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MONOLINGUAL AND PLURILINGUAL WORDPLAY IN ERGONYMS AS PART OF THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES OF TÜBINGEN AND CHERNIHIV

Abstract

The paper focuses on monolingual and plurilingual wordplay in the ergonymy of the cities of Tübingen (Germany) and Chernihiv (Ukraine). The aim of the study is to describe and analyze lexico-semantic, structural and functional characteristics of wordplay in the ergonymy of the linguistic landscapes of the mentioned cities. The methods of research include personal observation, lexico-semantic, graphic, structural and functional analyses of wordplay in ergonyms in the linguistic landscapes of Tübingen and Chernihiv. The research reveals that the main lexico-semantic features of the studied wordplay are homonymy, paronymy, metaphor and creation of non-existent words. The graphic means of wordplay include capitalization of the whole ergonym or of its part to attract the visitor's attention, changing of colour and font, putting in bold, paragram, use of paragraphemic signs. The presence of English is remarkable in the ergonymy of both cities. The linguistic landscape of Tübingen is multilingual, including English, Italian, German, French and Greek. The distinctive feature of graphic wordplay in the linguistic landscape of Chernihiv is the usage of Latin and Cyrillic letters in ergonyms. We revealed a few examples of lexicalization in the ergonymy in Chernihiv. According to the structure the analysed ergonyms are mainly nouns, two-component or three-component nominative phrases. Blended bilingual ergonyms reflect the creativity of the nominator. Monolingual wordplay represents localization, meanwhile plurilingual wordplay reveals glocalization and globalization. Ergonyms perform such main functions in linguistic landscape as expressive nomination, original identification, aesthetic and ludic functions. Humour is also a characteristic feature of wordplay, in particular, the monolingual one. Further studies may explore the role of humour in linguistic landscapes or the comparative characteristics of wordplay in the ergonymy of other cities to reveal common tendencies in the creation of attractive ergonyms.

Keywords: wordplay, ergonym, commercial name, bilingual blend, linguistic landscape.

Анотація

Статтю присвячено одномовній і багатомовній грі слів в ергонімії міст Тюбінгена (Федеративна Республіка Німеччина) і Чернігова (Україна). Метою дослідження є описати й проаналізувати лексико-семантичні, структурні та функціональні особливості словогри в ергонімах у лінгвістичному пейзажі зазначених вище міст. Методи дослідження містять власне спостереження, лексико-семантичний, графічний, структурний і функціональний аналіз гри слів у ергонімах міст Тюбінгена і Чернігова. За результатами дослідження ергонімів у лінгвістичних пейзажах Тюбінгена і Чернігова виявлено, що основними лексико-семантичними засобами досліджуваної гри слів є омонімія, паронімія, метафора і створення неологізмів. Графічні засоби словогри включають капіталізацію цілого ергоніма або його частини для привернення уваги відвідувачів, зміну кольору, шрифту, параграм і використання параграфемних знаків. Значною в ергонімії обох міст є наявність англійської мови. Лінгвістичний пейзаж Тюбінгена багатомовний (англійська, німецька, французька, іспанська й грецька мови). Відмінною рисою графічної словогри в лінгвістичному пейзажі Чернігова є використання латиниці й кирилиці. Виявлено декілька прикладів лексикалізації в ергонімії Чернігова. За структурою проаналізовані ергоніми – іменники, дво- й трикомпонентні номінативні фрази. Двомовні ергоніми-бленди виявляють креативність номінатора. Багатомовна словогра відображає глокалізацію та глобалізацію, тоді як одномовна словогра – локалізацію. Основні функції ергонімів у лінгвістичному пейзажі такі: експресивна номінація, оригінальна ідентифікація, естетична й ігрова функції. Характерна риса одномовної гри слів

у лінгвістичному пейзажі – гумор. Подальші дослідження можуть бути присвячені гумору в лінгвістичному пейзажі або зіставному вивченню слогогри в ергонімії інших міст з метою виявлення спільних тенденцій у створенні атрактивних ергонімів.

Ключові слова: гра слів, ергонім, комерційна назва, двомовний бленд, лінгвістичний пейзаж.

