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Linguistic Landscape of the most important Hungarian institutions in São Paulo

The Brazilian metropole of São Paulo is home to one of the most populous Hungarian communities in South America. The migration waves of the 20th century led to more than a hundred thousand Hungarians settling down in Brazil, where several generations of Hungarian descendants now form the distant diaspora. From the moment the first immigrants arrived on the mainland, street names, religious documents, guilds, sports clubs, newspapers, and advertisements have indicated the place of residence of the different ethnic groups. Two decades after the millennium, there are only a few areas and institutions in São Paulo where the Hungarian language remains significant. This study introduces the Linguistic Landscape of the most essential Hungarian institutions: the Hungarian House of São Paulo (*Casa Húngara*) and the Consulate General of Hungary in São Paulo (*Consulado Geral da Hungria em São Paulo*).

Keywords: linguistic landscape, diaspora, language community, language maintenance, bilingualism, multilingualism

1. Introduction

The significance of Linguistic Landscape (LL) as a field of research has been emerging in the last few decades due to the increasing number of signs, symbols, displays, advertisements, commercials, images, and posters. More and more conferences are held on the topic, new collections of studies in connection with public texts are coming to light, and LL as a subject is gaining popularity among universities worldwide. By analyzing signs of public places where texts are present in one or more languages, one can get an insight into the society where the signs are being broadcast (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). Most public signs are accompanied by texts in one or more languages, depending on the settlement, country, society, culture, and inhabitants. People turn 'spaces' into 'places' (Shohamy, 2015) by filling them with public signs that favor informing others. When arriving in a new country, the first encounter with the local language is through the different forms of signs containing texts (Shohamy, 2006). Texts can be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, determined by several factors (e.g., how touristic the settlement is, how many languages the society uses, and so on). In many cases, however, despite the language laws or the official language status, the use of languages remains limited, which therefore do not even play a role in the linguistic landscape (cf. Vígh-Szabó, 2017). The more globalized the countries

and societies become, the more considerable need there will be for the representation of more than one language on public signs. Therefore, the significance of new studies in LL is escalating.

Pavlenko (2009: 1) describes Linguistic Landscape as 'public uses of written language.' Sebba (2010: 73) suggests that it is 'somewhere at the junction of sociolinguistics, sociology, social psychology, geography, and media studies.' In their article about LL, Landry and Bourhis (1997: 23) introduce two complementary definitions; one abbreviated and one more detailed. According to the abbreviated definition, LL "refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region." The more detailed definition, which also happens to be referred to more often, states, "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the LL of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration." Beyond that, in their article (1997), the two authors differentiate informational and symbolic functions of the discipline that can serve together as a marker regarding the language status of communities living in the given territory. The authors suggest that the informational function covers the geographical territories and their language communities, setting up well-defined language boundaries and analyzing texts on public signs. The symbolic function shows how individuals are affected by the absence or presence of their language on signs and how individuals feel like members of a language community in a bi- or multilingual setting. They hypothesize that by analyzing public signs of a street, an institution, or any sites where language texts are present, one can also get an insight into the society where the signs are being broadcast. Even political background, economic status, touristic capacity, and multilingual community awareness can be speculated by examining the signs from LL approaches. Indeed, the geographic areas of most of the studies that have been carried out in the field of LL are multilingual countries and societies, often under circumstances of language conflicts. It is possible to determine which ethnic community is in a hegemonic or subordinate role. Correlations between Linguistic Landscape and language maintenance have also been subject to research (Landry and Bourhis, 1997), just like the representation of language contact and change (Huebner, 2006; Piller, 2003). Examples of such can also be observed by analyzing the signs of public places in neighboring countries with territorial conflicts. Numerous studies that deal with the status of the Hungarian language, for instance, in relation to the language policy of the country's neighbors (Csernicskó, 2018, Laihonen, 2015). In some regions and settlements, Hungarian texts on public signs are being suppressed or erased to decrease its dominance over local languages, even in territories where the majority of the inhabitants are Hungarians. Font sizes, colors, the particular location of texts in one language over another can mean an intention to express superiority. Studies conducted concerning this phenomenon are multiplying year

over year in this area and worldwide where questionable territorial decisions were made, e.g., in the Basque country (Cenoz and Gorter, 2006) or Israel (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006).

