

The Concept of Localness (*Tutëishasts'ŭ*) in Visual Communication in Public Space in Belarus as a Source of Exclusion

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Abstract

Does the presence of several languages in visual communication in public space mean tolerance and equality between those who use them? Visual communication in public space creates and employs the concept of belonging to a community and constructs identity. Thus, multilingual public space communication may produce different meanings and identity mechanisms. In the article, I reconstruct the meanings produced in this communication in two periods of the national rise in Belarus (the 1920s and 1990s–2000s) and the concept of local identity they built. I show how they were shaped and what kind of exclusion mechanisms were produced in relatively different cultural contexts to preserve multilingualism in public space communications. To do this, I compare city signboards and printed materials from both periods.

Keywords: Belarus; national identity; visual communication; representation; typefaces

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Introduction

At the intersection of the language of everyday communication and institutional regulations, the fabric of everyday life is constructed. Although in many states there is only one official language, simultaneous use of several languages in public space is quite common, leading to the construction of different meanings and implications.

Unsurprisingly, increasing international migration leads to the diversification of languages used in public space. Despite the official status of one language, it is not only English (as a language of international communication), but also native languages of newcomers that are used. Some practices are strictly regulated when it comes to the use of language in public space, e.g. all stationary signs and texts in public space must be in the official language, with optional translations into other languages if necessary.¹ At the same time there are micro-practices that are occasional, which are hardly subject to regulation and control – such as graffiti or notices in languages clear to the community they are addressed to (De Certeau, 1988). So, the strict hierarchy of language use is reproduced through regulations and everyday communication, but the question is what meanings and statements are behind this.

Let us take a closer look at the following example. In Belarus, the constitution establishes two official languages: Belarusian and Russian, and declares their equal status. But what kind of meanings are hidden behind calls to use the mother tongue of the majority of citizens of Belarus, especially if we take into account census data?² Belarusian, one of the two official languages, is classified as vulnerable by UNESCO (Moseley & Nicolas, 2010), and calls to speak it appear on public service posters placed all over the country.³

All these examples show that the presence of several languages in communication in public space implies difficulties in balancing the spheres of their use, revealing some tensions. In this article, I study the case of visual communication in the public space of Minsk in two periods of the national rise (the 1920s and 1990s–2000s) to identify what meanings are constructed

1 This is the case, for example, in Poland, Germany, and Lithuania; cf. Ustawa o języku polskim z dnia 7 października 1999 r., 1999.

2 According to census data, the percentage of citizens of Belarus who considered Belarusian their native language was as follows: 1999 – 73.2%; 2009 – 53.2%; 2019 – 61.2%. It needs to be taken into account that for a significant part of them the language that they consider native is different than the language of their everyday communication. Although 61.2% consider Belarusian their mother tongue, what prevails is passive knowledge, which means that it can rarely be heard on the streets. The census data is currently unavailable on the official website of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, i.e. belstat.gov.by (Boguslavskaja, 2019). For more detailed research on the language situation in Belarus, see Bekus, 2014; Kittel et al., 2010.

3 In Belarus, public service posters are issued by a state agency and are placed on empty advertisement stands on the streets, often owned by private businesses. The owners of ad stands have a choice to place these posters or pay a fine for empty space. Supposedly, posters with local berries showing their names written in Belarusian (e.g. "kavun", "sunitsa") can be seen so often because they are considered more acceptable compared to other choices, such as Belarusian regime propaganda. But as a consequence, any Belarusian-speaking person feels like someone from a world that uses a language unfamiliar to everyone, like in a reservation.

when two languages have equal official status in legal terms but are not used to the same extent in everyday communication. The 1920s and 1990s were similar in some respects: Belarus became a political entity (as a republic of the USSR since 1922⁴ and an independent state in 1991), with a relatively large control over printing technologies and dissemination networks, and with Belarusian declared as an official language. However, it was not the only one: between 1923 and 1938 there were four official languages: Belarusian, Polish, Yiddish, and Russian; in the 1990s, there were two: Belarusian and Russian, and this situation is also the case today. Thus, there have been at least two languages legitimately present in public space.

The populist authoritarian regime established in 1995 is often seen as the result of a weak national identity and a lack of democratic aspirations in society (Bemporad, 2013; Ioffe, 2004; Martin, 2001; Rudling, 2014). The turn of Belarusian society to the path of democracy and the non-Soviet past during and immediately after the collapse of the USSR is often explained by the consequences of external pressure rather than internal need. Authors such as Timothy Snyder and Simon Lewis notice how identity promoted at the level of the state is contested in cultural practices, e.g. in films or books (Bekus, 2010; Lewis, 2018; Snyder, 2003). But only by taking into account the ubiquitous asymmetry between society and the state in Belarus in terms of resources can we understand what the process of identity shaping looks like. Therefore, the study of practices of visual communication in public space at a micro level (such as typography) could provide more insights into understanding the contrast between the state level and the local level of creating identity. It could also enable us to see how Belarusian national identity is constructed through languages, especially when it comes to the question of the Belarusian language, which has survived under long-term institutional pressure of the state.