Introduction. Wordplay in Linguistic Landscape (hereinafter referred to as LL) is an attractive advertising and expressive means. Ergonyms and commercial names with wordplay is the proof of the nominator's creativity and the way of lexical innovation which may later serve as word formation patterns for common words. By wordplay we understand any semantic, grammatical, graphic or phonic manipulation with words and word forms which performs expressive, emotive and pragmatic functions. Wordplay may be complex and include several means of such manipulation: graphic and semantic, phonic and semantic, or even graphic, semantic and syntactical at the same time. The ability to make wordplay and to decipher it includes emotionally marked mental processes. Wordplay in proper names is lexical creativity which serves as attraction to the perceivers. Proper names perform other functions in comparison to common names. A proper name may coincide with a common name, though the first one is created more to indicate or identify than to nominate. To be precise in terminology, commercial names represent proper names of private companies, therefore, they are included in ergonyms, which, additionally to commercial names, comprise public or state nominations, such as the names of universities, institutes, schools, public transport organizations, etc.

Public spaces of big cities, historical centres and commercial areas are full of wordplay to attract the potential clients influencing their emotions and creating a special invisible interaction between the nominator and the perceiver of the wordplay. Our hypothesis is that the presence of English in LL is significant, especially in the formation of bilingual ergonyms, thus contributing to wordplay. The presence of English makes a proper name more internationally recognized. A mixture of European languages in ergonymy proves language contact and contributes to interlingual lexical innovation.

Literature review. Our research focuses on wordplay in ergonyms (a term introduced by Bauer in 1985), belonging to a subcategory of proper names, also referred to as commercial names, with a special emphasis on the presence of monolingual and plurilingual wordplay in ergonymy as part of the linguistic landscapes of Tübingen and Chernihiv. Plurilingual wordplay in linguistic landscape proves lexical innovation in ergonymy. As Winter-Froemel (2017) puts it, playfulness motivates linguistic innovation (p. 33). Comparative investigation of ergonymy as part of linguistic landscapes constitutes the object of contemporary sociolinguistic studies with the special focus on language contact. Gorter (2006) studied multilingualism in LL of Spain and the Netherlands. The mixture of languages, in particular English, in bilingual ergonyms, makes evident the popularity of English in creating commercial names in many European cities. According to Gorter (ibid.), "the process of globalisation is visible through the presence of English in linguistic landscape. Next to globalisation there is also a process of regionalisation or localisation going on. Together these processes have been called 'glocalisation'" (p. 82). The term 'glocalisation' is a blend which could be used to characterize the phenomenon of bilingual blend words as the evidence of language contact or language interaction.

One of the most striking features of modern linguistic landscapes is the presence of monolingual and plurilingual wordplay as creative means in the formation of ergonyms, therefore LL performs a ludic function. Wordplay in a broad sense is defined by Lecolle (2018) as a deliberate and conscious ludic or poetic practice which is related to words as the manifestation of linguistic feeling – non-explicit conception and perception of the

language (p. 217). This definition reveals the linguistic and aesthetic nature of wordplay. Additionally, we would like to note poly-contextual and poly-functional character of wordplay, including the mixture of its pragmatic and aesthetic value.

Wordplay is studied as a culturally-based, dynamic phenomenon (Winter-Froemel & Zirker, 2015; Winter-Froemel, 2017), creative tool (Full & Lecolle, 2018). However, research on bilingual wordplay remains limited, with relatively few studies in literature (Knospe, Onysko & Goth, 2016; Gladstein, 2006), and in linguistic landscape (Bobchynets, 2024; Lamarre, 2014).

Our previous comparative studies have examined ergonymic spaces of other cities, including Lyon and Kyiv (Bobchynets, 2024), Madrid, Cádiz, Málaga, Kyiv, Odesa, and Chernihiv (Bobchynets, 2021). This study continues our investigation of wordplay in ergonymy as part of linguistic landscapes of European cities.

