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„Spoken Security": The Linguistic and Visual Construction of Security in Hungarian Tourism Communication

„Beszélt biztonság": a biztonság nyelvi és vizuális konstrukciója a magyar turisztikai kommunikációban

Abstract

This study examines how security is constructed in Hungarian tourism communication through the interplay of linguistic and visual practices, using the concept of "spoken security." Its theoretical foundation is securitization theory (Buzan–Wæver–de Wilde 1998), which conceptualizes security as a speech act; this is complemented by the integration of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) and multimodal discourse analysis (Kress–van Leeuwen 2006). The empirical findings are based on materials from four tourism portals (Balaton.hu, Budapestinfo.hu, CsodasMagyarorszag.hu, HelloHungary.hu). The results indicate that security appears not as a defensive but as a trust-based construct: affirmative statements such as "safe", "peaceful" performatively produce a sense of security, which is visually anchored by metaphorical imagery of nature, family, and order. Multilingual accessibility (language-switching options, audio guides, typographic coherence) functions as a form of intercultural security, offering the promise of comprehensibility and navigability. The study demonstrates how everyday security is generated within tourism; it analyses the interplay of linguistic and visual devices; and it clarifies the ways in which multilingualism can be understood as an infrastructural system supporting security.

KEYWORDS: SECURITIZATION, TOURISM, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, MULTIMODAL VISUALITY, MULTILINGUALISM

Absztrakt

A tanulmány a „beszélt biztonság" fogalmán keresztül vizsgálja, hogyan konstruálódik a biztonság a magyar turisztikai kommunikációban nyelvi és vizuális gyakorlatok összjátékaként. Elméleti kiindulópontja a „biztonságiasítás"-elmélet (Buzan–Wæver–de Wilde 1998), amely a biztonságot beszédaktusként értelmezi; ezt a kritikai diskurzuselemzés (Fairclough 1995) és a multimodális diskurzuselemzés (Kress–van Leeuwen 2006) integrációja egészíti ki. A vizsgálat eredményei négy turisztikai portál (Balaton.hu, Budapestinfo.hu, CsodasMagyarorszag.hu, HelloHungary.hu) anyagán alapulnak. Az eredmények szerint a biztonság nem védelmi, hanem bizalmi konstrukcióként jelenik meg: a „biztonságos", „békés" típusú állítások performatív módon hozzák létre a biztonság érzetét, amelyet a természet, a család és a rend képi metaforái vizuálisan rögzítenek. A többnyelvű hozzáférés (nyelvváltás, audioguide-ok, tipográfiai koherencia) interkulturális biztonságként működik, a megértés és navigálhatóság ígéretét kínálva. A tanulmány bemutatja, hogyan jelenik meg a turizmusban a mindennapi biztonság megteremtése; elemzi a nyelvi és képi eszközök összjátékát; valamint tisztázza, milyen módon tekinthető a többnyelvűség a biztonságot támogató háttérrendszernek.

KULCSSZAVAK: BIZTONSÁGIASÍTÁS, TURIZMUS, DISKURZUSELEMZÉS, MULTIMODÁLIS VIZUALITÁS, TÖBBNYELVŰSÉG

Introduction: The Language of Security in Tourism Communication

In the era of twenty-first-century global mobility, tourism functions not only as an economic activity but also as a social and communicative space in which travel, hospitality, and place-representation intertwine with questions of security. Security in tourism is not confined to infrastructural or political dimensions; it also appears as a linguistically and visually constructed experience. Tourists' decisions and their perceptions of destinations are shaped to a significant extent by discursive practices

– the words, images, and metaphors that communicate safety, stability, and reliability.

The aim of this study is to explore how the discourse of security is constructed and operates within Hungarian tourism communication. Its novelty lies in approaching security not as a given condition, but as a linguistic and visual construct that emerges through acts of communication.

On a theoretical level, the study draws on securitization theory (Buzan–Wæver–de Wilde 1998), which posits that security is a speech act: it becomes social reality through its articulation. Methodologically, this framework is combined with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) and multimodal discourse analysis (Kress–van Leeuwen 2006) in order to examine linguistic and visual representations of security within a unified analytical system. The significance of the research lies in its interpretation of tourism security as a communicative phenomenon: it reveals security not only in political or physical terms, but also in its discursive and visual dimensions. Language and imagery together construct the social reality in which security, trust, and cultural stability become fundamental elements of the tourist experience.