Since Linguistic Landscape counts as a relatively new field of research, there are still various debates about its theoretical framework as a discipline. Pavlenko (2009) summarizes the most common questions regarding theoretical and methodological arguments based on the studies of Backhaus and Huebner. Representativeness and scope of samples is one of the most relevant issues: how researchers choose a representative sample; what are the criteria for selecting a street or a building; what data is sufficient for generalization; in addition, the skills of the researchers as photographers. Since the publications of the first studies on Linguistic Landscape, both technology and globalization have undergone incredible development and spread, and it is without a doubt, more questions regarding samples, signs and photography have been raised. The unit of analysis or the linguistic sign itself has also been a question of debate (e.g., printed items, books). According to Backhaus (2006: 55), "any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame" is a sign.

Moreover, signs can be divided into analytical categories for understanding their authorship (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). The government of related organizations sets top-down, or official signs (e.g., street names, road signs), bottom-up or non-official ones are placed by autonomous social actors (e.g., personal ads, shop signs). The language or the languages of the signs can also cause difficulties regarding clear manifestation and determination of the signs' purpose when language mixing, lexical borrowing, or language play occur.

Although there are still numerous question marks and debates around the discipline, "the question can be asked whether we can (or want to) demarcate the boundaries of the field at all because it extends in many directions, and its boundaries are continuously crossed by scholars who bring in innovative theoretical and methodological approaches" (Gorter, 2019: 42). LL as a field of research is still a developing discipline that adapts to the development of the world. Creating a concrete theoretical and methodological framework at this point would not be an easy task; additionally, diversity and heterogeneity appear to be notable features.

1.1. The location of the research: two official Hungarian institutions in São Paulo

São Paulo is the home of the most prominent Hungarian diaspora in Brazil and Latin America. According to the webpage of the Consulate General of Hungary in São Paulo, there are at least 100.000 inhabitants who are Hungarians or have Hungarian ancestors. During the 20th century, many associations were established in the Brazilian metropole by European immigrant groups. However, only a small percentage of them could survive by the end of the millennium. Regarding

institutions and service providers created by the Hungarian community, there are still some that exist (e.g., restaurant Chárika, sports clubs Clube XV de Março and S.E.R.V.A., elementary school Colégio Santo Américo, etc.) The most significant, however, are the ones that officially work for the interest of the Hungarian community are the Hungarian House and the Consulate General of Hungary in São Paulo. Before analyzing the Linguistic Landscape of these two institutions, it is crucial to get an insight into their short history.

1.1.1. The Hungarian House

Wars of the 20th century that reached and affected the territory of Hungary have caused three large migration waves. Immigrants faced restrictions regarding their use of language and maintenance of the Hungarian culture in most of the host countries to which they escaped. From 1941, it was forbidden to speak Hungarian and any other languages of all Axis powers in São Paulo. The oldest Hungarian organization in Brazil, the Association of Hungarian Entities in São Paulo (later owner of the Hungarian House), was subject to expropriation. It took almost two years of official state supervision and control before the authorities were convinced that the work of the Association was only aid and education, which were for the benefit of the state itself. However, per the new law introduced, the Board of Directors could only be composed of native Brazilian citizens. The official name also had to be nationalized, in which the word 'Hungarian' could not appear because the Brazilian authorities allowed the first general meeting of the association to be held on September 30, 1943; the organization was renamed Associação Beneficiente 30 de Setembro (Benefit Association 30th of September). Until today, the colony gratefully remembers the Brazilian directors who helped the organization to survive. World War II curbed the development of the community; decrees of the Brazilian government regulated the abolition or nationalization of associations and schools established by the immigrant groups of the Axis nations. Hungarian educational institutions were no exception. In 1938, twelve schools were in operation, and the last two had to be closed in 1951. More than 10.000 children obtained elementary education in Hungarian schools (Piller, 1996).

