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The Multilingual Schoolscape of a Hungarian College in Western Ukraine

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Abstract

The Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education is the educational and cultural centre of the local Hungarian minority, situated in Western Ukraine. Schoolscaping studies are relatively rare in Transcarpathia, nevertheless the investigation of the linguistic landscape of multilingual educational institutions can provide us with interesting insights related to the language policy of a war-torn country, and the findings can also contribute to sustainable multilingual development through minority education. Fieldwork was carried out in the spring of 2024, during which 394 pictures were taken in the main building of the Transcarpathian Hungarian College and the Philology Campus. In addition, the virtual schoolscape of the institution was also included in the research. The pictures were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively, paying special attention to the symbolic importance of the various languages presented in the signs, including mainly Hungarian, Ukrainian and English. The collected pictures were divided into eight categories, ranging from top-down to bottom-up initiatives: educational documents, names of classrooms and departments, symbolic inscriptions, instructions related to crises, library signage, decorations, advertisements, and other signs and announcements. In order to ensure the reliability of the findings, data collection was repeated in the summer of 2024. Based on the results, the analysed college follows a strong bilingual tradition by making everything available in Ukrainian and Hungarian, and sometimes even in English. However, the bottom-up domain is also subject to monolingualism. The research can be further expanded by taking into consideration other educational institutions in Transcarpathia.

Keywords: linguistic landscape; minority education; multilingualism; schoolscaping; Transcarpathia.