The object of our study comprises ergonyms with wordplay in the linguistic landscapes of the cities of Tübingen (Germany) and Chernihiv (Ukraine). **The aim of our research** is to describe and analyse lexico-semantic, structural and functional features of monolingual and plurilingual wordplay in ergonyms as part of the linguistic landscapes of Tübingen and Chernihiv. The choice of the cities is conditioned by both personal and academic factors: Chernihiv is our native town and Tübingen was the place of our research stay. Notably, the two cities have not been the object of comparative studies in the proposed focus, which highlights the novelty of the present investigation. **The research material** includes 126 ergonyms with wordplay collected through personal observation of linguistic landscapes of Tübingen and Chernihiv, data retrieved from websites and advertising booklets. Particular emphasis is placed on direct observation in public spaces, which is considered essential for the accurate and contextually grounded analysis of the linguistic landscapes. **The research methods** applied in the analysis include observation, lexico-semantic, structural and functional analyses of the wordplay in the studied ergonyms. There were some limitations in data collection, such as the seasonal character of wordplay, as it will be seen later in the example *GANS GANZ LECKER*, which belonged to the Christmas menu in Tübingen. Other limitations in our research data representation belong to the graphic features of ergonyms which include some specific signs or letters impossible to reproduce in text (*Lucky coffee*) in Chernihiv, where the letter *u* is interrupted and looks as a smile.

Results and discussion. Tübingen and Chernihiv are small historical cities representing beautiful tourist destinations. Our hypothesis is that the most creative ergonyms tend to be concentrated in the historical part of the cities, which are most visited by local and foreign tourists. The linguistic landscapes of the two cities reveal features of multilingualism and internationalization in creation of ergonyms. Thus, at the western entrance of Tübingen we observe the presence of English and French in such commercial names as *Total Energies* (a gas station), *Bonjour* (a food shop) and *Wash* (a car wash). Similarly, multiple commercial names in English are as well observed in Chernihiv (*Coffee corner*, *BEAUTY DOLLS*, *Sun city*). This reflects a broader tendency across many European cities, where multilingualism in ergonyms serves as a form of international attractors. This is particularly evident in names that contain monolingual or plurilingual wordplay.

Monolingual wordplay reveals local language peculiarities (examples from Tübingen include *TüBus*, *Tügast*, *Tü-Bio*, *TUEpaedia*, *tueMarkt.de*, all of which play on the abbreviation “Tü” for Tübingen), and plurilingual wordplay states globalization in commercial names (*NeCkAR* – a multilingual blend incorporating the name of the Neckar River), *coffeeварка* – a hybrid of English “coffee” and Ukrainian “варка” [brew]). We would like to demonstrate examples of monolingual and plurilingual wordplay in ergonyms separately to analyze the main means of its creation.

Monolingual wordplay as localization means

Linguistic creativity is not only revealed in the ergonym itself but in the accompanying explanation. The repetition of the same syllables, the use of paronyms are examples of monolingual wordplay: the student bar *KUCKUCK* in Tübingen, accompanied by the slogan *Von studierenden fuer studierende* [By students for students].

Rhyme and humour are also an effective means of local wordplay: the shop *LUSH Friendmade cosmetics* frequently used the changing slogans, one of which vividly exemplifies wordplay based on rhyme and humour as part of advertising, where we observe a creative rupture of the fixed phrase *Let all your dreams come true*:

LASS ALLE TRÄUME

UND SCHÄUME

WAHR WERDEN (Literally: Let all dreams and foams come true).

The shop *LUSH Friendmade cosmetics* was changing slogans every week to keep the visitors' interest with such a creative approach. This phrase plays both on rhyme (*Träume-Schäume*) and on the semantic proximity of fantasy and luxury, thus merging advertising and poetic elements.

One more monolingual creative approach in LL of Tübingen is observed in a poem made by the café *lieb*, where the name of the café is represented in an original acrostic-like advertising and it is put in bold, in different colour and font. The two-coloured grey and purple representation is remarkable and corresponds to the two colours of the commercial representation of the café:

FRISCHE

HANDWERKSKUNST

VIELFALT

GENUSSERLEBNIS

MEGA LECKER

TRADITION

REGIONAL

MIT LIEBE GEBACKEN.

Such type of graphic creativity on a small paper bag for pastries attracts visitors with its aesthetic value.

