Book Section:

3   Ethnolinguistic Landscaping in Sheffield
**   The Invisible Repertoires of the Slovak Roma**

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1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Slovak Roma population and the minority 'hidden' language of Romani in Page Hall, a small area of urban Sheffield and locus of the local Roma population. This chapter will draw on empirical fieldwork data from an on-going five-year longitudinal study which explores Slovak Roma migration, integration, schooling and family life in Sheffield (Payne, 2014).

       To gain a deeper understanding of the lives of the Slovak Roma, the objectives of ethnography as outlined by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 3) seemed an appropriate fit for the study:

>   the researcher participating … in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts.

Accordingly, this approach was observed, and amplified to include linguistic landscaping which involved, essentially, the photographing of language artefacts in the city-scape and the writing of fieldnotes (Wolfinger, 2002), and the addition of these to the broader research data corpus.

       Having read various Linguistic Landscaping Studies (LLS), such as the work of Landry and Bourhis (1997), Juffermans (2008), Shohamy et al. (2010), as well as the works of scholars such as Blommaert's (2013) study of Old Berchem, Scollon and Scollon's (2003) research into discourse and emplacement, and Kress and Leeuwen's (1996) work on signs and meanings, I came to understand that the field of LLS is broad, multi-faceted and draws on a range of ontological and epistemological viewpoints and, as Blommaert (n.d.) argues, it is a 'potentially highly dynamic and productive field'.

       Therefore, I decided to utilize LLS in my work, capturing and analysing the visible language as it 'can act as a first-line diagnostic of a particular area … [It] offers … a relatively user-friendly toolkit for detecting the major features of sociolinguistic regimes in an area' and, reassuringly, it 'will at the very least protect researchers from major errors' (Blommaert, 2013: 2–3).

       When it comes to issues of historicity and synchronicity in ethnographic fieldwork and ethnolinguistic landscaping studies, projecting backwards and forwards to uncover the dynamic stories of language in place, there can be no time limit when 'saturation' of data is reached. As Blommaert points out, the picture is changing all the time and capturing the truth is problematic. This is well put by Blommaert commenting on the writing of his 2013 book: 'I started the book some years ago but was never able to complete it because I never had the impression that I had a complete, comprehensive and definitive image of my neighbourhood' (Blommaert, 2013: 113), and he goes on to say 'I was only able to complete this book when I began to understand that this was precisely the point: there is no position that can yield such a comprehensive and definitive picture' (2013: 114).

       What Blommaert refers to is the complexity of the sociolinguistic landscape and the underlying dynamic forces at work that see the populations changing, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly and the visible languages in the form of signs, official or

homemade/grassroots, reflecting this change. There are many examples of LLS attesting to how the languages spoken in a community are reflected to some degree in the languages that are visible (Shohamy et al., 2010), though there is not always a direct correlation as it takes a while for the linguistic landscape to 'register' the new arrivals to a community (Blommaert, 2013).

Conducting semi-structured interviews with Roma family members focusing on their migration stories provided a foundation on which to build and triangulate other sociolinguistic findings, including the LLS perspective. I assumed that applying the LLS method to my research in Page Hall would uncover things I had hitherto missed and shed new light on the situation there; well, it did and did not. Whilst observing closely the various shop fronts, notices and other bits of language evidence such as handwritten grassroots artefacts and car number plates for example, I did uncover more detail about the dynamics of the Roma lives in Page Hall; what was missing though was any evidence of visible Romani. This is when alarm bells started ringing with me. How can there be some 3,000 people living in the area and their language not appear anywhere in the linguascape?

In the sections that follow this, I will discuss LLS as both a discipline and a method, briefly review LLS in relation to minority languages and Romani and then present the Slovak Roma and Page Hall in Sheffield. Following this, I will discuss three linguistic artefacts that shed some light on the linguistic and social developments in Page Hall before drawing some conclusions.