I focus on typefaces as a form of visual representation (Hall, 1997). The analysis of typefaces is justified as their design and production is a time-consuming process, which requires certain qualifications of personnel, access to printing technologies and resources, compliance with the rules and regulations of communication in public space (so as not to be censored or banned), and competence to convey a message to the audience (delivering information using rhetorical and visual means accepted by the target audience). The complexity of this process

4 Considering that this article focuses on Minsk and its practices of visual communication, as discussed here Belarus in the 1920s is regarded in the limits of BSSR. While Soviet authorities claimed to be more tolerant to national cultures, Poland relied on the policy of cultural and language assimilation. Therefore, visual evidence of public communication in the western part of Belarus (which was part of Poland) showed the approach whereby the Polish language dominated. Persecutions against Belarusian nationalists in the Second Polish Republic were largely motivated by their connections with their counterparts in Soviet Belarus. At the same time, partisan activities were conducted and publications in Belarusian were issued in the Second Polish Republic, and attempts to build the opposition to the Soviet concept of the Belarusian nation were undertaken (Rudling, 2014; Snyder, 2003). The focus on Minsk and, consequently, on the Soviet language policy and practices of communication in public space allows to emphasize the intolerant and instrumental attitude of Soviet authorities to national cultures in spite of their claims. This policy, characterized by contradictions between rhetoric and practice, was inherited by the current regime in Belarus. The state campaigns of national revival of the 1920s and 1953 could be considered as the development of instrumental approach to the national language. The national revival of 1989–1991 had a fundamentally different character, as it took place in the conditions of the weakening of state institutions.

implies that only really important ideas and ideological statements will be embodied, ones that are worth disrupting a complex, well-established printing process.

The typeface is a multi-level encoded visual form, which admittedly is not visible to non-professionals: they begin to see it only when it is difficult to read. Accordingly, when ideas are embodied in typefaces, the typefaces should be tested in well-known, easy-to-control, and understandable forms. The production of a single-language product is carried out in accordance with established and proven practices, in which the “seams” that mark the logic structuring these practices are erased. Because multilingual communication is not so widespread, and thus not conventionalized so much, it requires special solutions that can expose patterns, and make visible the logic along which everyday visual communication is built up. A comparison of the media in which multiple languages are used (produced using different technologies and in different scale, e.g. street signboards and books) and the way they are presented in two periods of Belarus’s history: the 1920s and 1990s–2000s – i.e. the periods of the most favorable attitude to the Belarusian language on the part of both institutions and citizens – will make it possible to identify the meanings given to multilingual communication and its significance, and to reveal the ideologies behind multilingualism.

Language policy has always been an important instrument of institutional regulation of everyday practices. As the ideology of the nation-state developed from its Romantic to the modernist stage, the idea of a mono-ethnic state with a single official language turned out to be the most attractive and effective. However, there is a limited number of states where the language of everyday communication corresponds to the political borders (Billig, 1995). State policy regarding languages can be compared with the processes that James Scott describes as the policy of forest administration – a deliberate policy to reduce the number of plant species in the forest, which goes hand in hand with the formation of nation-states and facilitates its use for industrial purposes for profit (Scott, 1998). The reduction in the number of languages of everyday communication and the legitimization of the main (and often the only) official language, in parallel with the crystallization of the ideology of the nation-state, were closely related to the processes of modernization. The analogy of language policy with the policy of forest management is then justified, because the simplification of the linguistic landscape contributed to an increase in control over public moods and processes, and increased their manageability on the part of regulatory institutions.

The shifts of the borders and the changes of the political regime in the territory of Belarus led to the co-existence of representatives of different religious confessions traditionally speaking different languages and using various alphabets: Latin (Polish and Belarusian), Cyrillic (Russian, Belarusian), and Alefbeyts (Yiddish). Thanks to printing technologies, these language communities enhanced their visibility. In different periods, their legal status and degree of presence in public space varied. An analysis of the available printed materials in different languages and photographs of signboards in public space makes it possible to

reconstruct the meanings that were assigned to those languages within the constructed hierarchy that reinforced or displaced certain concepts of identity.

Visual Communication in Public Space in the 1920s

In this section, I analyze the typefaces and the composition of signboards and print products from the 1920s as a form of visual representation according to Stuart Hall's proposition (Hall, 1997), and I reconstruct the meanings and ideological implications that made this form possible.