The morpheme *tü* which is a short form for Tübingen is used to form original blended ergonyms: *TüBus* (Tübingen+autobus), *Tübio*: *Die innovative Verpackung der "Tü-Bio" Milch besteht zu 40% aus Kreide* (an innovative bio-pack for milk 40% made of chalk), *TüGast* (from *Tübinger Gastronomie und Hotelbetriebe* [Tübingen gastronomy and hospitality]).

Seasonal menus also reflect creative use of paronymy. At the restaurant *CAROS*, the Christmas menu: features the Christmas slogan *GANS GANZ LECKER* (paronyms *Gans* [goose] and *ganz* [enough], meaning *goose tasteful enough*). The monolingual wordplay is used to invite visitors to eat the Christmas menu, in which goose is traditional in Germany. There are ergonyms with the typical diminutive suffix *-le* used in Swabian to refer to local linguistic peculiarities: *MAUGANESCHTLE*, *Schmälzle ERSTKLASSIG ESSEN IN LINIE*. Localization is revealed in German names and realias: *CAFÉ GLÜHWEIN*, *ZUM ALTEN FRITZ*. The name of the beer bar *BIERBREZEL* is a compound word that creatively combines two iconic German consumables: drink (Bier) and food (Brezel). The ergonyms with the prefix *uni-* are used to express the uniqueness of the products: *Unikat* (a clothes shop), *OONIKAT* (a coffee shop). The coffee shop *OONIKAT* in Tübingen uses capitalization in its slogan: *DU und DEIN Kaffee* (YOU and YOUR coffee) for emphasis.

The graphic means of wordplay include: capitalization (*BIERBREZEL*, *LÖWE LADEN*), different colours and fonts (green and yellow in *Verde Lima*, black and red in *NECKAR* and in *TüBus*). The significant part of the studied ergonyms are in three main colours: black, white or red. We consider these colours traditional and rather vivid to attract the client's attention. Capitalization may be applied to the whole ergonym as well as to its part to make a special emphasis on it: *SUEDHANG Kaffeerösterei*, *DU* und *DEIN Kaffee*.

Monolingual wordplay in Chernihiv is represented by metaphoric ergonymy (*sun city*, *Coffee Boss*, *Coffee Hit*, *Panda Coffee*, *Lucky Coffee*, *Blessed coffee*, *Paradise Hookah*, *SOUL PUB*) with personification, where the main language for monolingual wordplay is English. There is also a humorous unofficial nickname of one of the districts of Chernihiv: *Masan city* (Masany is a residential area on the outskirts of Chernihiv with a developed infrastructure: supermarkets, bars, cafés, shops, a secondary school, a kindergarten, etc.). German ergonyms are also present in LL of Chernihiv: *Bierdeckel*, *Bierwelle*. They are mainly related to beer shops, as it is known that German beer is considered one of the best quality beers. Ukrainian ergonyms represent some examples of wordplay: *ПаЛімба Пува*, *АМстердам*, where we observe partial capitalization as graphic means of wordplay and metaphor as the lexico-stylistic one; *Хмільне м'ясо* [drunk meat] is one more example of a metaphoric ergonym. Similar metaphoric ergonyms are used in Russian: *Сладкий мир* [sweet world], *Пивнойрай* [beer paradise].

We state that monolingual wordplay is easier to create than plurilingual one because of possibilities of multiple manipulations of idiomatic and direct meanings. The allusion on idioms which can be changed by a letter or a few letters (paragram), may produce paronymic wordplay or paronomasia to create a humorous effect. The creation and deciphering of wordplay possesses aesthetic value based on positive emotions, satisfaction from understanding the creative potential of lexical innovation and creativity. Monolingual wordplay is more frequently observed in LL and proves localization of the proper name. At the same time, bilingual and multilingual wordplay reveals multilingualism of modern world and contributes to global character of commercial naming.

Plurilingual wordplay in LL as glocalization and globalization representation

There are international commercial names represented in linguistic landscapes of many European cities, though at the same time they are part of linguistic landscape of a certain city: *Bijou Brigitte*, *Marc O'Polo*, *Gusti Leder*. Local bilingual names are mostly formed by combination of English and German: *the Länd*, *City Reisebüro* (Tübingen), *КварталCITY* (a real estate agency in Chernihiv), *Sun city restaurant* (Chernihiv).