The empirical corpus of the study consists of four Hungarian tourism portals:

- *Balaton.hu* – a regional site presenting the tourism offerings and programmes of the Balaton area.
- *Budapestinfo.hu* – the official tourism portal of Budapest, serving as the central information channel for urban tourism.
- *CsodasMagyarorszag.hu* – Hungary's official tourism website, which plays a major role in shaping the national image.
- *HelloHungary.hu* – a narrative, experience-based magazine showcasing cultural and rural tourism.

These portals represent different levels of Hungarian tourism communication – national, regional, and urban – thus providing a comprehensive picture of how security becomes a central meaning component in tourism marketing and language use.

Theoretical Framework: The Linguistic and Visual Construction of Security

Security in social-scientific thought is increasingly understood not as an objective state but as a socially and communicatively constructed phenomenon. From this perspective, security is never given; rather, it becomes intelligible for someone, about something, and in some particular way. In the context of tourism, this is a particularly sensitive issue, as travel, hospitality, and

destination-representation all unfold through communicative practices in which the experience of security is linguistically and visually constructed. Security is thus not merely physical protection but a cultural and discursive experience: a form of social promise performatively created by tourism communication (Dann 1996; Thurlow–Jaworski 2010; regarding destination branding, Morgan–Pritchard–Pride 2004).

The theoretical foundation of this study is the securitization theory formulated by Buzan and colleagues (1998), which interprets security as a speech act. According to securitization theory, the articulation of security is itself an action: when an actor designates an issue as a security problem, they simultaneously transform it into a social reality. Security thus emerges not from the objective existence of threats but from their discursive articulation. In tourism, this speech act assumes a distinctive form, since here security does not serve to justify a state of exception but, on the contrary, to communicate normality, predictability, and calm. The discourse of tourism security is often de-securitizing: it translates potential threats into the language of care, trust, and harmony. The tourist is portrayed not as someone fleeing danger but as an actor entering a space of care (e.g. Floyd et al. 2004; Gössling–Scott–Hall 2020). In this way, security in tourism communication shifts from protection to trust: the central meaning core is not the warding off of danger but the maintenance of a relationship of trust (among others, Morgan–Hunt 1994; Wang–Yan 2022).

This discursive interpretation of security aligns with the theoretical premises of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995), which regards language not simply as a descriptor of reality but as a reproducer of social relations. Discourse here is a social practice: it both reflects and shapes social conditions. In tourism discourses, the concept of security becomes stabilized through linguistic forms, lexical choices, metaphors, and rhetorical structures. Individual expressions carry performative value: they reinforce the destination's image and implicitly delineate what constitutes a "good" or "reliable" travel experience (e.g. Echtner–Ritchie 1993; Avraham–Ketter 2012). Discourse analysis allows us to uncover how security becomes a naturalized, seemingly self-evident value – how the image of Hungary, Budapest, or Lake Balaton as a "safe" destination is hegemonically constructed in language. Linguistic formulations often carry hidden ideological elements: metaphors of order, cleanliness, family, and nature evoke a world of care and regularity while excluding voices that would articulate experiences of uncertainty, vulnerability, or social inequality (Péter–

Németh–Lelkóné Tollár 2018; Csapó–Törőcsik 2019: 13–20; Tokodi 2022).

The discourse of tourism security, however, is not only a linguistic but also a visual construction. According to the theory of multimodal discourse analysis (Kress–van Leeuwen 2006), meaning never resides solely in words but emerges from the interplay of visual, typographic, and compositional elements. The visual world of tourism websites reproduces the sensoriality of security: tranquil landscapes, smiling families, spacious environments, and harmonious colours do not assert safety but evoke it. Visuality thus complements the performative force of language: what the text names, the image embodies (Dann 1996). In the logic of multimodality, images, colours, viewpoints, and compositional arrangements all function as carriers of meaning: close-ups connote intimacy, wide shots calmness; warm colours suggest friendliness, while symmetry signals order. Visual discourse thus creates security on a sensorial, experiential level, while linguistic discourse renders it intelligible on cognitive and ideological levels (Thurlow–Jaworski 2010).

There is therefore a strong connection between the discursive and visual constructions of security. In tourism communication, the two media – the word and the image – mutually reinforce one another in constructing the linguistic-visual architecture of trust. Security here does not signify the absence of danger but the presence of predictability and care. The "soft" semantic field of security is trust: security communication does not repel but reassures (Reisinger–Mavondo 2005; Park–Reisinger 2010; Karl–Muskat–Ritchie 2020). The tourist is addressed not as a potential victim but as a member of the community, moving with ease in a culturally open, calm, and predictable environment (for a multidimensional approach to tourism security, Michalkó–Németh–Birkner 2023). This trust-oriented concept of security aligns with the insight of contemporary communication theory that security is not solely a system of protection but also a network of social relations and cultural interpretations (Fairclough 1995; Kress–van Leeuwen 2006).