The first example is a signboard dated to 1929, written in four languages: Belarusian, Russian, Polish, and Yiddish; the inscription reads: "Authorized by the Central Committee for Assistance to Children, Minsk District. Department Store No. 1" (in Belarusian: *Upaŭnavazhny Ts.K. dapamohi dzetsiam pa Mienskaï akruze. Univerŝal'ny mahazyn №1*) (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. Signboard: "Authorized by the Central Committee for Assistance to Children, Minsk District. Department Store No. 1" (Rudling, 2014, p. 157; first published in the magazine *Illustrirovannia Rossiia*, Paris 1929)

In this case, the visual attributes of the Cyrillic, Latin, and Yiddish fonts are very similar indeed, not to say indistinguishable. The hierarchy of the use of languages is not indicated in any way, except for the order in which they appear. However, in the urban environment the order in which they will be read depends on the direction the reader is heading. Despite the different alphabets and writing systems, the arrangement and layout of the inscriptions in four different languages are identical, which gives the impression of a deliberately functional or technical solution (opposite to one that would be artistic or aesthetic in nature, common to signboards and ads), similar to inscriptions at a train station. This is in contrast to the signboard below, which is written in Russian and is quite inventive in terms of its composition; it emphasizes the technicality of the four-language signboard above.

Visual characteristics usually help to guess the language in which an inscription is written, even without reading it. If we compare multilingual posters of earlier times or from other cultural contexts, it is striking to what degree Cyrillic, Latin, and Yiddish have different graphic structures and rhythm, and how they are arranged in a different way. Identical visual solutions in these languages are not common and not usually required because of functionality – people prefer to recognize easily whether a familiar language is present or not. In this case, the deliberate visual and compositional uniformity of typefaces makes them indistinguishable and impossible to be recognized from a distance. So, we can assume that the four-language signboard of a department store is not functional in any aspect, since those visual differences that help recognize different languages are almost invisible, especially in a situation of intense visual noise on the streets.

The simultaneous use of four languages suggests that one of them was a template for the others. Given the poor quality of the image, it is impossible to determine their filiation. However, the signboard below, with the diagonal inscription “shoes” in Russian – the only language used in the newspapers issued in Minsk, owing to the policy of Russification – suggests the prevalence of the Russian language.

In the photo, we can see that the four-language signboard at the top and the monolingual one below are in contrast in terms of their scale and size (big, monumental vs. small, compact), position (horizontal, dominates the shop window vs. vertical, complements the shop window), content and style (dry indication of the official, bureaucratic name of the shop vs. concrete indication of the goods and varied inscriptions). With its free composition, typefaces of different sizes, and the diagonal, playful arrangement of the text (which is easy to read), the signboard below is designed in line with the tradition of advertising. The purpose of the top signboard is somewhat more difficult to identify – the text “Authorized by the Central Committee for Assistance to Children, Minsk District” refers to an official entity. The composition and the demonstrative use of the same fonts shift attention from the content to the form – the deliberate erasure of visual differences between different writing traditions, the rejection of specific and recognizable characteristics of inscriptions in Cyrillic, Latin, and Yiddish in favor of uniformity, even

at the expense of functionality. While Rudling (2014, p. 157) considers the usage of four languages to be a response to demography and a demonstration of support to national cultures, the analysis of typography (revealing disregard to the writing traditions) points at the instrumental use of multilingualism.

The next example is a plaque from 1929 with the inscription “Belarusian State University” (*Belaruski dziarzhaŭny ŭniversytet*) in two languages: Belarusian and Yiddish (Figure 2).



Fig. 2. Plaque: “Belarusian State University”, Minsk 1929 (Rudling, 2014, p. 154)

The name in Belarusian appears above that in Yiddish, and, as can be seen, the inscriptions are not as similar as in the example discussed above. For the name in Yiddish, a traditional font and way of writing were chosen, which are characterized by the reverse-contrast typeface: horizontal strokes are thicker than vertical ones. The same choice was made for the inscription in Belarusian, a less conventional choice for Cyrillic.⁵ This may have been

⁵ Conventional Cyrillic letters have a thicker vertical rather than horizontal stroke. In this case, the Tuscan/Italian typeface was used. It appeared at the end of the nineteenth century in the wake of the industrial revolution, when wooden fonts were invented, which made it possible to experiment with the forms of letters. However, the Yiddish inscription below enhances the connotations of sameness, and the overall monotony emphasizes the pursuit to eliminate differences in writing traditions in different languages.

due to the need to combine inscriptions in Belarusian and Yiddish, but in this case it is easier to distinguish between texts in different languages.

While plaques are made in a single copy and often by handcraft, that is, each one is unique and the designer can quite accurately fulfill the wishes of the customer, mass-printing relies on the use of ready-made forms (punches), the existing typefaces and typesetting elements, and therefore the customer can choose from ready-made elements, but cannot change them.

