

## **Semiotic Landscapes in Times of the Pandemic: Reflections on Merging Sociolinguistic and Health Communication Curricula in Summer Semester 2021**

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**Background:** Linguistic or semiotic landscapes can be defined as spatial representations of language in particular multilingualism – for example in the form of public signs, posters, advertising billboards, graffiti, stickers or flyers. Since the beginning of the pandemic health communication has gained increasing importance in public space. In the summer semester of 2021 in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Vienna, a seminar was offered in which students were introduced to the concepts of health communication, public health and health literacy. Students conducted empirical research in which they investigated and photographed language in public space related to the pandemic.

**Methods:** The author of this abstract has a background in public health. As a first time lecturer at the university it was required to create a teaching concept as well as a self-reflection and self-evaluation. At the end of the semester these documents were analysed and themes were identified.

**Results:** The following themes were extracted: personal motivation for teaching, the role of linguists in medical communication, reflection on central concepts such as top down vs bottom up Covid-19 messaging and sociocultural, ethical, and political meanings attributed to face masks and vaccination campaigns. Students showed evidence of learning health communication content by actively participating in discussions about linguistic landscapes in healthcare and conducting empirical research in settings including schools, pharmacies, long term care facilities and vaccination centres.

**Conclusion:** The Covid-19 crisis has created increasing awareness of public health and learning opportunities across disciplines including applied linguistics and medical communication.

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