2 Discipline and method: What is LLS?

LLS as a discipline

In his 'panorama of the field', Gorter (2013) outlines the developments in LLS under the headings of 'pioneering studies', 'early adopters' and 'current research'. According to Gorter, the early pioneering works in landscaping studies were not conceptualised as such, featuring such research as Rosenbaum et al.'s (1977) study of linguistic encounters on one street in Jerusalem and Tulp's (1978) study of Dutch and French on billboards in Brussels. Landry and Bourhis' (1997) work on ethnolinguistic vitality and francophone students in Quebec, as far as it is possible to delineate, marks the point at which these pioneering works became embodied as 'Linguistic Landscaping Studies' and provides an oft-quoted definition of LLS as:

> the visibility and salience of languages in public and commercial signs in a given territory or region'. [LLS] ... may serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting a territory. (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 23)

What these early works showed us, according to Gorter, was some of the dynamism inherent in LLS and thus the potential for LLS to interrogate the multilingual society in which such linguistic landscapes are embedded. For example, Spolsky and Cooper (1991) uncovered the 'layering' of languages reflecting the shifts in rule of the Old City of Jerusalem, which saw Hebrew added to Arabic as the ruling power shifted to the Israelis. The historical, social and linguistic complexity that can be read off a few words on a street sign underscores the dynamism inherent in urban multilingual environments in particular, and how this can be reflected in the visible linguistic landscape.

Gorter refers to 'early adopters' whose work can be summed up as mainly quantitative research of language in locations where the presence of various languages was

counted and linked to the numbers of people living in the area and related to the importance of certain languages over others. However, as Gorter (2013: 194) says: 'Because of their descriptive characteristics, these articles have limited value for the study of multilingualism; they only look into the use of [language] and do not examine the relationships among different languages'. More usefully perhaps, Gorter cites the early adopter work of Dasgupta (2002) on linguistic landscapes as 'intentional activities', thus introducing the notion of agency into the field, and Singh's (2002) research on linguistic landscaping and language planning as an 'organized intervention', thus reflecting Fishman's (1974: 79) view on language planning as 'the organized pursuit of solutions to language problems, typically at the national level.

Of theoretical significance, Gorter cites the work of Scollon and Scollon (2003), who introduced 'geosemiotics' and the argument that one must seek to understand the emplacement of signs, why signs are positioned where they are, who they are intended for and for what purposes, and the notion that signs can be intended for the local community and, at the same time, be written in another language that indexes some far off culture, like French words on a sign in Tokyo (Blommaert, 2013). Signs are not placed randomly but with semiotic purpose, hence the term 'geosemiotics' (Scollon and Scollon, 2003: 2).

Gorter highlights LLS as drawing increasingly on disciplines beyond sociolinguistics. For example, Leeman and Modan (2009) draw on theoretical frameworks from urban studies, sociology and tourism studies in their research in Washington DC's Chinatown; Jaworski and Yeung (2010) take an approach drawing on, inter alia, theories of space, geosemiotics (from the Scollons, 2003), visual discourse frameworks and Goffman's (1974) discursive frames, and employ 'index', 'spectacle' and 'brand' frames to analyse their LLS data from Hong Kong; Malinowski (2010) situates his study of Korean web-based LLS in a framework of applied linguistic landscape studies as the websites are used to support learners of Korean; Aiestaran, Cenoz and Gorter (2010) invoke environmental economics as a basis for LLS in their study of the Basque country; and Pavlenko (2010) draws on historical research and historical sociolinguistic archival research in her study of Kyiv.

LLS have moved then, from an initial focus on counting and cataloguing languages, what Blommaert refers to as 'first wave' LLS (Blommaert, n.d.), to a more sociolinguistically sophisticated approach such as that espoused by Blommaert and Maly (2014) in their study of Rabot in Ghent, redefining LLS in the process as Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (ELLA). Whilst embodying many of the traits and indeed methods of LLS more generally, Blommaert and Maly argue for a deeper diachronic study of the landscape and the acknowledgement that a synchronic snapshot does not do justice to the multi-layered, multi-filiar and multi-scalar histories embodied in each often simple shop front sign.

What is the LLS method?

Gorter (2013: 205) summarises the LLS method as the collecting of photographic data along with census surveys and interviews and states that 'methodologies can be quantitative, qualitative, ethnographic or even experimental … related to a multitude of perspectives and disciplines'.

Quantitative counts are often a precursor in studies that take a qualitative turn, such as Todd Garvin's (2010: 260) study into cognitive and emotional responses to the LL in Memphis through a walking tour that took in 692 'English only' signs and 116 'multilingual/other language' signs on some 808 businesses. Many studies are based on the sampling of photos of urban linguistic multi-modal artefacts, such as shop fronts in Ireland and Japan (Kallen & Donnacha, 2010), signs indexing residential spaces in Hong Kong (Jaworski & Yeung, 2010) and street signs in Tel Aviv (Waksman & Shohamy, 2010).