The principle of eliminating the visual hierarchy of different languages can also be traced in the design of the title page of the Constitution from 1927, where the narrow sans serif font of the first line is combined with the serifs (Latin typeface) of the second line, although the Yiddish inscription is given in fairly organic proportions. This may have been due to the technical impossibility of changing the proportions of the metal letters that were used to design the title page. However, we can also see the trend of visual uniformity. But the more casual a document is, the more natural approach to its design – in contrast to the deliberate uniformity of the signboard discussed above. For example, a form of the Central Archival Administration still follows the logic of using serif typefaces (the font called Latin) for the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, and the typeface with natural proportions for Yiddish. In the letterhead for the Military Commissariat of the Mogilev District, a large number of fonts are used, which are freely combined and look quite regular, thus different languages could be easily distinguished despite poor printing quality (Figure 3).

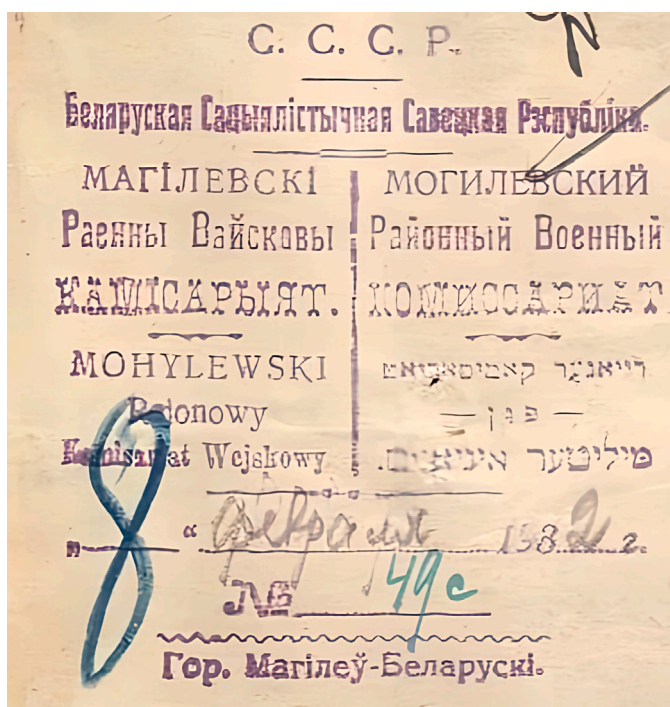


Fig. 3. Letterhead: "Military Commissariat of the Mogilev District", 1920s. Source: Instagram profile of local historian from Mogilev Aleh Dz'iachkoŭ (n.d.)

The typefaces and the way they are designed look the same as those from the private publishing houses which grew in the wake of the industrial revolution. A large variety of typefaces for different languages was characteristic for publications issued after the liberal reforms in Russia, which followed the revolution of 1905. It can be said that such a style was an important stage in the tradition of printing in Belarus, and its use in the 1920s, already in the BSSR, was due to the technical impossibility to quickly change the characters and make changes to the publishing process. Presumably, they were still in use for insignificant provincial matters till the very end of the 1920s.

Multilingual signboards and letterheads from the 1920s reflect the situation of multilingualism, which was observed in the territory of Belarus among different social strata. The language of everyday communication of the largely illiterate peasantry was referred to as *prosty* "simple" or *pa-tutëishamu* "local speech"; they could speak several languages, but not to write in them. The intelligentsia and landowners, i.e. the elites, associated the *tutëishy*, or "local", language with Belarusian, while they themselves also spoke several languages: the language of their everyday communication could be Polish, but they also knew Russian and French. Thus, multilingualism was a widespread phenomenon that varied depending on the social class and locality (Pershei, 2008, p. 91). The class attribute of multilingualism was the ability to separate the languages and to write in them.

In the 1920s and earlier, the concept of *tutëishasts'* identity (Pershei, 2008, 2010), or "localness", referred specifically to peasants and villagers (Bardach, 1994; Smalianchuk, 2017; Snyder, 2003), that is, people without education, as opposed to nationally oriented elites. Ales Smalianchuk and Juliusz Bardach interpret *tutëishasts'* as an idea that made it possible to maintain relations between different linguistic communities on a daily basis. Conducting a conversation in several languages at the same time was a common practice. The prevalence of this concept in the territory of Belarus allowed endorsing the peaceful coexistence of representatives of different confessions and languages.