By 1945, the board of directors, composed of Hungarians, could be set up again. However, due to the different waves of migration, social interests, and political views often diverged from the community. The diaspora of São Paulo matured relatively late to establish its own Hungarian House, which opened its doors in Avenida de São João in the late 60s. The Hungarian House, which is the home of the community today, was built in 1985 in Rua Gomes de Carvalho, partly with the help of donations from the colony. The objective of *Casa Húngara* is to cultivate and maintain the Hungarian culture, language, and national identity. By this time, events organized by the board were already in the Portuguese language besides Hungarian because of the younger generations and mixed marriages. The

most popular events have always been folk-dance evenings, scouting events, dinners, national holidays, chess and table tennis parties, literature nights, Bible study, Easter, and Christmas.

1.1.2. Consulate General of Hungary in São Paulo

Hungary has ten institutions of diplomatic representation in Brazil. They include the Embassy of Hungary in the capital Brasíla and the other nine consulates around the country. *Consulado Geral da Hungria em São Paulo* is located in one of the business districts of the Brazilian metropole, in a skyscraper of a corporate center.

Photo 1. Park Tower in the Corporate Center – home of the Consulate General of Hungary

Brazilian individuals with Hungarian roots increasingly visit the institution, especially since 2011, when the Hungarian government introduced the simplified naturalization procedure. As a result, nearly 700.000 Hungarians worldwide, who live beyond Hungary's borders, could receive citizenship within five years. Many of São Paulo's Hungarian community have also taken advantage of the procedure and can obtain their documents ceremonially at major events of the colony every year.

Before World War I, the Consulate was involved in the Association of Hungarian Entities' activities in São Paulo whenever possible. After the war and the events in the motherland, the community saw the Consulate as a local representation of communism. The Hungarian government did not even reopen the institution in its former function; it only operated as a commercial representation. It was not considered convenient for the Hungarians in the colony to visit the Consulate, and the institution did not seek contact with the colony, either. The situation of the World War immigrants was made more difficult by

Hungarian diplomatic missions could not officially deal with individuals who did not have Hungarian passports following the Treaty of Trianon. Most of the separated country's citizens were forced to relinquish their passports. For Hungarian holders of Romanian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Austrian documents, maintaining relations with the mother country proved to be a dead-end (Kóbori et al., 2017).

By the 70s, Hungarian politics experienced a détente. Members of the community had the chance to go home from the Brazilian land, and the newly formed Consulate provided visas. Furthermore, the institution started to be the host of national holidays and traditional celebrations, which were visited by more and more people from the colony. Today, the *Consulado Geral da Hungria* has an inevitable role in organizing the life of the Hungarian community in São Paulo. In addition to that, since the introduction of the simplified naturalization procedure in Hungary, the institution provides the process of acquiring citizenship for those who have Hungarian ancestors or are married to Hungarian citizens (in case of possessing at least an intermediate level of Hungarian language proficiency).

1.2. Goals and hypothesis of the research

This study focuses on the two specific Hungarian institutions in São Paulo, the Hungarian House and the Consulate, where a significant number of texts in the Hungarian language can still be found. The hypothesis is that despite these institutions are being visited mostly by Hungarians and their descendants living nearby, owing to the younger generation's language attrition, there are already more signs with texts Portuguese than in Hungarian. By analyzing the various languages on each sign (Portuguese, Hungarian, English), one can get an insight if the local community has the possibility or at least the interest in maintaining their Hungarian language command being surrounded by mono-, bi- or multilingual signs that include Hungarian texts on them. The study can reveal the current situation and predict the future of Hungarian signs in the community, should language erasure, language replacement, or language upgrading and downgrading occur. Results can also be useful for both institutions since they can focus on increasing or decreasing the number of texts in the language they prefer.

2. Methods
2.1. The methodology of LL research in general

In order to examine LL, a collection of representative information about signs in public places is needed, including the time and location the information was collected (mostly photos). This process is followed by a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the items being studied from linguistic points of view: the frequency of appearance of certain languages; if they are bi- or multilingual; the

relationship between the languages displayed; the features of the fonts, and so on. (Pavlenko, 2009).