Languages used in plurilingual ergonyms in Tübingen:

- a. Combination of Spanish and English in commercial names: *Contigo fairtrade shop*, *El Pecado Grill & Bar*, *cosita bonita MEXICAN SELECTED*, *El Chico Cantina & Bar*;
- b. French: *Casino Cheval*, *Cafe Lunette*;
- c. German-French: *Wirthaus zum Boulanger*, *Gaststätte Boulanger*;
- d. Spanish-English-German: *pagina Publications technologien*;
- e. Italian-German combination: *Il dolce: italienische Konditorei*, *Gusti Leder*;
- f. Italian-English: *Marbello gossip*, *Da Marco Hair beauty*;
- g. German-Italian: *EIS Cortina*;
- h. English-German: *moreJOE Fruchtgummispezialitäten*, *Ernsting's Family Sparkasse*, *BACKHOUS MAHL*;
- i. German-English blend: *NECKAR Werkstatt*. Graphic representation (black and red colours, different fonts and the word "car" in bold) is crucial here to see two words in one: the Neckar river in Tübingen and English "car", as it is a car parking in Tübingen close to the river;

j. Greek word written in Latin as a proper name and German explanation of the business: *ANGELOS Friseur salon*.

Glocalization in Tübingen is revealed in the combination of international and local names: *Kebap Lustnauer* (combines the Turkish word *kebab* in the district of Lustnau), *NECKAWA* (the name of a restaurant close to the Neckar river, made as a blend (*Neck* from Neckar and *kawa* [coffee], *NECKAR* (a car parking close to the Neckar river).

Formal creativity is revealed in spelling innovations, as in the word *Länd*, where *ä* is used to show the German spirit revealed in the transcription of English pronunciation by a German letter:

“The 3R-Center Tübingen for In vitro Models and Alternatives to Animal Testing at the University of Tübingen and the NMI Natural and Medical Sciences Institute in Reutlingen is thrilled to host the first 3R LÄND Conference in the heart of the Länd, Tübingen, Germany.) (3R LÄND Conference 2024)

There is also a gaming web-site using such original spelling: *“Hallo aus “The Länd” bei Tübingen”* ([RIFT HybridGamingWebsite](https://rift-hybridgaming.com/)).

The names of web-sites in Tübingen with *TUE* component is very productive means of creative commercial naming: *TUEpedia* (tuepedia.de), *TueMarkt.de* (tuemarkt.de).

Structural characteristics

According to the structure, most ergonyms with wordplay in Tübingen and Chernihiv are formed by nouns if they are one-word nominations (*NECKAR*, *CAROS*), or nominative phrases, if they are two-component nominations (*EIS Cortina*, *Coffee Boss*) or three-component nominations (*Hot Dog Bar*). The heading principle is like in English, where the first noun is attribute to the second one being the main word. Thus, two-component and three-component ergonyms are nominative clusters. The ergonym *Kebap Lustnauer* is an exception where the main word occupies the first position (more typical of Germanic languages would be the combination *Lustnauer Kebap*). The graphic creativity in ergonymy of Tübingen and Chernihiv is also represented by the use of the ampersand (&) in two-component nominations: *LUCK & MYCC* (a beauty studio in Chernihiv), *ami & lu* (a sewing school in Tübingen). The ergonym *LUCK & MYCC* also contains homonymy proving the complex character of wordplay.

If we consider the relatively small geographic size of the two analyzed cities, especially the central zones, we observe a high density of ergonymic creativity. This proves the growing advertising development to attract tourists and local visitors, and the creative potential of the nominators who make LL dynamic and original. Ergonyms as proper names constitute a significant part of LL, and wordplay in ergonymy makes linguistic landscapes creative public spaces.