Within this theoretical framework, the notion of "spoken security" functions as a metaphor for the linguistic and visual performativity of security. Security is not only articulated but also "represented": it is continually reproduced in tourism communication through linguistic claims and visual metaphors. The metaphors and images appearing in discourse form a web of meaning that shapes tourism as a cultural space of stability and trust. This tripartite theoretical foundation – the speech-act theory of securitization, the sociolinguistic framework of critical discourse analysis, and the visual perspective of multimodal discourse analysis – enables us to interpret security not as a static state but as a dynamic communicative construct (Buzan–Wæver–de Wilde 1998; Fairclough 1995; Kress–van Leeuwen 2006).

The Security Discourse of Tourism in Hungarian Tourism Communication

Methodological foundations

The study is qualitative in nature: by analysing text units taken from selected tourism websites (titles, subtitles, promotional slogans, descriptive narratives, etc.), we examine how the meaning of security is constructed. On this basis, we identified three main thematic clusters:

1. linguistic securitization (explicit promises and statements of security),
2. the language of trust (implicit meanings of stability and harmony),
3. the discourse of cultural inclusion (openness, multilingualism, inclusive communication).

The metaphorical construction of security through nature and home appears as an immanent component of these discourses, permeating their linguistic structures.

Enunciating security – explicit securitizing acts

The essence of securitization is that the very act of articulation creates security. In Hungarian tourism communication, this most frequently appears in the form of linguistic promises. On the *CsodasMagyarorszag.hu* website, statements such as the following are common: *"We work internationally to promote Hungary as a colourful, vibrant and safe travel destination", "The baths of the region offer a truly peaceful sanctuary", "get to their destination safely."* These statements are classic securitizing speech acts: they do not describe security but performatively bring it into being. The actor of communication ("Hungary" as a personified entity) presents security as a national attribute that extends to all visitors.

In the texts on Budapestinfo.hu, securitization frequently takes place through normative statements: "Budapest has been named one of the safest cities to travel in the world", "Budapest's transportation is simple, fast, and safe!", "provide the perfect setting for a peaceful stroll."

In the articles on *HelloHungary.hu*, security appears as part of authentic experience and self-identity – language creates the metaphor of psychological safety:

"enjoy the peaceful harmony of nature", "a quiet, peaceful location", "families can enjoy safe and relaxing water sports."

In the case of Balaton.hu, securitization functions as an element of regional identity: "The beach at Alsóörs is a true stronghold of family-friendly beaches on the northern shore… The water quality is impeccable", "October arrives with a flood of family-friendly programmes."

These statements demonstrate the positive dimension of securitization theory: the language of security operates simultaneously as a mechanism of identity formation and as an economic strategy.

The language of trust – implicit securitization

The second, more concealed level of securitization is the linguistic construction of trust. This is not always mediated by explicit security terms (such as "safe"), but by networks of connotative meaning – for example, words associated with stability, calm, orderliness, and homeliness.

In the material on CsodasMagyarorszag.hu and HelloHungary.hu, for instance, we encounter expressions such as: "a haven of eco-tourism", "spanning more than 150 acres, the Kecskemét Arboretum is an island of tranquility", "families can enjoy safe and relaxing water sports." These expressions construct security as an emotional state rather than as a factual category.

The narrative of *Balaton.hu* creates trust through the linguistic codes of predictability and naturalness: *"child-friendly place", "family-friendly beaches", "clean water."*

These patterns support a broader interpretation of securitization theory: the articulation of security is not always explicit; it often occurs through linguistic evocation, where meaning is activated via the emotional lexicon.

Cultural inclusion and multilingual security

An important dimension of the discourse of tourism security is linguistic accessibility – that is, whether different visitors encounter the messages of security and inclusion in their own language. Most of the tourism portals under examination are multilingual, thereby consciously constructing a communication of trust and accessibility.

The *CsodasMagyarorszag.hu* site is available in more than fifteen languages. The very possibility of language choice is a form of securitization: it creates a predictable and inclusive environment for visitors, conveying an experience of cultural security through linguistic access.

Budapestinfo.hu offers seven language versions. This multilingual structure signals the openness of urban tourism: it provides visitors not only with information but also with interpretive security. On a dedicated subpage, the site explicitly emphasizes that *"Budapest is safe and welcomes visitors"*, reinforcing the core communicative value of the welcoming city.

HelloHungary.hu – although available in only two language versions – offers a multilingual audioguide system in numerous languages. This linguistic range constitutes a communicative form of empathetic and intercultural security: here, language not only informs but also builds trust through the experience of understanding.