Signs can also be divided according to their primary functions (informative or symbolic) and can be analyzed by how the information they carry is arranged (Reh, 2004). Information arrangement can be duplicating, fragmentary, overlapping, and complementary. The information is considered duplicating when the same information is displayed in two languages. The information is fragmentary when more information is displayed in one language than in the other. Overlapping information is when part of the text is displayed in both languages, but both languages are displayed differently. Finally, the information can be complementary, when different information is displayed in the two languages. Public signs in this study are observed following the criteria mentioned above.

Another categorization suggests that signs can be top-down when placed by official authorities or bottom-up when issued as advertisements by individuals or private companies. The first type of sign is an official sign, which can even represent language policy, while the latter reflects non-official language preferences (Bátyi, 2014). All images containing text in and outside both buildings of this study are examined in light of this categorization as well.

Although there are theoretical and methodological debates, LL researchers attempt to agree with the clarification of several methods, such as explaining their theoretical assumptions, the geographical area of the research and the reason they chose it, the type of the signs analyzed, and the significance of their findings (Pavlenko, 2009).

2.2. The methodology of the present research

The data source of the study (77 photos) is the visual data that consists of photographs of signs taken inside and outside the Hungarian House (50 pictures) and the Consulate General of Hungary in São Paulo (27 photos). Pictures of fixed objects such as information panels, posters, and advertisements were taken in daylight in 2020, based on the one frame–one token approach of Backhaus (2007). The pictures are analyzed according to the distribution of mono- bi- and multilingual signs, their information arrangement, and if they are either bottom-up or top-down signs.

3. Results and discussion
3.1. The Hungarian House
3.1.1. Languages displayed in signs

Although Hungarian was the 'official language' during community events for some time, the younger generations of Hungarian descendants now have only a relatively basic Hungarian command; hence the events are either monolingual (Portuguese) or bilingual (Portuguese and Hungarian). However, the languages of

the signs do not show a clear majority in favor of Portuguese. As Shohamy writes (2015), one of the purposes of displaying a different language than the majority one is to motivate people to learn and use it. This is especially relevant in relation to this study since the acquisition of Hungarian has been one of the most important goals of the Hungarian House for decades.

In the 21st century, *Casa Húngara* is the home of most Hungarian events in São Paulo. It is located in Vila Olímpia, a district easily approachable from most parts of the city. Since the Benefit Association 30th of September moved there from its previous home in 1985, it also hosts the Hungarian language school and operates a library with books from the mother country or Hungarian authors from Latin America. The building itself has been under renovation since 2019, with the Hungarian government's financial help.

Photo 2. The renovated building of *Casa Húngara*

The house has mostly informative signs and announcements. The number of objects with texts on them is 50. There are only two signs outside, and the rest are found inside the building.

Table 1. Monolingual signs in The Hungarian House

Monolingual signs	Hungarian	Portuguese	English	*sum*
number of signs	31	10	1	*42*

Table 1. presents the number and the language distribution of monolingual signs at *Casa Húngara*. The names of rooms such as the library or the assembly hall are typically monolingual Hungarian appellations, named after members of the Hungarian community who contributed to the successful continuation of the active social life in the diaspora (Photo 3).

Photo 3. János Csernik Assembly Hall

The majority of the monolingual Hungarian signs were photographed in the library (Photo 4), where appropriate labels identify different genres of books on their shelves in Hungarian. The books themselves were not counted in the data.

Photo 4. Monolingual Hungarian signs in the library

Monolingual Portuguese signs can be read mainly on objects that aim to call attention or contain reminder inscriptions found on a fire extinguisher, on a non-smoking sign, or in the bathroom. A poster with a call on a Hungarian study program contains the only monolingual English text.


