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Margrethe Petersen* & Carmen D. Maier**

Exploring Multimodal Intersubjective Stance in the Linguistic Landscape of a Danish University

Abstract

This article focuses on investigating multimodal signage in a Danish organizational linguistic landscape. We report on the signage study of an indoor university site primarily used by students but open to the public. To identify multimodal means by which sign owners communicate intersubjective stance, the study primarily explores signs targeting students. The stance-taking exploration centres on multimodal dialogic engagement and disengagement strategies. This study shows how consistent usage of multimodal linking strategies reinforce the persuasive messages displayed in the signage. Thus, the study complements and extends previous research on linguistic landscapes by providing novel insights related to multimodal strategies of dialogic engagement and disengagement of signage.

Keywords

Linguistic landscape; multimodality; intersubjective stance; dialogic engagement; dialogic disengagement; linking strategy.

1. Introduction

This paper springs from a larger project aimed at investigating communication in organisations as evidenced through multimodal means in their linguistic landscapes (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Gorter, 2006; Shohamy, 2006; Gorter, 2013; Shohamy, 2019; Gorter & Cenoz, 2024).

In the present paper, the main perspective on communication is adopted from White's (2003) work on linguistic resources expressing intersubjective stance, where intersubjective stance refers to "the communicative and rhetorical functionality of those wordings by which speakers/writers take a stance towards the various points-of-view and value positions being referenced by the text and thereby align themselves vis-à-vis those who hold, or are represented as holding, these positions" (White, 2003, p. 260). Starting with this early understanding of intersubjective stance, this paper extends White's (2003) outlook on a diverse array of lexico-grammatical forms and structures by focusing also on multimodal resources as do, for example, Maier and Engberg (2021). Thus, it is the dialogic functionality of a diverse array of both multimodal and linguistic resources in an organizational landscape that is identified and explained in this paper.

From this multidisciplinary perspective – multimodal and linguistic landscape (LL) analysis (Gorter, 2019) – the paper studies a site at a Danish university: a refectory and its immediate environs and specifically investigates material signage targeting students as a non-integral part of their studies. For the purpose of identifying (a) multimodal means by which sign owners (Spolsky, 2009) as senders communicate stance and (b) the contribution of such means to intersubjective stance-taking across assumed role relations (Simpson & Carroll, 2008), the study primarily focuses on signs targeting student receivers and, secondarily, on signs with a wider target group. The stance-taking exploration is centred on the strategies of engagement enhancement (Hyland, 2002, 2010; Chen, 2010; Tan, 2010). The impact of the meaning-making interaction of several semiotic resources - from language to images - upon these strategies is discussed from a social semiotic perspective (Boxenbaum et al., 2018; Kress, 2010; Iedema, 2003; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Jewitt, 2009; Höllerer et al., 2019).

* *Margrethe Petersen*
School of Communication and Culture
Aarhus University
mpe@cc.au.dk

** *Carmen Daniela Maier*
School of Communication and Culture
Aarhus University
cdm@cc.au.dk

1.1. Context

The site investigated was at Aarhus University (AU) in Denmark, the country's second largest city, which at the time of the data collection had a population of approximately 90,000 in the city itself (Aarhus Kommune, n.d.) and some 350,000 in the municipality (Aarhus Kommune, n.d.) while the country as a whole had a population of just above 5.8 million (Statistics Denmark, n.d.). Founded in 1928 (Aarhus Universitet, 2024), AU has developed into an international university with five faculties and, at the time when the data were gathered, 8,040 staff (full-time equivalent) and 34,818 students (undergraduate, graduate and doctoral) including 2,790 full-time and 61 part-time international students as well as 996 exchange students (Aarhus University, 2020, July), i.e., approximately 11 percent of the student body consisted of international or exchange students. The university offers 36 doctoral programmes (Aarhus University, 2024, February), 67 all-English master's programmes and a few all-English bachelor's programmes (Aarhus University, 2024, October). Due to its internationalisation efforts over the past four decades, AU is a *de facto* multilingual institution with students from around 100 different countries (Aarhus University, 2025, January) and staff from approximately 80 countries (Aarhus University, 2023, July). As a result, English is "the secondary language" at AU (Aarhus University, 2023, July), the primary language at the university being Danish (Aarhus University, 2023, July), the *de facto* official language of Denmark and, as indicated above, the first language (L1) of the majority of AU students and staff.