Further qualitative methods include the interviewing of adults (Lou, 2010; Todd Garvin, 2010), passers-by and people on the streets (Aiestaran, Cenoz & Gorter, 2010; Martens, 2010) and map-drawing exercises (Lou, 2010) as researchers attempt to uncover more of the contextual detail in the linguistic landscape. In sum, it appears in LLS that methodologically 'anything goes', researchers bring their own disciplines and ontological viewpoints to the process and a range of research methods, in turn, is also appropriate.

Having said all this, and thinking about my experiences of conducting LLS in Page Hall, the *actual* process of conducting LLS remains unclear. Does one read off the signage on every shop front as a precursor to deeper ethnographic diachronic LLS-related analysis? And if so, does one start at the end of a street on the left and work one's way up to the end, and then down again on the other side? Or should one be criss-crossing the street? Or does it matter? Should photos be taken of every piece of visible language to include 'official' and 'grassroots' literacy (Blommaert, 2004), or can one be selective and just sample the shop fronts? And in reading Blommaert and Maly's work, or the Scollons' or indeed any of the authors mentioned thus far, why have they selected the pictures that they have reproduced in their reports, and not others? Blommaert and Maly (2014) select a Polish van, a Turkish vegetable shop and a Turkish kebab shop; Kallen and Donnacha (2010) select a 'Shuh' shop in Galway; and Lou (2010) selects images of a Starbucks and a Subway. Now, these selections are probably made because the images are of particular interest and demonstrate or evidence the phenomena that the authors are addressing. But what of, in my case, the high street betting shop with its commercial signage all in English regardless of the multiple languages present in the area? It doesn't say much about multilingualism in Page Hall beyond English, granted, but my point is that within the various LLS I have read, there is little rationale provided for what appears to be an extremely careful selection of artefacts that may serve to represent certain areas as more linguistically interesting than they really are. I am not saying that this is common practice but there should be some evidence in multilingual settings of some shops and businesses being simply impervious to the surrounding changes; after all, 'static', 'indigenous' emplaced language counts as part of the superdiverse linguistic mosaic.

3 LLS, minority languages and the position of Slovak Romani

Research into minority language LLS includes Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) study of the minority languages of Basque and Frisian in Donostia and Leeuwarden, and focuses on efforts of maintenance. Aiestaran, Cenoz and Gorter (2010) also research the position of Basque and point to a recent survey which shows the number of Basque bilinguals slowly increasing in the Basque country (of northern Spain and southwest France). Blackwood (2011) has been active in researching what could be classed as minority French regional languages, including Corsican, Breton, Occitan and Provençal.

For many people, the definition of a minority language will be one not spoken widely nor by many people locally, not a lingua franca such as English nor one that commands a prestigious position within society, such as an official government-sanctioned national language (Gorter et al., 2012; May, 2014). But it all depends upon contexts; a couple of Romani speakers in England may well be considered to be speaking a minority language, but the same speakers in Page Hall Sheffield might be viewed differently. Ethnologue classifies languages according to categories of vitality such as 'vigorous', 'national' or 'dispersed' and takes cue from Fishman's GIDS (Fishman, 1991), adapted as EGIDS - Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Lewis & Simons, 2010), which rates language from '1-National' to '9-Dying' based on 'vitality' measures such as numbers of speakers across generations. If 'minority' language were taken to be synonymous with 'endangered' or

'dying' languages, then this would preclude Romani in Slovakia, which is evaluated as 'Level 5 – Developing' (Paul, Simons, & Fenning, 2015). Defining a minority language then is problematic (May, 2015) and the use of 'minority language' for Romani is, for the purposes of this chapter, driven partly by the socio-cultural position of Romani (and the Roma people) in Slovakia and elsewhere, and partly by its representation already as a 'minority language' by others working in the field (e.g. Halwachs, 2003; Matras, 2005).

