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## Linguistic Landscape of the City of Krasnoyarsk

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine some categorical issues of the statement on universal links, mutual interdependence and holistic nature of linguistic phenomena and social processes. Under the scope of closer observation is linguistic landscape of the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk. The topical issue lies within a global theme “Language and Society”, which reveals social character of development and functional use of languages. From the qualitative research perspective, the paper examines resident’s self-reported emotions and visual perceptions of the linguistic landscape. The study implies results from contributive efforts of multidisciplinary approach to analysis of urban settings.

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*Keywords:* Sociolinguistics; linguistic landscape; linguistic tokens; commercial shop signs

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### 1. Introduction

Scholars from many areas are tempting to exhibit systematic description of linguistic profiles of present-day cities. It should be mentioned that the so-called “Linguistic landscape” has recently developed as a zone of cooperation among a wider spectrum of specialists. Sociolinguists, involved into studies of interdependence of all kinds of social and linguistic phenomena paid attention to the fact that public spaces are marked by linguistically formulated symbols, which relate to many social, economic, political and cultural grounds (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Shoamy & Gorter, 2008).

Generally speaking, the attempt to address varied topical issues may be justified by understanding that the theory and modern methodology of linguistic landscape cannot be put into a certain and elaborated paradigm. Scholars

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argue that there is no universal concept-base inventory, which could support coordinated study of this specific-related issue.

From the diachronic perspective, the studies of the Russian sociolinguist B. Larin on dialectal profile of the city and its social groups of population (Project team “Language of the city” worked at the History of Arts Institute as early as in 1926-1931), then studies of the Chicago School of urban sociology (1920-1930), and to some extent, the research works of W. Labov (1960s), the founder of the American sociolinguistics, contributed into understanding of differentiation between codes of meaning construction by various social strata of the city population. The resulting statement of previous studies evidenced that “spaces are constructed not just through the objects and boundaries that surround us and the habitual ways we conceive of them, but also through interaction with others operating in the “same” space” (Ben-Rafael, Shoamy & Barni, 2010: xiv).

Thus, one of the definitions of linguistic landscape, under which the above-mentioned scholars assume linguistic objects that mark public spaces with tokens, includes “any written sign found outside private homes, from road signs to names of streets, shops and schools. The study of linguistic landscapes focuses on analyzing these items according to the language utilized, their relative saliency, syntactic or semantic aspects. These language facts which landmark the public space are social facts that, as such, relate to more general social phenomena” (Ibid.: xiv). It is understood, that further development of linguistic landscape will depend on consolidated contribution of different disciplinary areas. Their common understanding of linguistic landscape as symbolic frame of public spaces motivated us to look at the city of Krasnoyarsk as a relevant social environment domiciled by people who live there and those who work there as advertising agents, designers of all kinds, investors and sponsors, local authorities, entrepreneurs and shop owners. We can therefore argue that linguistic landscape is a kind of a crossroad of professional and social interests.

## **2. Methodology**

The research questions identified aims to investigate the students’ assessment of the city linguistic image, which conveys both semantic meanings and syntactic aspects.

Along with evaluation research, the study was developed as a sampling of the linguistic landscape discursive power and its symbolic role, which comes into play. We identified the research aim: to depict an evaluation of the elicited material and immaterial objects marked with linguistic tokens. In the classroom within the Business English course, we informed twenty undergraduate students of the Institute of Economics, Management and Environmental Studies of the Siberian Federal University, located in the city of Krasnoyarsk, about the main aim, objectives and procedure of the study. The selected students completed answering the questions and discussed the topicality of the investigation and their first impressions and assumptions. They also studied material on brand names and their symbolic meanings. Having got a set of the detailed instructions, the students started collecting data.

Through semi-structured interviews, the qualitative data from the students/experts were researched and assessed later.

## **3. Discussion of results**

As we have already defined, our narrow focus of research dealt with commercially centered public spaces overloaded with linguistic tokens. Thus, we were addressing our particular interest of research to the most popular downtown, business areas, and spots of entertainment in the city of Krasnoyarsk. Being a center of commercial and entertaining activities, Krasnoyarsk depicts a vivid interaction of business people, local authorities, and its population via vibrant and contemporary messages. According to the students’ understanding, linguistic landscape reflects attire of the city of Krasnoyarsk as a part of activity of a global financial arena and countless innovative achievements.

They argued that a generic image of every single city worldwide could be presented metaphorically in a form of a reservoir full of human resources, their professionally induced competences and skills. Under contemporary globalized environment, a large amount of languages inhabit in the metropolitan cities. Both a state language, which is an official means of communication within the area in question, and the English language, which is a proud owner

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