1.2. Aim

Much research has been done on linguistic landscapes from a language policy perspective (see, for example, Gorter & Cenoz, 2024). The launching in 2015 of *Linguistic Landscape*, an international academic journal, bears witness to this interest while, in focusing on "the presence and absence of languages in public spaces" (*Linguistic Landscape*, 2015, p. 1), the introduction to the very first issue testifies to the language policy perspective. With the present paper, we intend to extend the reach of the concept of linguistic landscape by focusing not on languages used, or not used, but on multimodal communication of intersubjective stance and relationships in material signage as evidenced in the case of a university site accessible to the public including university-external sign owners.

For that purpose, we use a functional framework, combining linguistic and visual analysis of material signage in an organisational landscape, specifically an educational one, with the aim to investigate (a) which multimodal strategies of engagement employed by sign owners, i.e., senders, contribute to communicating their intersubjective stance and (b) how multimodal linking strategies contribute to the distance between senders and receivers of the signage.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this research project is informed by perspectives upon linguistic landscapes and intersubjective stance. Simultaneously, we also adopt a multimodal perspective upon communication when exploring these topics.

2.1. Linguistic landscapes

Linguistic landscape studies have seen considerable development since the publication of Landry and Bourhis (1997), in which the linguistic landscape was described as referring "to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Landy & Bourhis, 1997, p. 23). That paper was very much concerned with the material linguistic landscape as an expression of language policies, and it is not least within the field of language policy that linguistic landscapes have drawn much attention. A number of overviews of the field (e.g. Gorter, 2013; Gorter & Cenoz, 2024) bear testimony to the development. Gorter (2013, p. 191), for example, points out that "the interest of most researchers is with the use of more than one language in urban settings" and argues that a more precise designation might be that of "multilingual cityscape", reflecting the fact

that much interest in the field at the time focused on signage in multilingual urban sites, particularly on language choice and its symbolic value. It was also noted, however, that new uses of the linguistic landscape label referred to "the general language situation or linguistic diversity" (Gorter, 2013, p. 191), i.e., a more abstract perception of linguistic landscape. Gorter and Cenoz (2024) provide an overview of further developments in terms of the many theoretical approaches adopted and the variety of research methods, including data collection methods, applied. A constant focus – whether implicit or explicit – however, is language choice and, frequently, the symbolic value of that choice in the social context of the site.

Given that the site chosen for this paper is part of Aarhus University, this study is, of course, a candidate for inclusion in the body of studies focusing on what, in the field of language policy, has been termed **schoolscape** (see Brown, 2005, 2012, 2018, on schoolscapes in Estonia) or **educationscape** (see Huang, 2021, on an educationscape in Hong Kong). Our focus, however, is not on language choice. The present paper aims to study how sign owners in the sense of Spolsky (2009), i.e., senders, combine linguistic and visual means to engage receivers through signage in a linguistic landscape. The landscape is part of the immediate environs of a university refectory primarily used by students and, to a much lesser extent, by staff, visitors, or passersby. The part of the site that we have chosen to make our focus is in a partly open gallery immediately above the refectory and includes five juxtaposed panels with signage that, given the primary users, may be expected to target students. Figure 1 below is a photograph of the site.

2.2. The multimodal perspective

Inevitably, in order to address the challenges of exploring signage in this context of multiliterate senders and receivers, it is necessary to adopt a theoretical perspective that takes into consideration the intrinsically multimodal nature of communication. According to this perspective, meanings are always made through a series of interrelated semiotic modes - from language to images and layout - that are co-deployed in all texts (Jewitt, 2017). Furthermore, meanings can also be (re)created through resemiotization when the semiotic modes are translated from one into the other during the unfolding of social processes (Iedema, 2003). The viability of this perspective upon contemporary communication has been signalled in the past two decades across diverse research fields by the variety of applications focused on, for example, moving images (Iedema, 2001; Maier, 2014), mathematical images and symbolism (O'Halloran, 2005), media texts (Chouliaraki, 2017), software (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2012), web communication (Djonov & Knox, 2014; Ravazzani & Maier, 2017; Belmonte & Porto, 2020), social interactions (Weatherall et al., 2021), and corporate communication (Höllerer, Jancsary & Grafström, 2018).