From 1920, along with the campaign of *korenizatsiia*, or "indigenization" (Martin, 2001), there were large-scale attempts to employ people of different nationalities in state institutions. On 31 July 1920, the Declaration of Independence of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus was adopted (from December 1922 – the BSSR), proclaiming the equality of the four official languages in the Republic – Belarusian, Russian, Polish, and Jewish (Yiddish), and declaring struggle against the privileges of "any national group";⁶ which resulted in the expanding use of Russian in the BSSR. It was later embodied in the principle "national in form, Soviet in content", whereby the use of the national language was predominantly apparent and outward, while the language of education and work was predominantly Russian.

At the same time, the state monopoly on print was introduced, and private printing houses were closed and expropriated. In 1921, following the example of the State

⁶ Wording from the program of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), approved by the 8th Congress of the Party in March 1919.

Publishing House of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), the State Publishing House of the BSSR was founded, with the aim of running the publishing activity in the territory of the BSSR. The publication of books was controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), people's commissariats, and departments of the Republic; books were distributed through a network of state bookstores (Nikalaeŭ et al., 2011). Thus, the concept of *tutėishasts'* identity, incorporated into Soviet institutions and the ideology of "fighting against the privileges of any national group", discursively formalized the discrimination of any language other than Russian, and any form of production and distribution of goods except the state one. These processes manifested themselves in the uniformization of the visual environment (filling it with monotonous propaganda) and the gradual destruction of local writing traditions. The analogy with the instrumentalization of the forest by reducing the variety of vegetation, described by Scott, was apparent in the visual environment of the city, where the diverse linguistic landscape was made uniform both visually and at the level of micro-practices, e. g. practices of writing.

Within the framework of Soviet policy, the scope of use of Belarusian was strictly defined and instrumentalized. Therefore, it was a means of the state propaganda rather than response to popular request. In many ways, the instrumental approach to national languages was inherited from the Russian Empire, which, according to many researchers, fits into the logic of colonial policy (Głębocki, 2000; Glembotskiĭ, 2005; Rodkiewicz, 1998; Staliūnas, 2007; Thaden, 1981).

The analysis of signboards and print products, which have a different technique and scale of production (unique signboards vs. mass-printed letterheads and books), reveals how the visual diversity of the urban environment was eliminated. This can be considered as a manifestation of the repressive processes unfolding behind the declarative support for linguistic variety. It is noteworthy that technologies made their own adjustments to the pace of implementation of the program of instrumentalization of the diverse linguistic landscape. The paradox of Soviet language policy was that the visual and linguistic unification of public communication was implemented within the framework of the ideology of supporting diversity, which declared "fighting against the privileges of any national group". The use of different languages in isolation from their writing traditions, involving forced adherence to the aesthetics of unification and homogenization, led to the questioning of the status of these languages as a main means of communication, and to maintaining colonial policy, implemented, for example, within the framework of Russification.

To a certain degree, the *tutėishasts'* identity and multilingualism fitted in with the Soviet approach to managing the linguistic diversity, as multilingualism became a tool to reduce the importance of local languages under the pretext of equal opportunities for each of them. In fact, the aim was the subsequent Russification of education and professional spheres of life. The shift in identity was from *tutėishy*, a local who speaks *pa prastu*, "simple language", and can communicate in Polish, Yiddish, and Russian, i.e. is multilingual, to the (mostly) Russian-speaking Belarusian.

An analysis of typefaces as well as visual and compositional characteristics of signboards and print products has allowed me to show how the Soviet ideology was implemented at the level of micro-practices. At this level, the practices of exclusion consisted in the erasure of traditions associated with local history from the visual environment of the city. This happened even at the level of writing practices, and eventually resulted in the weakening of local communities and the strengthening of Soviet state institutions.

Visual Communication in Public Space in the 1990s and 2000s

To continue the analysis of typefaces as a form of visual representation of the Belarusian language, let us look at the inscriptions “Department Store” and “TsUM”⁷ in Minsk (Figure 4). Following the remodeling of 1997, the building resembles a fortified castle with small embrasure windows and turrets.



Fig. 4. Inscription: “TsUM”, Minsk 2000s (Borisevich, 2014) [Photographs for the article “Creation of the ‘Children’s World’: The third floor appeared in the Minsk Central Department Store”]

Before the reconstruction, the facade of the department store was a glass and concrete structure, quite typical of the Soviet modernist style of the Cold War period. The signboards on the building showcased the inscription “TsUM” in Russian, but the words “Minsk” and “Univermag” (which means “Universal Shop” or “Supermarket”) were in Belarusian. However, colorful ads (like the one in the foreground of the photo) were in Russian.

In turn, the inscription “Belarusian State University” at the top of the Geography Faculty building was designed with serif letters, typical for books issued in the 1920s (Figure 5). Although this inscription is in Belarusian only, the plaques at the main entrance (from the 2000s) are in Belarusian and Russian, while everyday announcements in front of the building (in the bottom right corner of the photo) are in Russian.