In terms of Romani, sources point to at least five main dialect groups: Vlax, Balkan, Central, Northwestern and Northeastern (ROMLEX, 2013), and various dialects spoken across Slovakia, including Lovari, Kalderash, Šariš, Krompachy, Spiš, Záhorie, Eastern Slovak and Diakovce (ROMANI Project, n.d.; Romany Ethnologue, n.d.). For the most part, the Slovak Roma speak a variety of Romani plus Slovak; my Sheffield Roma research participants are reported to speak an 'East Slovak Roma and Spiš dialect' (fieldnotes 2/5/17). Such varieties may be mutually intelligible to a degree, though as Matras (2005: 4) points out:

> All Romani speakers are bilingual, and are accustomed to freely integrating words and phrases from their respective second languages; this creates potential difficulties when trying to communicate with Romani speakers from other countries … There is no tradition of a literary standard to which speakers can turn as a compromise form of speech.

Non-standardisation should not be taken to mean that written texts do not exist in the various varieties of Romani – they do (Gažovičová, 2012, 2015; Hancock, 2002; Rácová, 2010). For example, efforts in terms of intra-national Romani standardization have been attempted in Slovakia, with 2001 census documents translated initially into a Western variety of Slovak Romani. However, as the Roma population in the East had difficulties in understanding the census forms, another set was translated into Eastern Slovak Romani, which in turn laid the foundation, on April 29 2008, for the standardization of the Romani language in the Slovak Republic 'officially recognised as the base of the literary Romani language' (Rácová, 2010: 331). That said, Romani teaching materials are frequently 'corrected' by Roma staff in one eastern Slovakia High School to render them into the 'correct' variety (fieldnotes, April 2017).

The point to make here is that in my study of Page Hall I have found no evidence of written Romani, and so debates about what might or might not be a minority language and which varieties of Romani are written or spoken in Slovakia are a little beside the point. Reviewing studies of LLS and minority languages, the focus still seems to be on those that are reproduced in written form on visible signs – they are written evidence of the language and its prevalence in the locality, to some degree.

4 The Slovak Roma and Page Hall

The Roma peoples originally migrated out of Northwest India around the 11th century, appearing in Europe from about the 14th Century onwards (Hancock, 2002). A designated ethnic group of some 11 million, they form a diaspora spread across much of Europe, parts of the US and Canada and some parts of Latin America (Sykes, 2006). Triggered in part by the fall of communism, EU enlargement and the accession of the A8 countries (Gillingham, 2010), the Slovak Roma first started to appear in Sheffield in 2004 with significant numbers arriving from 2011 onwards, the latest in a long history of new migrant groups to the city (Runnymede Trust, 2012). In the main, they come from rural Eastern Slovakian villages of the wider Košice region. Ethnographic fieldwork interviews with Roma school pupils

initially, identified two main villages or origin: Bystrany and Žehra. They occupy homes in the Burngreave Ward of the city, and mainly centre on the area of Page Hall, a tight-knit cluster of red-bricked, terraced, Victorian era streets bordered by Page Hall Road to the south and Hinde House Crescent to the north (see Figure 1).
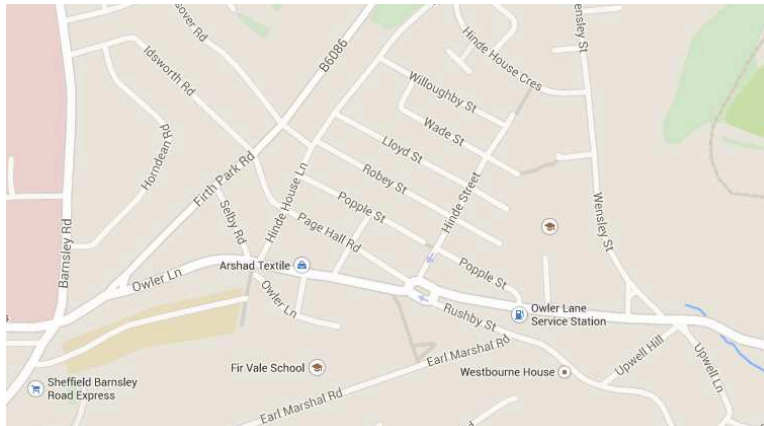

Figure 1 Page Hall, Sheffield (Map Data © 2016 Google)

It is not clear how many Roma reside in the city due to Slovaks having the right to free movement under EU law and accurate counts being inherently problematic (Home Office, 2014). For example, in the 2011 census, 1,244 people declared themselves to be Slovak speakers; none declared themselves as 'Romani Language' (Office for National Statistics, 2011) and research centred on GP practices estimates up to 6,000 Roma living in Sheffield (Willis, 2016). My *working* figure over the last three years has been 3,000 Roma living within the tightly demarcated Page Hall area.