When addressing the multimodal character of contemporary communication, these researchers highlight the fact that in any text each mode is *partial* "in relation to the whole meaning and speech and writing are no exception" (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2022, p. 1260). The choice of semiotic modes is thus significant for the articulation of meaning, but this does not mean that all semiotic modes are always harmonized when producing meaning. They may also subvert each other when producing the overall meaning of a multimodal text. The meaning-making interweaving between semiotic modes has been explored by a series of multimodal researchers (Knox, 2007; Martinec & Salway, 2005; Royce, 2016; van Leeuwen, 2005) who consider that "the value of information lies in its relation to its context" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 219), regardless of the semiotic modes that are employed.

Figure 1. The five juxtaposed panels with the signage studied.

For multimodal researchers, especially this dynamic interplay is in focus as they consider that "the multimodal ensemble is the most fruitful unit of analysis" (Andersen et al., 2015, p. 159). Exploring any single mode such as the verbal or visual mode distorts the analysis because "the interaction between modes is itself a part of the production of meaning" (Jewitt, 2017, p. 17). Accordingly, a multimodal perspective offers the possibility of addressing the complex interaction and interplay of semiotic modes within each signage. By implication, we take as point of departure in our analytical endeavour the idea that any semiotic mode is able not only to represent reality but also "to project the relations between the producer of a (complex) sign and the receiver/reproducer of that sign" and "to form texts, complexes of signs which cohere both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 42-43). This understanding of semiotic modes is a relevant assumption of the multimodal perspective that we intend to adopt, i.e., social semiotics, because it allows us to understand the meanings of signs as being social: "they are shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign-making, influenced by the motivations and interests of sign-maker in a specific social context" (Jewitt, 2017, p. 17).

2.3. The intersubjective stance

As the multimodal signages explored in this article are embedded in a social practice that requires a continuous positioning of social actors towards each other, we also take into consideration theoretical perspectives dealing with stance-taking in communication.

Starting with the assumption that all texts have a dialogic character (Bakhtin, 1981), researchers working within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics and, specifically, the field of

appraisal (Martin, 2000; White, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; Martin, 2015) have devised a semantic typology of resources that accounts for the means used by various social actors to engage with each other in diverse communicative contexts. Engagement researchers consider that "these resources can be broadly divided into those which entertain or open up the space for dialogic alternatives and those which suppress or close down the space for such alternations" (White, 2003, p. 259). Accordingly, the resources that allow space for dialogic alternatives are labelled as **heteroglossic**, while the other resources that do not invoke alternative positions are **monoglossic** (Martin & White, 2005; Martin, 2015). The heteroglossic resources of engagement are further subcategorized according to their functions in the dialogic space (Martin & White, 2005): **dialogically expansive** and **dialogically contractive**. The dialogically expansive resources include resources through which "alternative positions are construed as possible or even likely and as to a greater or lesser degree authorized" (White, 2003, p. 268). The other set of resources, namely the dialogically contractive ones, "act to reject, counter, confront, head off or rule out actual or potential dialogic alternatives (White, 2003, p. 268). Based on Martin and White (2005, pp. 97-98), an overview of the main resources of (dis)engagement and their functions is provided in Table 1.

Forms of engagement	Functions
Monoglossic engagement	To communicate consensual knowledge that is accepted in the current communicative context, so no dialogistic alternatives are recognized.
Dialogic alternative 1: heteroglossic engagement (dialogic expansive resources)	To entertain: "By explicitly presenting the proposition as grounded in its own contingent, individual subjectivity, the authorial voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions – it thereby entertains or invokes these dialogic alternatives" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 98).
	To attribute by acknowledging or distancing: "By representing proposition as grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice, the textual voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions – it thereby entertains or invokes these dialogic alternatives" Martin and White (2005, p. 98).
Dialogic alternative 2: heteroglossic disengagement (dialogic contractive resources)	To proclaim through concurring, pronouncing or endorsing: "By representing the proposition as highly warrantable (compelling, valid, plausible, well-founded, generally agreed, reliable, etc.), the textual voice sets itself against, suppresses or rules out alternative positions" Martin and White (2005, p. 97).
	To disclaim by denying or countering: "The textual voice positions itself as at odds with, or rejecting, some contrary position" Martin and White (2005, p. 97).