7 “TsUM” – *Tsentral’nyĭ universal’nyĭ magazin* (Central Universal Department Store).



Fig. 5. Inscription: "Belarusian State University", Minsk 2010s (Geography Faculty, n.d.)

According to the Constitution both official languages have equal status⁸ (Bekus, 2014; Kittel et al., 2010), and thus a number of signboards of institutions – in which inscriptions in Belarusian and Russian started to be duplicated – are designed in the paradigm of exact correspondence of language versions to make them look like a copy. In official documents, one language is predominantly used: Russian, and there is often no choice (e.g. until recently application forms and tax returns were available only in Russian; diplomas and certificates have always been issued in two languages, designed in an identical way).⁹

In the 1990s, a new segment of souvenir goods appeared in which one can find the parallel use of Belarusian, Russian, and English, as in the case of photo albums *Belarus: A Story of Change* (Mel'nikaŭ & Mishchanka, 1998) (see Figure 6) and *Minsk in the Past and Today* (Maroz, 2002) (see Figure 7).

8 On 26 January 1990, the law "On Languages in the Belarusian SSR" was adopted, giving the status of the official language to Belarusian. On 25 August 1991, the Declaration on the Sovereignty of Belarus (adopted on 27 July 1990) entered into force as a constitutional law. Since 1996 Belarusian and Russian have equal status according to the Constitution. In fact, this has meant a return to the Soviet practice of the widespread use of the Russian language and the scarce use of Belarusian.

9 A civil initiative is working in Belarus to force public services and large companies to switch to Belarusian. Various official forms, such as applications and tax returns, have been made available in Belarusian only thanks to numerous appeals of activists to state authorities. The resources of civil activists are not comparable to those of the state, but they are sufficient to keep the Belarusian language on the agenda. And if the state recognizes the vulnerable status of the Belarusian language in Belarus through public service advertising (mentioned at the beginning of this article), but sabotages the implementation of the legislation on its equal status, then civil activists choose a different path.



БЕЛАРУСЬ • BELARUS

ВЕХІ ГІСТОРЫІ

ВЕХИ ИСТОРИИ

MILESTONES OF HISTORY

Чалавек на тэрыторыі Беларусі паявіўся 100—40 тысяч гадоў да нашай эры. Старажытныя яго паселішчы (каля вёсак Бердыж і Юравічы на паўднёвым усходзе Беларусі) узніклі 27—24 тысячы гадоў таму назад. З паяўленнем бронзавых, а затым і жалезных прылад працы плямёны, якія склаліся да таго часу, пачалі пераходзіць ад збіральніцкай гаспадаркі да вытворчай — развіцця старажытных форм земляробства і жывёлагадоўлі, што хутка палегчыла розніцу ва ўзроўнях іх развіцця, прывяло да стварэння самастойных дзяржаў.

На землях цяперашняй Беларусі заснаваны славянскія саюзы крывічоў, дрыгавічоў, радзімічаў і балтамоўных явягаў мелі сваю дзяржаўнасць. Добра вядомыя Полацкае, Тураўскае і Смаленскае княствы. У X стагоддзі большая частка беларускіх зямель уваходзіла ў Кіеўскую Русь.

Некалькі слоў аб старажытным усходнеславянскім княстве з цэнтрам у Полацку. Гэты старажытны горад узнік у IX стагоддзі на беразе Заходняй Дзвіны. Да X стагоддзя Полацк уяўляў сабой буйны цэнтр рамстваў, дойлідства і самабытнай культуры. У X стагоддзі на тэрыторыі Верхняга замка быў узведзены славуцкі Сафійскі сабор, які і сёння застаецца ўнікальным помнікам ранняй славянскай архітэктуры.

У XII стагоддзі склалася арыгінальная полацкая школа дойлідства, якая падарыла такія шэдэўры, як княжацкі храм і

Человек на территории Беларуси появился 100—40 тысяч лет до нашей эры. Древние его поселения (у деревень Бердыж и Юровичи на юго-востоке Беларуси) возникли 27—24 тысячи лет тому назад. С появлением бронзовых, а затем и железных орудий труда сложившиеся к тому времени племена начали переходить от собирательного хозяйства к производящему — развитию древних форм земледелия и скотоводства, что быстро углубило различие в уровне их развития, привело к созданию самостоятельных государств.

На землях нынешней Беларуси образовавшиеся славянские союзы кривичей, дреговичей, родимичей и балтоязычных явягов имели свою государственность. Хорошо известны Полоцкое, Туровское и Смоленское княжества. В X веке большая часть белорусских земель входила в Киевскую Русь.