This trans-national Roma migration to Sheffield is fuelled by a combination of 'push' factors in Slovakia, e.g. lack of employment opportunities and discrimination (Mušinka & Kolesárová, 2012; Scheffel, 2013), and 'pull' factors in the UK, such as increased employment prospects and perceived better schooling (Brown, Martin, & Scullion, 2014). The move from such settlements in Slovakia to other countries in the EU could be termed a natural move from 'periphery' to 'centre' in globalisation discourse (Blommaert, 2010). It is not entirely clear why Sheffield though, suffering as it does from post-industrial economic depression and hosting some of the most deprived wards in the UK (Sheffield City Council, 2014), should be a locus of migration from Eastern Europe, although it is common for areas of traditional inward migration to become established migratory destinations, i.e. migrants follow migrants, resulting in 'a layered immigrant space' (Blommaert, 2010: 7). The resultant ethno-linguistic layering in Page Hall comprises:

1) Almost-permanent settled 'native' British/English people and the English language as the 'substrate' base layer. It is the orally and visually dominant language of the wider area and the official language.
2) The Urdu, Panjabi and Mirpuri languages of the Pakistani heritage community occupy the next layer. The Pakistani-heritage community consists of people born in Pakistan and subsequent generations born in the UK.
3) On the next layer are the 'subordinate' languages, such as Yemeni Arabic, Iraqi Arabic and Polish, which are restricted mainly to speakers from those speech communities who reside in the area. Subordinate languages are not necessarily aimed at the broader communities beyond the immediate vicinity (Blommaert, 2013).

4) The Slovak Roma people and their languages occupy the recent, 'super-strate'. Romani is heard widely in the area but not seen; it is invisible in written form.

5 Evidencing the Slovak Roma: three artefacts

The three artefacts discussed in this section were all part of the ethnographic fieldwork data corpus. At the corner of Page Hall Road and Firth Park Road lies the main row of shops where many of the Slovak Roma tend to congregate. Here can be found the larger of the two shops displaying the prominent signage 'SK Mix Potraviny' (Mixed Groceries), i.e. grocery shop or small supermarket. I have selected this shop (Artefact 1), as it was the first and most prominent to advertise itself as selling produce targeting the Slovak community.

Artefact 1 Mix Potraviny

This is a typical 'bottom up' (Briheim, 2015) multimodal commercial sign that is intended to attract Slovakian customers in to do their grocery shopping – it is arguably an example towards the 'elite-literacy' end on Blommaert's gradient of 'fully literate to fully illiterate' (Blommaert, 2004: 9). The 'SK' is an international semiotic symbol for Slovakia and is recognisable to and beyond the Slovakian community but intended for the Slovak population to attract it to the shop. The pictures of products, one side typical Slovakian – e.g. 'Kofola', and the other typically 'British'/global, e.g. 'Baked Beans', provide an indication as to what is inside, regardless of customer linguistic heritage. Signage here is market driven; the signs are smart, professional and sourced by the shopkeeper's contacts in Doncaster. The shopkeeper knows what he is selling, but cannot read off the items fluently (shopkeeper interview, 16 July 2016); the lingua franca in the shop is English.

What can we learn about the linguistic community from this shop? The shopkeeper is part of the Yemeni community who migrated here from the nineteenth century onwards (Runnymede Trust, 2012), evidencing that Yemeni Arabic is present as part of the subordinate language layer of Page Hall. The Yemeni community is well established and now provides services to new migrants. The remodelling of the shop to a Slovak supermarket by people who cannot speak Slovak evidences in turn a professional shop-fitting business that

can transform a shop to cater for a specific type of community. Currently missing from my data is the link between the arrival of the Slovak Roma community and the catalyst for changing the shop – who noticed the intake of new people into the area and at what point, commercially, was the decision made to refit and restock a domestic goods shop as a Slovakian supermarket?

Looking more closely at language and ethnicity, the Slovak Roma are not the so-called 'white' (Scheffel, 2013) indigenous Slovak speakers that make up the majority Slovak population in Slovakia. Yet this shopkeeper, like many other business owners in Page Hall, refers to 'the Slovaks' as their target consumers. As one take-away food outlet owner said to me: "Roma? Do you mean the Slovaks?" For most of the people in Page Hall, the Roma *are* Slovaks, which technically according to their passports, they are, but of course ethnically and linguistically they are also a distinct demographic. In other words, the presence of the 'SK Mix Potraviny' could mislead in terms of the assumed Slovak demographic living in the area, thus challenging Blommaert's (2013: 2-3) assertion that LLS can protect researchers 'from major errors'.