Table 1. Overview of forms of engagement and their functions (Martin and White, 2005).

This dialogic view upon communication has been adopted by a series of researchers (Fryer, 2013 & 2019; Pérez-Llantada Auría, 2011; Moyano, 2019; Xu & Nesi, 2019) who applied the engagement typology to a variety of texts belonging to academic writing from the domains of, among others, applied linguistics, medicine, microbiology and sociology. In the social media context, this typology has been applied in the study of political communication in order to examine a negative stance construed through the affordances of Twitter (Ross & Caldwell, 2020). Thus, this typology of engagement resources has been recurrently employed to examine "the linguistic mechanisms by which texts naturalise certain value positions and construct for themselves ideal, model or compliant readerships" (White, 2003, p. 259).

However, being established on the premise that an intersubjective stance characterizes all communication, this engagement system also allows researchers to explore the potential of other

modes than language to provide the means for taking a stance. For example, in order to shed light on the dialogic process in a pedagogic context, Chen (2010) examines how various multimodal resources in EFL textbooks enable dialogic engagement with readers. A series of researchers have also adopted this system in order to explore multimodal texts in web context. For example, Tan (2010) examines the dynamic multimodal texts of an internet-based advertising campaign and shows how the multimodal resources construct preferred dialogic positions for target audiences in order to influence them to adopt a certain point of view. Maier and Engberg (2021) focus also on engagement enhancement when they address hypermodal strategies used for conveying domain-specific knowledge and offering practical guidance to various audiences in the business communication context.

In our present analyses, we apply the above-mentioned engagement typology to multimodal texts in order to identify and explain the dialogic functionality of a diverse array of multimodal resources existing in organizational signages. Another reason for this choice is that by exploring engagement, "it becomes possible to see imagined audience construal not in terms of some single modeled reader or reading position but, rather, in terms of multiple, not necessarily consistent readers or reading positions" (White, 2003, p. 275).

3. Methodological considerations

We collected and analysed multimodal data from the refectory and its immediate environs at Aarhus University. The data were gathered on the January 14, 2020, by taking photos of the five juxtaposed panels (see Figure 1 above), of the individual panels, and of the 49 multimodal signages displayed on the panels.

The design of our analytical framework was based upon the assumption that "transcription and analysis go hand in hand" (Norris, 2019, p. 199) when dealing with multimodal data. The process of transcribing, coding and analysing the multimodal data involved several stages. In the first stage, for each panel (P), we produced a data analysis table where each row was dedicated to a multimodal signage (S) (see an excerpt in Table 2 which includes one row). In the first column of each table, we inserted a photo of each signage, annotating it in the second column according to type, purpose and sender. In the sixth column, the relations between the semiotic modes were labelled.

The key conceptual labels used to identify the relations between semiotic modes in the signages are **elaboration** and **extension** (van Leeuwen, 2005). A relation of elaboration indicates that a semiotic mode makes the other one more specific by providing more details, or it explains the other one by paraphrasing it. A relation of extension denotes a situation in which the meaning of one semiotic mode is similar to, contrasts with, or complements that of the other semiotic modes. Table 2 includes the overview of these relations identified by Van Leeuwen (2005).

Image – text relations		
Elaboration	Specification	The image makes the text more specific (or vice versa)
	Explanation	The text paraphrases the image (or vice versa)
Extension	Similarity	The content of the text is similar to that of the image
	Contrast	The content of the text contrasts with that of the image
	Complement	The content of the image adds further information to that of the text, and vice versa

Table 2. Overview of image-text relations (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 230).

During the second stage, our focus was on columns three and four, in which we annotated each signage according to the engagement and/or disengagement that multimodal resources employed.

We employed the *a priori* categories from Martin and White's conceptual framework (2005), but we tried to avoid prioritizing a specific semiotic resource (such as language, for example). The fifth column was dedicated to codifying forms of identity construction as identified in each multimodal signage. Although time consuming, such detailed multimodal transcription and analysis practices ensure the transparency of the cross-modal criteria used in the analytical work (Thibault, 2000; Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Norris, 2004, 2012). In order to refine each data analysis table, both researchers verified the transcription and discussed the further development and modification of all tables. An excerpt of one of the tables is displayed in Table 3.