Photo 5. Monolingual Portuguese and English signs

Table 2. Bilingual signs in The Hungarian House

Bilingual signs	Hungarian–Portuguese	Portuguese–English	*sum*
number of signs	4	2	*6*

There are only six signs containing bilingual texts (Table 2.): four with Hungarian and Portuguese and two with Portuguese, and English.
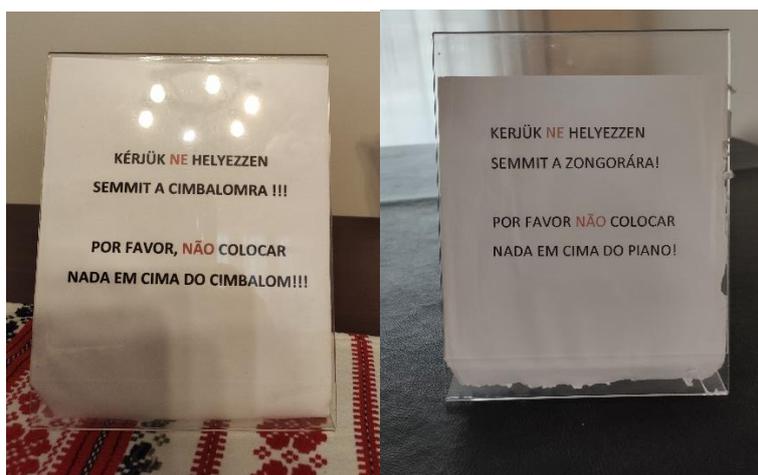
Photo 6. Signs with bilingual Hungarian-Portuguese texts on them

The Hungarian House has two multilingual signs that show Hungarian, Portuguese and English texts. Regarding information arrangement, one sign has all three languages equally represented, and the other has Hungarian in focus. Considering the first one, even though the Hungarian text has a grammatical error, there is no difference in the information arrangement between the languages.
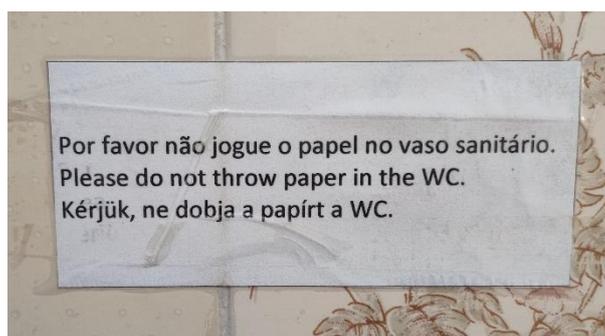
Photo 7. Multilingual sign in *Casa Húngara*

3.1.2. Information arrangement

Bilingual signs were analyzed also according to the information arrangement point of view. Three of the six sign texts have equal sizes and colors of fonts, which does not assume any emphasis of either language over the other, though the Hungarian texts are placed above the Portuguese ones. There are two bilingual

signs on which Portuguese text is more prominent than English, and one sign has Portuguese language dominance over Hungarian.

3.2. Consulate General of Hungary in São Paulo
3.2.1. Languages displayed in signs

Park Tower is the home of hundreds of offices and companies, and there are no signs that indicate that the Hungarian Consulate is based there: the front hall of the building lacks any flags or signs. However, reaching the floor of the Consulate provides several materials for an LL study. There are 27 signs altogether with monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual texts.