There is evidence here in the photo of diachronic layering (Blommaert & Maly, 2014), with 'Mix Potraviny' occupying a local landmark building called 'Firth Park Coliseum' dating from about 1906 (Sheffield City Council, 2016). However, LLS alone is not enough to uncover the rich history of the shop that has evolved over the years to reflect the demographic profile of the area and the changes in society. Referring to archival sources, again part of the wider ethnographic fieldwork data corpus, in 1910 the building was an 'Outfitters' run by Samuel Alonso Peel, then in 1930, still run by the same person, it was a 'Clothier'. In 1935 the Clothier gave way to a house furnishing business run by William Grafton and in 1940 it was 'Reliable Furnishing Stores House Furnishers' under the ownership of Greaves and Harvey Ltd. The building continued to be a furnishing store in 1948 (Websters) right up to 1961: Alpine J.A. House Furniture. In 1974 there is record of a launderette in the building called 'Washeteria' (Smith, 2003) which in 1990 was still a launderette before in 2000 becoming 'Page Hall Launderette and Dry Cleaners' (Kelly, n.d.). According to the current shopkeeper, in recent years it became a domestic goods store selling washing machines and other electrical goods and lastly, for about the last four years, a Slovak supermarket (Shopkeeper interview, 16 July, 2016). Now, with its prominent shop sign in the national colours of Slovakia, its Western Union money transfer terminal, Lebara sim cards, accessible cashpoint, Eastern European produce and Yemeni shopkeeper it is emblematic of a dynamic globalised urban migrant economy.

In conducting linguistic landscaping research, I have always walked both the main street of shops and the various side streets. Most LLS seem to ignore much that is off the main locus of shops and businesses or is private: 'I did not go and look at messages next to door bells and other more private inscriptions' (Blommaert, 2013: 52). Widening my field of observation to take in the residential side streets led to me finding the Altobus Notice (Artefact 2).

Artefact 2 Altobus Notice

This piece of 'Blommaertian' (2005) handwritten and non-standard grassroots literacy provides a further clue as to who lives in the area. It is a piece of A4 paper, presented landscape and handwritten in large block letters, though with a thin biro – each letter itself requiring multiple pen strokes. In this sense it evidences a 'poor literacy environment' (Blommaert, 2004: 9) and a rudimentary form of literacy production and is intended for people who live in the street or neighbouring streets, not the people using the shops and takeaways in the main street – geosemiotically it would lose meaning emplaced in another part of Sheffield (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). It is a sign that was there in August 2015 and had gone by September 2015. Translating the sign, it reads: 'Write down the number for the Altobus [number] Aladar [a name]'. Working on this sign led to the following conversation with my Slovak teacher:

> Teacher: What he wrote wasn't incorrect it was only the sound of it. It didn't sound natural.
> Me: What do you mean?
> Teacher: If the sign says 'Write down AltoBus number', then the correct and most accurate version will be 'Opíšte si číslo na AltoBus'.

And following this, an e-mail exchange with my colleague, a Professor of Slavonic Studies:

> It does not appear to have been written by a native Slovak or Czech speaker: - napišťe - the last háček (caron) is redundant and the accent on the 'i' is missing, it should be napíšte (in Slovak you don't need to write the háček after a 't').
> - čislo - this should be číslo with a long 'i' (acute accents in Czech and Slovak mark vowels of longer duration).
> - altobus - this should be 'autobus'.

This evidences the complexity of translating and understanding even a small piece of grassroots literacy and then trying to ascertain who might have written it, for what reasons and then, in turn, what it says about social and linguistic trends and relations in the local community (note for example the lack of agreement in the use of 'opíšte' and 'napíšte' in the translations). From the above observations and commentaries I argue that:

- The sign *appears* to have been written by a Slovak Roma adult aimed at fellow Slovak Roma who are heading off for the summer by bus.
- We can *assume* this because:
  - No Slovaks/Czechs live in the area who are *not* Roma.
  - Most of the Roma in Page Hall are Slovak.
  - Slovak Roma adults often have a command of Slovak L2 but, in general, lack the literacy of native speakers.
  - Slovak Roma children often have a poorer command of Slovak than their parents, if at all.
  - Most of the Roma in Sheffield return to Slovakia for the summer holidays, by car or bus.
- But we cannot *honestly* say who wrote this notice.