Signage	Stance Signage type, purpose, sign owner	Multimodal monoglossic engagement	Multimodal heteroglossic engagement or disengagement	Identity construction (community affiliation or individuality support)	Multimodal interplay
Panel 1 Signage 1 Image embedded here	Syndicate announcement & invitation Reaction expectation Offer Welcome bidding	Engagement through imperative: *Welcome to AU* (superimposed text with different typography) Engagement through imperatives: *Become a member; Get also the book; Join; Read more.*		Community affiliation	Elaboration through specification: *Få samtidig bogen* [Get the book at the same time] and the book photo

Table 3. Excerpt from a data analysis table.

4. Analysis
4.1. Multimodal stance-taking

In analysing our data, we apply engagement analysis as a methodological lens. This provides an analytical perspective and a method of inquiry enabling us the possibility of explaining how multimodal resources of intersubjective positioning are co-deployed. More specifically, in what follows, we explain the multimodal resources through which the senders engage (or not) with other positions and anticipate responses from potential receivers of the signage: **multimodal monoglossic engagement** and **heteroglossic (dis)engagement**.

The selection of specific multimodal resources of intersubjective positioning contributes to identity construction by unfolding, negotiating or adjusting potential aspects of collective or individual identities when communicating about, for instance, specific associations, events or activities. Aspects of multimodal linking are also explained below in connection with the interplay between verbal and visual elements in these resources that intend to subjectively propose specific reading and attitudinal positions for the potential receivers of the signage. The construction of identity takes place along two coordinates in the signage: **community affiliation** and **individuality support**. The following presentation of our analytical findings related to multimodal stance-taking is thus structured according to these two coordinates.

When identity construction through **community affiliation** is in focus, the stance-taking strategies of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** are verbally marked by a recurrent usage of

imperatives through which the senders try to include the receivers in various associations, events or activities (see Figure 2). According to Martin and White (2005, p. 112), "the imperative is monoglossic in that it neither references, nor allows for the possibility of, alternative actions". For example, receivers are encouraged: "Become a member!" (P1S1), "Buy tickets!" (P3S1), "Stop the terminals!" (P2S8). Furthermore, concrete verbal information about names of associations, participants and/or organizers, dates, phone numbers, addresses or webpages are also part of the recurrent stance-taking strategies of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** as this kind of information does not recognize dialogic alternatives either.

The verbal information is meaningfully linked to various types of visuals both through **extension** and **elaboration** when these strategies of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** are employed. While **elaboration through specification** occurs more frequently in cases such as a book's image specifying visually the actual book indicated in the imperative "Get also the book!" (P1S1), **extension through complementation** is also present. For example, the imperatives "Observe, analyse and implement the UN's 17 global goals in a company!" (P5S4) complement the abstract images of the UN's sustainable development goals and of a globe by adding more verbal information about the focus of the respective event (see Figure 2).
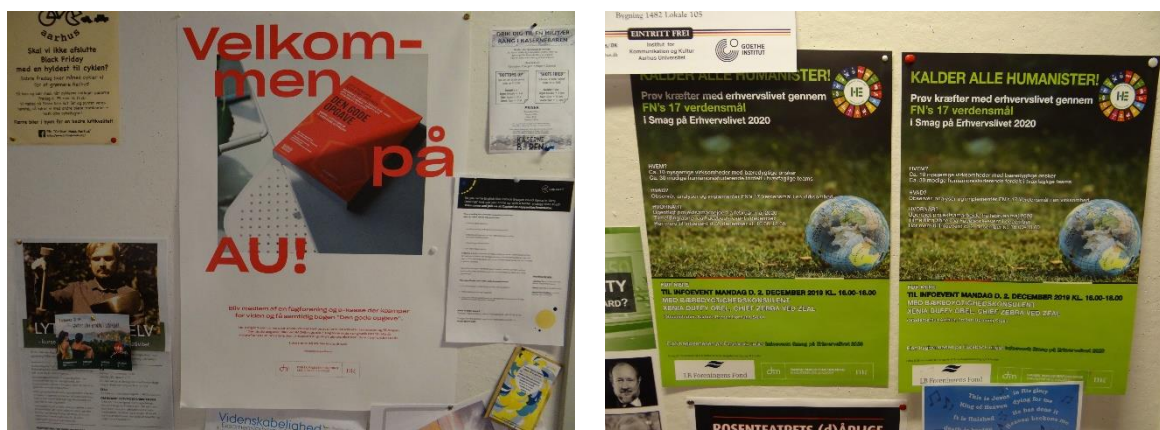

Figure 2. Examples of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** stance (P1S1) and **extension through comple-mentation** linking (P5S4).