Table 3. Monolingual signs in The Consulate

Monolingual signs	Hungarian	Portuguese	English	*sum*
number of signs	0	13	1	*14*

The collected data show an absolute predominance of monolingual Portuguese signs (Table 3.). However, like in *Casa Húngara*, most of them include informative rather than descriptive information, and the names of the departments are in Portuguese. The significant proportion of Portuguese signs is not surprising since the Consulate is a formal scene that provides services connected to personal documents and not the venue of informal social events or language teaching like the Hungarian House.
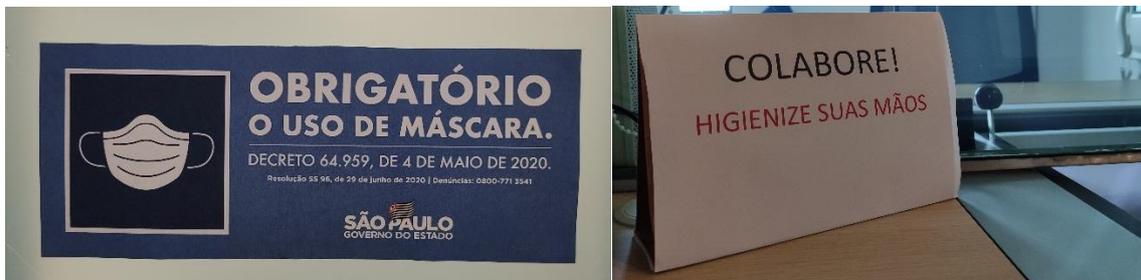
Photo 8. The appearance of the pandemic has launched a new wave of informative signs

The only sign with monolingual English text is a name of an exhibit about Hungarian scientists, inventors, and innovators created by the National Research, Development, and Innovation Office.

Photo 9. The only monolingual English sign

Table 4. Bilingual signs in the Consulate

Bilingual signs	Hungarian–Portuguese	Hungarian–English	*sum*
number of signs	3	4	*7*

Regarding bilingual signs (Table 4.), in contrast with *Casa Húngara*, besides Hungarian–Portuguese signs, there are no objects with Portuguese–English text on them, only Hungarian–English. Since the Consulate deals with international relations and is the home of international meetings, the presence of the English language is more common.

Photo 10. One of the four Hungarian–English bilingual signs at the Consulate

There are three Hungarian–Portuguese bilingual signs, primarily for educational purposes. The Consulate operates a Corner of Books, where visitors can read Hungarian books on the spot. The text also suggests the reader visit the Hungarian House library, where books can be borrowed. Acquiring Hungarian is essential for those wanting to apply for citizenship. As a result, language promotion among younger generations and mixed marriages has risen in the past decades.
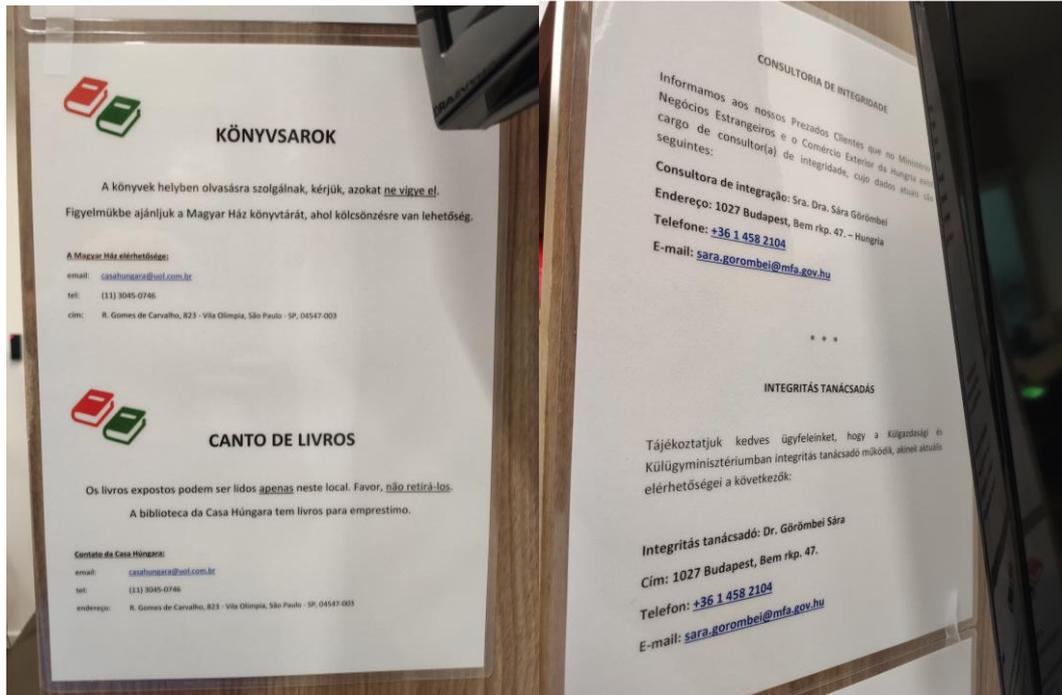
Photo 11. Bilingual Hungarian and Portuguese signs