The visuality of security in Hungarian tourism communication

Visuality as an extension of "spoken security"

In tourism, security is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also one that is encoded visually. The visual language – colours, compositions, photographs, icons, layouts – can fulfil a securitizing function analogous to the linguistic discourse. On the basis of securitization theory, every communicative act that carries a security-related meaning can be regarded as a speech act; its multimodal extension occurs when security is constructed by visual means.

Visual securitization in tourism communication is realised in three main ways:
1. through metaphors of nature (landscape, water, green spaces, sunlight),
2. in images of community and family (human presence, group harmony, smiles),
3. in visual codes of order and predictability (ordered spaces, cleanliness, structure).

Images, typographic choices, and the visual arrangement of multilingual elements together form the verbal-visual security discourse that constitutes one of the key features of Hungarian tourism communication.

Visual metaphors of nature and calm

The analysis of illustrations and promotional photographs reveals clearly identifiable visual patterns. On *CsodasMagyarorszag.hu* and *HelloHungary.hu,* most images depict natural landscapes – hills, lakes, sunlit meadows, forests, waterfronts. These images do not merely serve an aesthetic function; they operate as visual counterparts of linguistic metaphors, becoming symbolic spaces of peace, harmony, and security. The dominance of green, blue, and golden tones carries

meanings of reliability and stability in terms of visual modality.

The visual world of *Balaton.hu* employs nature as a metaphor for security in an even more concentrated way: calm water surfaces, sunsets, family scenes on the shore. These images can be read, in the sense of securitization theory, as a de-securitizing discourse – they communicate the absence of danger and of tension. Here, nature is not a mere backdrop but a security actor: the landscape as a protective space embodies security both linguistically and visually.

Images of community and family as performances of security

In tourism communication, images of human presence fulfil a particular security function. The *HelloHungary.hu* and *Budapestinfo.hu* sites frequently use photographs depicting smiling people in interaction – families, friends, couples, hosts, and tourists. These images function as visual acts of trust: open body posture, eye contact, sunlit environments, and shared activities (such as shared meals, walks, coffee breaks) all convey a visual rhetoric of social cohesion.

On one of the main-page banners of *Budapestinfo.hu*, for example, a mixed-age group is shown laughing on the bank of the Danube. The visual narrative portrays security not as isolation but as a collective experience. On *Balaton.hu* and *HelloHungary.hu*, images of children and families predominate: this visual strategy renders security timeless and natural. The image of the family conveys the metaphor of a protected micro-community – the smallest unit of social stability.

From the perspective of securitization theory, these images are securitizing performances in that they delineate who is protected by security: the tourist as a communal actor becomes the central figure of the discourse.

Visual codes of order, cleanliness, and structure

The discourse of security also appears through the visuality of ordered space. Most of the relevant photographs employ structured, symmetrical compositions: cityscapes, orderly streets, clean squares, illuminated buildings.

The images on *Budapestinfo.hu* often show the city from above – in drone shots or panoramic photographs – which serves as a visual metaphor for control and transparency. On *CsodasMagyarorszag.hu*, typography and iconography in particular communicate the security of order: a simple, homogeneous typeface, regular pictograms, minimalist icons.

Colours and layouts function as visual counterparts of de-securitization: there are no sharp contrasts, sudden movements, or visual danger signals. The visual representation of cleanliness, structure, and transparency in tourism communication is not merely an aesthetic choice but a security code. Visually represented forms of order are foundational to perceptions of predictability and trust.

Multilingualism and typographic security

In tourism, multilingual communication is not only a linguistic but also a visual strategy. On the interfaces of *Budapestinfo.hu*, *HelloHungary.hu*, and *CsodasMagyarorszag.hu*, the language-selection icon is always placed in a clearly visible, unambiguous position, usually in the upper right-hand corner of the header – this visual accessibility serves as a spatial metaphor of linguistic security. The visual presence of multilingualism is itself a security signal: for foreign-language users, it signifies the possibility of navigation, control, and understanding.

Typographic consistency (the same typeface in all languages), structured use of icons, and transparent design all constitute visual languages of trust. The typography of *HelloHungary.hu* is particularly noteworthy: larger font sizes, friendly rounded letters, and a light background nonverbally convey empathy. On *Balaton.hu*, the balance between text and images creates an impression of visual stability – there are no overcrowded sections or dynamic moving elements. Multilingual and visually clear communication itself acts as a securitizing practice: understanding, navigability, and visual order are preconditions for experiencing security.