The stance-taking strategies of **multimodal heteroglossic (dis)engagement** that appear when identity construction is performed through **community affiliation** are primarily represented by two disengagement strategies meant to close down the dialogic space: **disengagement through concurrence** and **disengagement through pronouncement**. Martin and White explain that "the category of 'concur' involves formulations which overtly announce the addresser as agreeing with, or having the same knowledge as, some projected dialogic partner" (2005, p. 122), while pronouncements "do not 'entertain' alternative positions" (2005, p. 131). Although these strategies imply an absence of dialogic alternatives, they still engage the receivers multimodally. Usually, the **disengagement through concurrence** is manifested verbally through single, or clusters of, rhetorical questions that should arguably lead the receiver to an inevitable or obvious answer as in these examples: "Do you want to make a difference for others? (P3S10) or "Shouldn't we end Black Friday with a homage to the bike?" (P1S2). The senders also limit the dialogic alternatives by employing the strategy of **disengagement through pronouncement**: "All are welcome to engage themselves in the book club regardless of their background" (P2S4). As far as the category of endorsements is concerned, these "associate the proposition with an individual subjectivity, and primarily with the subjectivity of the authorial voice" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 127). Thus, **disengagement through endorsement** (see Figure 3) appears in the explored data when the senders

evaluate the proposed event and rule out alternative positions as follows: "a heavenly Christmas show", "a wonderful experience", "a super professional show" (P3S1). The senders' stance quite rarely becomes dialogic as when, for example, a strategy of **multimodal heteroglossic engagement** is employed to offer "an explicit distancing of the authorial voice" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 113), and to explicitly give the receivers a choice: "Economic inequality, unjust distribution or fair reward?" (P5S8).

As in the case of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** strategies, the verbal information is meaningfully linked to various types of visuals both through **extension** and **elaboration** relations when the strategies of **multimodal heteroglossic (dis)engagement** operate. By means of **elaboration through specification**, in one of the signs, the verbal presentation of a syndicate's offers provides specific information about the six abstract images that try to symbolize those offers and limits the receivers' interpretative choices (P4S8). In another sign, namely the Christmas show announcement mentioned above (P3S1), the relation between text and image is one of **extension through complementation** as the words "the heavenly show" are complemented by the image of two performers with stars in a golden background (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Examples of **disengagement through endorsement** stance and e**xtension through complementation** linking (P3S1).

These multimodal resources of intersubjective positioning contribute systematically to identity construction as all of them imply the existence of a collective identity that connects individuals even when no dialogic alternatives are offered in the signage. This collective identity is projected and shaped in the signage by alluding to potentially shared values or/and routinized practices.

When identity construction through **individuality support** is in focus, the stance-taking strategies of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** are also verbally marked by imperatives through which the senders attempt to convince receivers to make an effort and act in order to improve a specific aspect of their life. In the case of job announcements, the imperatives are meant to urge the individual receivers to apply for the respective job: "Send your application as soon as possible" (P1S8), "Then come and join us, send your application" (P1S10), "Apply for the position" (P4S3) and the like. The imperatives used for encouraging the receivers to attend events meant to improve an individual's life quality advocate for action in more nuanced ways such as "Sink your teeth into small nourishing delicacies" (P2S3) (see Figure 4) or "Give yourself permission to let go of unrest, tensions, stress and worries" (P3S13). By using such imperatives, the senders signal that they do not recognize dialogic alternatives because the offers are supposed to improve the individual's life. The multimodal configuration of these stance-taking strategies is rather weak in the case of job announcements as the detailed verbal information usually covers the entire surface of the sign.

Figure 4. Example of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** with imperatives encouraging receivers to attend an event (P2S3).

