape, the use of ELF in combination with Slovak, Ukrainian, or both, places English within a new layer of multilingualism in crisis signage away from its more established function as "café" English, or commercial glossing. The relative scarcity of Ukrainian monolingualism in the research sample suggests two possibilities: the first being that the majority of the crisis signage was not produced with (solely) Ukrainian addressees in mind. Due to state language policy, the Slovak language is required by law in official signs even if the addressees (in this case) are not Slovak citizens – the desire to spread and maintain awareness, tweak

compassion, and raise the level of donations, support and assistance partly explains the presence of Slovak and ELF in, particularly, the “bottom-up” signage.

Another possible reason for the inclusion of English might be the conscious decision to avoid the use of Russian to address recipients, even though a large number of Ukrainians migrating to Slovakia would be able to understand Russian better than Slovak or English. The second reason for the relative paucity of Ukrainian-only signage is that the producers of the crisis signage, at official and unofficial levels, are not, by and large, Ukrainians – in fact, the most commonly observed examples of Ukrainian monolingualism were graffiti, suggesting that the producers of those inscriptions are Ukrainian, and the addressees are Ukrainian as well. The identity construction in the observed crisis signage is overall pro-Ukraine and anti-war. However, the identity constructed in the “top-down” signage seems to orient towards projecting the idea that “assistance is good”, “support is good”, “solidarity is good”, while shying away from constructing an anti-war, “protest is good”, “Russia is bad” identity. The “bottom-up” signs, not being connected to any official, state, or municipal body, and therefore not subject to political sensitivities or non-proliferation of explicit ideologies, are more open to “anti-war”, “protest is good” identity construction. No overt “pro-war”, “pro-Russia”, “pro-Putin”, or anti-Ukraine signage or identity construction was noted in the research sample.[2] However, instances of damage to, especially, the “bottom-up” signage was recorded, which could be interpreted as having been caused intentionally by people wanting to construct an identity which went against the prevailing mood of the public.[3] An additional finding was that the official, “top-down” inscriptions are gradually disappearing from the local linguistic landscape, which may be a reflection of changing attitudes in temporary ad hoc language policy and the changing political situation.

The potential of the present research, i.e. to study the development, change, and evolution of semiotics in public space in the context of moments of social change and upheaval and how they are indexed, is large. A question for further research is whether, and for how long, this emerging layer of the local linguistic landscape will remain once the war ends, in a similar fashion as, for instance, observable remnants of Covid-19 pandemic regulatory discourse have. Another question for further research is to what extent Ukrainian will insert itself into the multilingualism of the local linguistic landscape, whether it will be permanently encoded in official as well as unofficial language policy and communication, or whether its presence in the public semioscape is of a more transient nature, that will fade and gradually disappear in the linguistic landscape of post-war Eastern Slovakia.

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[2] One woman was observed by the authors wearing a Russian flag fabric badge, but, due to concerns over GDPR breaches, as well as a desire to avoid possible public confrontation, she was not photographed.

[3] Based on the authors’ repeated observation over the course of data collection, municipal council cleaners do not tend to remove or clean stickers or similar “transgressive” signs. They are rather left to rot or be removed by the weather. The damage recorded in a significant part of the sample, however, suggests deliberate, physical, human attempts at removal. However, the authors admit that they have no record of someone found in the act of removing a sign and then interviewing them as to their motivation.

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