Несколько слов о старейшем восточнославянском княжестве с центром в Полоцке. Этот древний город возник в IX веке на берегу Западной Двины. К X столетию Полоцк представлял собой крупный по тем временам центр ремесел, зодчества и самобытной культуры. В X веке на территории Верхнего замка был возведен знаменитый Софийский собор, остающийся и сегодня уникальным памятником ранней славянской архитектуры.

В XII веке сложилась оригинальная полацкая школа зодчества, подарившая такие шедевры, как княжеский храм и княжеские

Man came to Belarus 100—40 thousand years ago. Early settlements found near the villages of Berdyzh and Yurovichi (south-east of Belarus) date back to BC 27—24 thousand years.

In the 6th—8th centuries, the tribes of Krivichi, Dregovich, Rodimichi and Yatviagi, the latter speaking Baltic languages, were formed on the territories. These were independent states. The best known formations were the Polotsk, the Turov and the Smolensk Principalities. In the 10th century, a large proportion of Belarusian lands made part of the Kiev Russ.

A few words about the oldest East-Slav Principality with Polotsk as its centre. The old town of Polotsk grew up on the Zapadnaya Dvina. By the 10th century, the town had become a major centre of crafts, architecture and self-made culture. In the 10th century, the famous St. Sofia's Cathedral was erected on the territory of the Upper Castle. Even today, the Cathedral remains a unique monument of the early Slav architecture.

Already in the 12th century, an original Polotsk school of architecture was established which gave the world such masterpieces as the Prince's Temple and Palace, the Church of the Forerunner, the monasteries of SS Boris and Gleb and of the Saviour-and-Euphrosine. The skillful jeweler Lazarus Bogsha, who made the famous Cross of St. Euphrosine of Polotsk, and the architect Ioan (surname is unknown), who built the beautiful Church of

Fig. 6. A page from the book *Belarus': Partrët na fone peramen / Belarus': Portret na fone peremen / Belarus: A Story of Change* (Mel'nikaŭ & Mishchanka, 1998, p. 26)



Fig. 7. A page from the book *Minsk staradaŭni i malady / Minsk drevnii i molodoi / Minsk in the Past and Today* (Maroz, 2002, p. 12)

As can be seen, the approach to the multilingual design is quite apparent: three versions of the same text in three different languages are parallel and practically do not differ from each other in visual terms. The typeface *Times* is the only one used for regular texts and headings; *Helvetica* is used once on the title page as a display typeface; all the typefaces used are produced digitally.¹⁰ These are the most common and familiar fonts of the com-

10 It is worth noting that books in Belarusian often have manually designed headings styled after the typefaces of Francysk Skaryna, a sixteenth-century Belarusian humanist; for example, the multi-volume series *Pamiats' Historyka-dakumental'nyia khroniki haradoŭ i raionaŭ Belarusi* [Memory: Historical-Documentary Chronicles of Towns and Districts of Belarus], issued in 1985–2015 by Belaruskaia Ęntsyklapedyia imia Petrusia Broŭki and other publishers; the headings in the series were designed by Ęduard Zhakevich.

puter era, as they are installed by default with the operating system. They are fonts that carry the connotations of a universal aesthetic, i.e. the rejection of connection with local traditions in favor of functionality. The editors and designers of the two books even managed to equalize the volume of the texts in three languages. Although a text translated into English is usually shorter than in Belarusian and Russian, this is not the case here. The significant reduction in the status of Belarusian is apparent in the fact that in the book issued in 1998, it comes as the first language, while in the one published four years later, in 2002, the first language is Russian.

Digital tools largely remove technical restrictions in the production of typefaces with desired ideological and aesthetic implications, especially when compared to printing technologies from the 1920s, but the paradigm of detachment from local traditions of lettering, of escape from a clear hierarchy of different languages, and the attendant indistinguishability of different language versions, is repeated again and again. Consequently, the policy of deliberate Russification of Soviet times, theoretically voluntary, resulted in hiding attachment to any culture and traditions. Owing to the fact that secondary education was offered predominantly in Russian, and higher education (except philological and linguistic studies) – only in Russian, a job and a career were available only if you spoke Russian. Thus the reforms of the Belarusian language in 1934 and 1956 aimed at making it more similar to Russian, as did one introduced in 2008.

Conclusions

This study reveals the uniformization approach in the multilingual visual representation in connection with the concept of *tutëishasts'* identity. In doing so, it also draws attention to the fact that the material infrastructure for the production of the visual urban environment preserved some ideological patterns even though their veracity had been questioned, as it has been shown on the examples of signboards and printed materials from the 1990s–2000s.

In the context of continuity of colonial policy, as in the case of Belarus under the influence of Russia, multilingualism without clear hierarchy can still be used as a tool of decreasing the significance of local history, which ultimately results in the weakening of local identity. The interest of people to preserve local languages and dialects that enrich the linguistic landscape, that is, reduce the permeability for institutional control, contradicts the colonial policy of the current authorities in Belarus. This is quite apparent in souvenir books intended for readers from abroad, which avoid representing the significance of Belarusian language and culture by any means, and visually communicate their conformity with the Russian language.