Furthermore, from this sign we can get a sense that the Roma do travel back and forth to Slovakia and that the bus is one mode of transport, confirmed by discussions in Košice bus station as part of the ethnographic fieldwork in Slovakia.[1] We have evidence via the emplacement of this sign that the producer of the sign is clearly intending to address the immediate Roma community – this sign would be meaningless a few streets away. Considering the mode of written communication, we have evidence too that the Roma might not communicate readily in Romani as a written form, even on a simple sign such as this.

In an adjoining side street I came across another sign, Artefact 3.
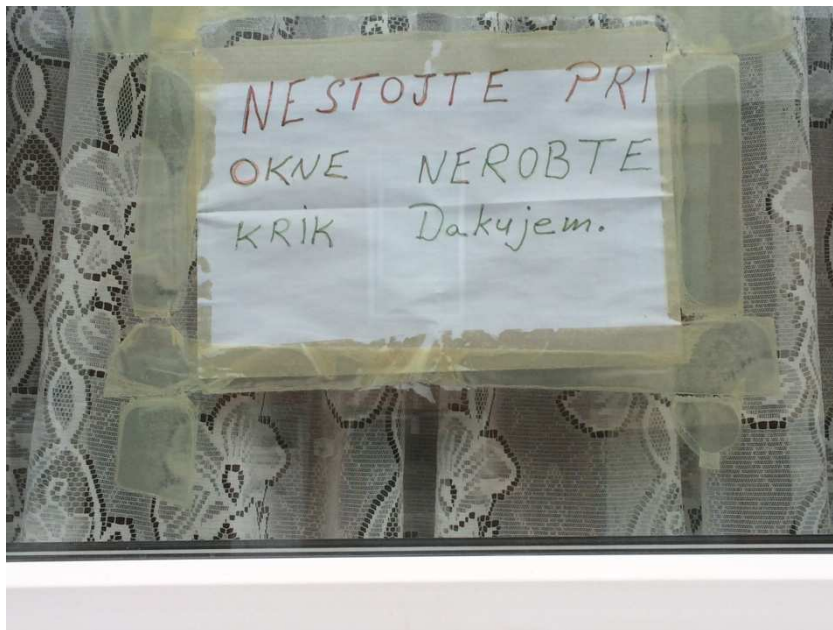
Artefact 3 Do not make a noise

I am spotted about to photograph the sign and a brief exchange occurs:

Person: What are you doing?
Me: Sorry, I tried but nobody is home, I've tried two times. I would like permission to take a photo of this sign. Do you think it is ok?
Person: Yes, ok.

Me: Thank you, oh, are you the neighbour? (Person unlocking adjoining house), are you from Slovakia?
Person: No, from Poland!
Me: Is this family Slovak?
Person: No, Pakistani.
Me: But isn't this sign written in Slovak?
Person: Yes, they wrote it to stop people hanging around outside.

This second piece of grassroots literacy evidences something of the often-uneasy relationship between the more established Pakistani heritage residents of Page Hall, and the Slovak Roma. The Roma have developed something of a reputation in the area for socializing on the streets with children playing outside until late in the evening (Pidd, 2013; Shute, 2013). Due to such practices, the occupants of the house have obviously taken it upon themselves to have a sign produced, either with direct human help or using a dictionary or translation function on a computer – evidence of 'polygeneric' production (Blommaert, 2004; Juffermans, 2008), and tape it in their front window. The sign is, again, A4 landscape and again evidences a poor literacy environment of production (Blommaert, 2003), but this time the letters are formed uniformly with a thick felt tip pen, the main message being in block capitals, the final word being an initial capital and then lower case – as Blommaert (2003: 9) argues, 'instability in orthography' is one feature of grassroots literacy.