The verbal information rarely enters a relation of **elaboration through specification** with some images when it can label the respective images as in the case of the job announcement in Figure 5, where five job tracks are symbolically visualized and verbally labelled (P4S3). By contrast, event announcements are usually designed multimodally and **elaborations through specification** are the dominant linking strategies (see Figure 5). In the event announcements exemplified above and below (P2S3 in Figure 4 and P3S13 in Figure 5), the verbal information specifies the meaning of decontextualized images such as three apples (P2S3) or hands massaging the back of a person (P3S13).
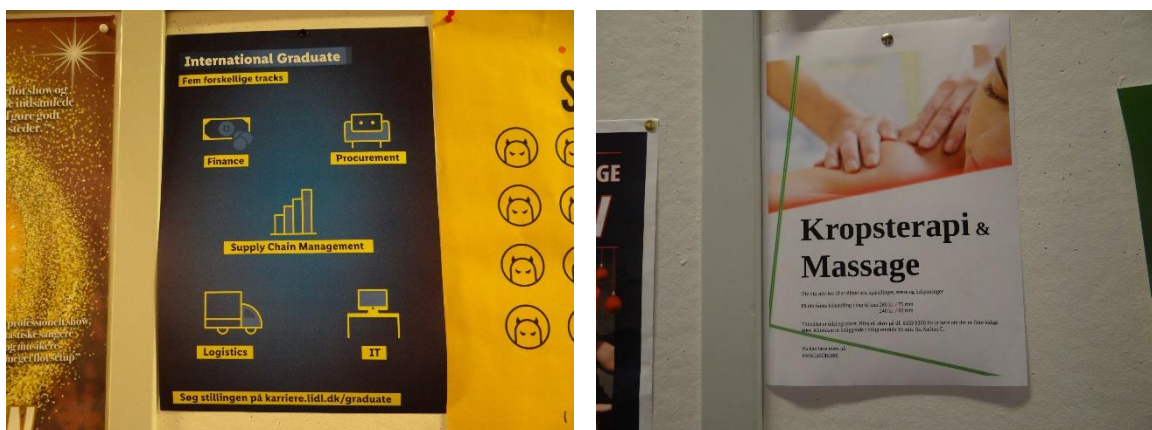

Figure 5. Examples of **elaborations through specification** linking (P4S3 and P3S13).

The stance-taking strategies of **multimodal heteroglossic disengagement** that appear when identity construction is performed through **individuality support** are also meant to close down the dialogic space. The **heteroglossic disengagement through concurrence** strategies appear in job announcements in the form of clusters of rhetorical questions that should lead the potential applicant to the inevitable or obvious answer implied by the senders: "Can you smile with your eyes? Are you good at working with many different assignments simultaneously? […] Then this is a job for you" (P5S7). In the case of events meant to improve an individual's life quality, the recurrent form of **heteroglossic disengagement** is through **pronouncement**: "In the psychotherapy sessions, we can work with…" (P5S3). When the senders evaluate the proposed event and rule out alternative

positions, **disengagement through endorsement** is employed: "Response from former participants …" (P1S4). Very rarely, the **disengagement through denial** strategy is also used: "Only for members of DA and MA" (P2S3). Such a strategy links and balances in fact the two types of identity construction processes, **community affiliation** and **individuality support**, because although the announced event is meant to improve an individual's life quality through the individual's own efforts, this **disengagement through denial** strategy anticipates an unavoidable group affiliation.

When such stance-taking strategies are employed, the connections of **extensions through complementation** between verbal information and visuals can appear in combination with **elaborations through specification** when more than one image accompanies the verbal information of an announcement. For example, in a psychotherapy announcement (P5S3), the name of the psychotherapist specifies the identity of the man from the close-up photo placed in the upper part of the page, while the image of some stones complement the information provided in the announcement. In rare cases, relations of **extensions through contrast** are also employed. For example, the rhetorical question "Do you dream of studying or getting an internship abroad?" (P1S3) is superimposed on the photo of two young women relaxing in front of a holiday-like scenery (see Figure 5). Obviously, the photo un/intentionally subverts the meaning of the rhetorical questions or suggests additional activities that could be enjoyed while being abroad.

Figure 5. Example of **extension through contrast** linking (P1S3).

As in the case of identity construction through community affiliation, this individual identity is projected and shaped in the signage by alluding to potentially shared values or/and routinized practices.