3.2.2. Information arrangement

According to information arrangement, all texts are presented equally in analyzing bi- and multilingual signs: there is no emphasis on either language above the other, considering applying larger fonts, more colorful texts, etc. During the data collection at the Consulate, six multilingual signs were found. All these signs with Hungarian, Portuguese, and English texts are part of the Smart Hungary exhibit.

Photo 12. Two of the multilingual signs at the Consulate

3.2.3. Assumptions of the possible outcomes of the LL in these institutions

What might be the future of signs with Hungarian texts in these institutions? An outcome that is unlikely to happen on signs is language erasure. There is no point in removing texts in Hungarian as long as the Hungarian House exists with its noble objectives. Those who visit *Casa Húngara* think about the language as part of their Hungarian identity. Another outcome could be language change, a process that has slightly begun already: the Portuguese language takes over the functions of Hungarian because of the language difficulties of younger generations and the spread of mixed couples. Language upgrading could likely happen soon if the interest in learning Hungarian increases due to the dynamic work of the coordinators of *Casa Húngara* and the *Consulado Geral*. In that case, one can assume that the Hungarian texts on signs could multiply.

In parallel with the change in generations and the growing number of mixed marriages between Brazilians and individuals of Hungarian origin, the Hungarian language can be heard less frequently within the community. It is taught in scouting events for children and in the courses that the Hungarian House organizes. For the youngest generation besides Portuguese L1, English is becoming L2, so Hungarian has already started to lose its significance in the aging diaspora. However, the community members often emphasize that it makes them feel proud to be Hungarians, even if their language skills are insufficient. Belonging to the same colony, sharing the same traditions, listening to the stories about the motherland of their ancestors, participating in events such as folk dance festivals and cultural dinners are the bonds that will keep the community together far into the future when even fewer individuals will have the ability to speak Hungarian. As long as *Casa Húngara* stays a popular scene for those who intend to maintain their Hungarian language and identity, and until the interest in applying for Hungarian citizenship in the Consulate remains remarkable, signs with Hungarian texts will continue to be seen in and around these institutions. The collected data shows an accurate reflection of the situation of the Hungarian language nowadays in São Paulo – the intention of maintaining the language is still on, even if it is not the L1 of the community anymore. To ensure intelligibility, most of the signs found in the two institutions contain Portuguese texts. According to the data, there is a balance between the Portuguese and Hungarian texts on signs.

4. Conclusions

The early hypothesis, which assumed there are many more signs in the two institutions with Portuguese texts on them, has turned out to be only partly correct. First and foremost, the study found no bottom-up signs whatsoever, which indicates that these institutions provide administrative information for the public. According to the data, there are significantly more monolingual Hungarian signs

at one of the most important Hungarian institutions in São Paulo, the Hungarian House. This is because *Casa Húngara* is the central meeting point of the Hungarian community that offers social events and education services such as folk-dance evenings, traditional cooking events and, more importantly, language courses. I can agree with Bourhis and Landry (1997: 29), who noted that "the prevalence of one's own language on public signs can fulfill an informational and symbolic function that can encourage group members to value and use their own language in a broad range of interpersonal and institutional settings." The main task and intention of the Hungarian House is to pass Hungarian traditions, identity, and language on to younger generations; hence they intend to keep using signs that have Hungarian texts on them in the future as well.

In the other crucial Hungarian institution, the Consulate General of Hungary, there were no monolingual Hungarian signs, but the language itself is represented in all bilingual and multilingual signs. The *Consulado* is a formal platform and service provider that deals with foreign affairs, so the relevance of the English language on signs is unquestionable. Individuals, who visit the institution to apply for Hungarian citizenship, presumably do not have a sufficient command of the language yet, hence the Portuguese language dominance on most of the signs.

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