One of the graphic and semantic means as a complex wordplay is revealed in paragram (changing one or two letters and creating a new name): *Café Porto Pino Gelateria* in Tübingen (similar to *Portofino*), the hookah bar in Chernihiv *Gazberry* (similar to *gooseberry* but translated literally from Ukrainian it mimicks the Ukrainian phrase for “to take gas”), *Бар-Дель* (changing of the letter *o* by the letter *a* and making non-existent word which sounds similarly to the word *bordel* [brothel]). Paragram is usually used to create a humorous effect by inventing non-existent words.

Languages used in plurilingual ergonyms in Chernihiv:

a. English-Russian: *кофееварка* (graphically represented as a bilingual English-Russian blend which reminds of the Russian word *кофеварка* [coffee-maker]);

b. Russian-English: *Chernika Lounge Bar* (The Russian word *черника* [blackberry] is spelt in Latin), *Дымный PLACE* (literally: smoky place), *Tochka Coffee* (Russian word *point* spelt in Latin and English *coffee*);

- c. French-English: *Le Moon* (a cosmetics shop), where we observe the use of French article and English noun;
- d. Ukrainian-English: *Lovka Café* [good (spelt in Latin) café];
- e. Ukrainian ergonyms written in Cyrillic and in Latin: *Пивна Sova*, *Doner Маркем*;
- f. Ukrainian words spelt in Latin: *ЇЗНА*, *МЯТА*, *Misteriya*, *Ornament – Mlyntsi Ta Kava*;
- g. Non-existing word made in Spanish manner which we propose to call a pseudo-Spanish name: *М'ассимо*;
- h. Non-existent word made in Italian manner which we could call a pseudo-Italian name: *Arbuzzo* (reminding of the Russian word *арбуз* [water melon]);
- i. Latin-Cyrillic spelling in one word: *кофееварка*, *БумS* [boots] (a footwear shop), *Sharik's* (*sharik* is from Russian *шарик* meaning "balloon");
- j. Names combining Ukrainian or Russian word represented as a name of a web-site, the use of paragraphemic signs: *Сало.ua* (a meat shop), *Belok.ua* (a sport food shop), *LUCK & MUSS* (a beauty studio).

The distinctive feature of the ergonymy in Chernihiv is the mixture of Latin and Cyrillic spelling in the proper names as graphic wordplay. Spelling manipulation revealed in deliberate mistakes creates original ergonymic nominations, such as in *FEELtrd Chernihiv* (a coffee bar).

We observed a few lexicalized ergonyms in Chernihiv which represent verbal phrases in English, as in *Small coffee to go*, *GoVegan*, *CUTME Studio* (a beauty salon), or spelt both in Latin and Cyrillic: *VEZUEDU Безьеды* (Asian cuisine).

Thus, ergonyms perform multiple functions within the linguistic landscape, including identification, denomination, advertising, orientation, and aesthetic enhancement. We are sure that ergonyms with wordplay are more expressive and we consider expressive nomination, original identification and ludic as the main functions.

Conclusions. The comparative study of the wordplay in ergonymy as part of the linguistic landscapes of Tübingen and Chernihiv revealed the presence of monolingual and plurilingual (mostly bilingual) wordplay, which includes combination of two languages within one ergonym, capitalization and different colours and fonts as graphic means of wordplay, metaphoric ergonyms with humorous elements, which are predominantly monolingual. Additionally, a combination of Cyrillic and Latin letters in ergonyms is a distinctive feature of ergonymy in Chernihiv. Localization is primarily represented in monolingual wordplay, while glocalization and globalization are proper of bilingual ergonyms.

Structurally, most ergonyms in Tübingen and Chernihiv are two-word or three-word nominative phrases or nouns if they are one-word nominations. Wordplay in the linguistic landscapes reveals the nominator's creativity and prompts the perceivers to decipher the wordplay, offering them aesthetic satisfaction. Ergonyms are multifunctional proper names, being the expressive nomination and original identification among the main functions. Ludic function is proper of ergonyms with wordplay.

Further research may focus on humour in linguistic landscapes or on the comparative studies of wordplay in ergonymy of other cities to reveal common tendencies in ergonymic creation. Ideally, linguistic landscapes as creative public spaces should bring additional aesthetic value in multilingual societies.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

No artificial intelligence tools or materials were used in the manuscript.

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