Conclusions: Constructions of security in Hungarian tourism communication

The main overall conclusion of the study is that, in Hungarian tourism communication, security does not appear as a pre-given, measurable state but as a linguistic-visual construct that is produced and stabilised within communicative practices. At the centre of this construct stands "spoken security": the linguistic articulation and visual representation of security jointly perform the work of social world-making that organises the tourist experience within a framework of trust, predictability, and calm.

The texts analysed confirm that the articulation of security is a performative act: statements of the "safe", "peaceful" type do not simply fulfil a descriptive function but, in the form of positive securitization, bring security into being itself. In tourism

communication, this logic turns the promise of protection into part of the destination's attractiveness, making security an integral element of the destination's brand promise. At the same time, this performativity always takes place within cultural and ideological frameworks: language designates to whom protection "belongs" and whose experience is being described. "Welcoming", "open", and "family-friendly" discourses render the norms of inclusivity and predictability hegemonic and, while promising inclusion, also convey a value system regarding what counts as a "good", "reliable", and "desirable" tourist experience. Ultimately, tourism as a security practice is realised in language: multilingual, empathetic, and metaphorical communication is not merely a marketing tool but also a security-political act in which language functions as a medium of security.

At the visual level, securitization continues in a multimodal form. Images of nature operate as metaphors of peace and stability; depictions of community generate a visual rhetoric of social trust; the aesthetics of order and cleanliness produce the symbolism of transparency and organisation; and multilingualism and typographic unity provide visual guarantees of understanding and access. These strategies are visual extensions of positive linguistic acts: security is not only uttered but also made visible and perceptible. Decisions about imagery (colours, viewpoint, composition) and about navigation and typography (consistent iconography, clearly visible language switcher, clean grid structure) function as subtle techniques of de-securitization: instead of crisis, risk, and threat, they render a normal, calm, caring environment experiential.

Viewed together, the linguistic and visual results reveal the structure of "spoken security". Linguistic performativity is expressed in statements, promises, and modality (certainty, evidentiality); visual performativity occurs through the iconography of nature-family-order, through family-friendly scenes, and through the aesthetics of ordered spaces. The two dimensions reinforce one another: what the text articulates, the image embodies; what the image evokes, the text normalises. Multilingualism is a key element of this system: it functions simultaneously as linguistic access (intelligibility, choice) and as visual orientation (unambiguous language selector, coherent typography), thereby conveying intercultural security.

These conclusions have practical implications at several levels. For destination management, coherent and redundant communication of security is a precondition for an effective branding strategy: linguistic promises and visual signs must occupy a shared semantic space. Multilingualism is not an auxiliary function but a security infrastructure: language choice, comprehensible practical information, transparent pictograms, and consistent design build up the experience of predictability. On the service-provider side, framing as "family-friendly", "close to nature", or "orderly" is credible only if it also covers the visitor's journey at an operational level (from arrival, orientation, and transport through to programmes). Communication about urban spaces and natural sites is ethical and sustainable when security is generated not through logics of exclusion or invisible selection but through the language of inclusion, access, and care.

The critical limits of this approach must also be acknowledged. While positive securitization effectively strengthens feelings of trust, it may homogenise experience and render more complex social issues invisible (for instance, the needs of groups with different perceptions of security, accessibility for people with disabilities, the security of workers, or the local externalities of tourism). Future communication should therefore seek to connect transparent, data-supported information (e.g. real-time updates on opening hours, traffic, health and environmental safety) with reassuring metaphorics, so that security is grounded not only in its experiential but also in its operational dimension. Multimodal analysis further suggests that, alongside the nature-family-order triptych, it would be worthwhile to develop an intercultural and inclusive visual repertoire that makes diversity visible (in terms of age, culture, mobility, life situation) without disrupting the narrative frame of trust.

From a scholarly perspective, the contribution of the study is threefold. First, it operationalises securitization theory in a positive, everyday context (tourism), showing that security can function not only as the language of crisis but also as a brand promise. Second, by integrating critical discourse analysis and multimodal analysis, it demonstrates the cooperation of linguistic and visual codes in constructing trust. Third, by emphasising the visual and functional role of multilingualism, it interprets tourism security as intercultural access, shifting the focus from protection to mutual intelligibility.

In this light, "spoken security" is not merely a rhetorical turn of phrase but a structural communication mechanism: the interplay of words, images, and layouts creates the discursive space in which experiences of trust and stability emerge. Hungarian tourism communication will be long-term credible and resilient if it supports the promise of positive securitization with an empirical, accessible, multilingual, and visually coherent information ecosystem, while simultaneously making room for plurality – that is, for the fact that security will signify

the experience of homeliness, care, and predictability in different ways for different travellers.

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