The constitutional status of Belarusian as one of the official languages among the Russified population has led to its use being limited to the domain of high culture. Thus, high

quality books are published in Belarusian and films are shot, while the policy of the state is to make Russian a language of everyday communication (in education and working life) for a great proportion of Belarusians. The prevalent use of Belarusian in the field of high culture resulted in low tolerance towards its common folk variants. Poor knowledge of Belarusian (due to the “*narkamaŭka*”¹¹ standard taught in secondary schools and a lack of opportunities to use Belarusian on a daily basis) is contemptuously called *trasianka*¹² – meaning replacing Belarusian words with Russian ones when the speaker is unable to find a suitable word – and *pa-tutëishamu*. Thus, in the 1990s, the concept of *tutëishasts'* underwent changes in terms of the meanings that it reproduced. Before, it referred to the overwhelming majority of Belarusians, who escape issues of national identity. Since the 1990s, the concept of *tutëishasts'* no longer assumes multilingualism, but negatively marks the knowledge of only one language, i.e. Russian, and is applied to people of various social status, often businessmen and high officials. The circles of people who fall under the designation of the concept of *tutëishasts'* expand, as opposed to the circles of Belarusian national intelligentsia.

The concept of *tutëishasts'* identity still remains relevant, although there are noticeable shifts in the meanings that it reproduces. It also serves as a marker of distance in relation to state institutions, i.e. institutions promoting colonial identity and unfortunately still opposing the nationally oriented intelligentsia, who stress the multilingual aspect of Belarusian identity.

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11 This designation comes from the abbreviated name of the ministries in the BSSR at the time of the grammar reform by the *narkamat*, i.e. people's commissariat, of 1933; subsequent language reforms within the same framework also took place in 1934, 1956, and 2008. Due to the simplification of grammatical rules, and changes in vocabulary and phonetics, they made the Belarusian language more similar to Russian. The *narkamaŭka* is a standard that differs from the classical language norm, the so-called, *tarashkevitsa* (Bekus, 2014; Kittel et al., 2010).

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1. Signboard: “Authorized by the Central Committee for Assistance to Children, Minsk District. Department Store No. 1”. Source: Rudling, 2014, p. 157; first published in the magazine *Illiustrirovannaja Rossiia*, Paris 1929.
2. Plaque: “Belarusian State University”, Minsk 1929. Source: Rudling, 2014, p. 154.
3. Letterhead: “Military Commissariat of the Mogilev District”, 1920s. Source: Instagram profile of local historian from Mogilev Aleh Dz’iachkoŭ. Dz’iachkoŭ, n.d. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CfrQpodlj4CNaWdPRJf3BFuczNVmgbpmt3PjU0/>
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6. A page from the book É. Mel’nikaŭ, V. Mishchanka (Eds.), *Belarus’: Partrët na fone peramen / Belarus’: Portret na fone peremen / Belarus: A story of change*. Source: Mel’nikaŭ & Mishchanka, 1998, p. 26.
7. A page from the book U. Maroz, *Minsk staradaŭni i malady / Minsk drevnii i molodoi / Minsk in the Past and Today*. Source: Maroz, 2002, p. 12.

Pojęcie „tutejszości” w komunikacji wizualnej w przestrzeni publicznej na Białorusi jako źródło wykluczenia

Abstrakt

Czy obecność kilku języków w komunikacji wizualnej w przestrzeni publicznej oznacza tolerancję i równość między ich użytkownikami? Komunikacja wizualna w przestrzeni publicznej kreuje i wykorzystuje pojęcie przynależności do wspólnoty oraz konstruuje tożsamość. Tym samym wielojęzyczna komunikacja w przestrzeni publicznej może generować różne znaczenia i mechanizmy tożsamości. W artykule rekonstruuje znaczenia wytwarzane w komunikacji wizualnej w przestrzeni publicznej w dwóch okresach ożywienia narodowego na Białorusi (lata 20. XX wieku i okres od lat 90. XX wieku do roku 2010) oraz koncepcję tożsamości lokalnej, jaką budowały. Pokazuję, w jaki sposób były one kształtowane i jakie mechanizmy wykluczenia były wytwarzane w stosunkowo różnych kontekstach kulturowych, aby zachować wielojęzyczność w komunikacji w przestrzeni publicznej. W tym celu porównuję szyldy miejskie i materiały drukowane z obu okresów.

Słowa kluczowe: Białoruś; tożsamość narodowa; komunikacja wizualna; reprezentacja; kroje pisma

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