4. Conclusion

This qualitative analysis of multimodal signage is meant to respond to the call for expanding the linguistic landscape's scenery into a semiotic landscape and delving into the exploration of signage's complex interplay of semiotic resources (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009a, 2009b; Pütz & Mundt, 2019). Although, due to the detailed analytical work, the focus of this paper has been on only two semiotic resources, language and visuals, this analysis demonstrates that tracing the multimodal aspects of signage can enhance our understanding of identity construction through stance-taking strategies.

The necessity of taking into consideration the multimodal aspect of signage has been clarified when examining identity construction through both **community affiliation** and **individuality support**. Thus, according to the present analytical findings, the multimodal character of the stance-taking strategies of **monoglossic engagement** or **heteroglossic (dis)engagement** contribute to

identity construction by providing new sources of meaning-making that cannot be found at the level of a single semiotic resource.

The consistent usage of multimodal linking strategies is clearly an indispensable way of reinforcing the persuasive messages displayed in the signages. Furthermore, the linking strategies employed are geared to minimizing the distance between senders and receivers even when the verbal strategies do not recognize or invoke dialogistic alternatives. Although all the signs are meant not only to inform but also to persuade their receivers about the feasibility of their offers and, thus, expect some sort of reaction or action, the majority of the multimodal strategies presented above are meant to ignore or deny dialogistic alternatives. The recurrent choice of these strategies might be motivated by the fact that the receivers are expected to become dialogue partners when/if they accept the proposals offered, and the potential identities constructed through the signages are acknowledged through future reactions or actions. Thus, instead of, for example, disclaiming strategies of heteroglossic (dis)engagement such as denying or countering, the strategies analysed above are also motivated by the senders' overall goal of contributing to the construction of identities through their signages. Simultaneously, in most of the signs marked by the stance-taking strategies of **multimodal monoglossic engagement** or **heteroglossic (dis)engagement** presented above, an indication reverberates also implicitly or explicitly of coalescing systems of values and/or norms that belong to, for instance, certain age groups, academic or leisure interests, or religious inclinations.

This analytical work also provides an understanding of the academic space of signage as a semiotic landscape, a discursively constructed space (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010), belonging to those places "considered not as mere geographically defined areas but as symbolic representations of social, cultural and political values" (Pütz & Mundt, 2019, p. 4). Based on the analytical work explained above, the consistent usage of multimodal linking strategies seems an indispensable way of reinforcing the persuasive force of the messages displayed in the signage. None of the multimodal signages analysed would be likely to have attained the same level of perceived persuasiveness had they made use of the affordances of a single mode of communication. Through the multimodal interplay between texts and images, the meanings produced at the level of each semiotic mode are nuanced. Furthermore, the linking strategies employed are geared at minimizing the distance between senders and receivers even when the verbal strategies do not recognize or invoke dialogistic alternatives.

Further, by tracing the stance-taking multimodal strategies and clarifying the connections of these strategies with the persuasive construction of identity on two coordinates, i.e. community affiliation and individuality support, this paper contributes to a better understanding of how multimodal dialogic alternatives can be employed to construct or strengthen identity in an academic organizational context. In addition to showing these analytical results, the paper also provides a methodological framework that can be employed to examine these phenomena not only in this specific organizational context, but also in other contexts where identities are also constantly negotiated. In spite of its complexity, practitioners from various organizational contexts could adopt this understanding of multimodal intersubjective stance and employ it strategically in the design of persuasive signage.

Additionally, this transferable methodological framework presented above and the multimodal manifestations of "evaluative judgements" of participants that project specific identities (Blommaert, 2020, p. 21) could also be applied in the linguistic landscapes of a given organization or, for example, across organizations belonging to the same domain of activity. Such multimodal analyses could be further nuanced by also taking into consideration typography (van Leeuwen, 2005, 2006) or colour "as affect and effect" (van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 23) in order to clarify their roles in the stance-taking strategies. Aspects of resemiotization could also be taken into consideration as the same multimodal information is sometimes, in the same linguistic landscape, transported from paper announcements to screen ones. Another relevant direction for future research would be a longitudinal approach to

multimodal and linguistic landscapes to investigate how or whether such landscapes are transformed over time and, if they are, what novel contextual situations might provoke potential changes.

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