A translation of the sign into English would read: 'Don't stand by the window and don't make noise, thank you'. The language of the notice is Slovak and is accurately produced apart from the accent (caron) on the 'D' of 'Ďakujem'. It should read: 'Nestojte pri okne, nerobte krik. Ďakujem.' Although the accent is missing, the more sophisticated grammatical function of turning the Slovak singular noun for window 'okno' into the locative case (preposition 'pri'+locative) 'okne' has been executed. But without further questioning of the home occupiers, we cannot tell if this was produced using a translation application on a computer or other device or if the home occupier received assistance from a Slovak or Roma person. If someone in the local community gave help, then there is an extremely high probability that it was a Roma person; one would assume that a Slovak L1 translator would have spotted the lack of a caron on the 'd' of 'Ďakujem'. That said, it may well have been communicated to the person writing the sign but left off; we cannot know without follow-up research, if at all.

In some ways, the sign is linguistically *uninteresting*; more insightful are the conclusions we can draw about the Pakistani community living alongside the Roma community, some of the issues that are prevalent – such as noise and social activity in the streets, and ways that the Pakistani community is trying to resolve these issues. This Pakistani heritage family probably has Roma acquaintances who have participated in helping draw up a notice to try and dissipate people from around the house, evidence perhaps of 'conviviality' (Blommaert, 2013) and some cross-cultural interactions between the two communities. It is also interesting from the socio-linguistic perspective, and potentially evidence of someone from the Pakistani community having his/her linguistic repertoire extended to incorporate Slovak words. The insertion of Slovak and Romani into the linguistic space was bound to permeate and affect cross-linguistic interactions such as this (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). As a final point, the emplacement of this sign is obviously important (Scollon & Scollon, 2003); it only has meaning where it is placed for the occupier of this house in relation to the immediate vicinity and is directed not at passers-by but at a group of people who have congregated there and been noisy. And these people have been a group of Slovak Roma.

6 Conclusions

In engaging with LLS, certain issues presented themselves in relation to the fact that Romani, as used by the Slovak Roma, is largely an oral medium; written communication embraces a multilingual repertoire. This means that LLS as a tool can easily miss the point; it focuses on the visible and not the hidden. Languages such as Romani, whatever the variety, are for obvious reasons not prominently, if at all, represented in the main linguistic landscape, such as the rows of shops or street signs. Whilst we know according to Blommaert (2013: 60) that 'visible languages do not overlap entirely with the ethnolinguistic composition of the area … [t]hey probably represent only *part* of the languages actually in use in the neighbourhood', there is much that may be hidden or missing such that LLS may but skim the multilingual surface. LLS methods do need to account for the potentially absent or at least acknowledge in studies that much may have remained undiscovered.

LLS may also serve unwittingly to reify the position of big 'languages', like French, Spanish, German and also, I would argue, languages addressed in this chapter such as Basque, Welsh and the regional languages of France – those that are dominant in the community or represent the commercial lingua franca. That may actually be the point of LLS, of course – the focus is on highlighting the major visible linguistic artefacts that dominate the landscape.

In terms of what conducting LLS may or may not have added to my research, I think it has certainly helped to shed light on some of the practices in the community in terms of how shops respond to and cater for the intake of a new community and how, in turn, existing communities interact with and respond to the incomers. Whilst we cannot generalise from the linguistic artefacts presented in this chapter, we do learn something that builds on the data already collected as part of the wider ethnographic fieldwork.

One issue that is still unclear is the 'doing' of LLS, what one should actually do on entering an area to conduct research and how linguistic artefacts should be sampled and captured and then analysed, what methodologies to apply or which disciplines to draw from. This is not necessarily a negative point and I would not argue for a dogmatic approach, but it underlines the infancy of LLS as a developing field.

Whether LLS is a 'field' of study, a 'methodology' or a 'method' is contestable. Whatever definitions researchers arrive at, I see it as an essential part of the sociolinguist's and linguistic-ethnographer's toolkit, alongside the more traditional methods of interviews, questionnaires, archival research and so on. For example, the addition of the archival data in this study was necessary to provide a fuller diachronic picture of the LLS of the 'Coliseum' building. Put another way, without prior knowledge of the Page Hall area and the years of research invested, I could have made a major error; I could have spotted the 'SK Mix Potraviny' sign and concluded that there was a prominent Slovak community in the area. And as argued above, this would have been technically correct, but incorrect as well.

Note

[1] According to the sales assistant for the bus company at Košice bus station, the bus is often preferred by larger Roma families as the bus luggage allowance is far greater than that allowed by the airline companies (field notes, Slovakia, April 2016).

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