

# Book Reviews

## Languages, images, smells, sounds and other semiotic monsters: Exploring Linguistic Landscapes and multimodality.

**Angeliki Alvanoudi**

*Expanding the Linguistic Landscape: Linguistic Diversity, Multimodality and the Use of Space as a Semiotic Resource*, ed. by Martin Pütz and Neele Mundt, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2019. xii+ 302 pp. \$50.00 (pbk, ISBN 978-1-78892-214-2) (hbk, ISBN 978-1-78892-215-9)

In recent years there has been growing interest in Linguistic Landscape (henceforth LL) research that focuses on the use of languages in public spaces. The volume edited by Martin Pütz and Neele Mundt is a valuable contribution to the expanding LL research that targets the visible representation of multiple languages in a globalized world. More specifically, the volume is a collection of 12 chapters which offer theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the field of LL, drawing on various disciplinary locations, such as linguistics, politics, sociology, literacy, education and cultural geography, and deploying quantitative as well as qualitative methods. The book has its origin in the 37<sup>th</sup> International LAUD Symposium held on 4-6 April 2016 at the University of Koblenz-Landau in Landau, Germany.

After the table of contents, the preface, and the notes on the contributors, Martin Pütz and Neele Mundt present an introduction to multilingual and multimodal LL entitled 'Multilingualism, Multimodality and Methodology: Linguistic Landscape Research in the Context of Assemblages, Ideologies and (In)visibility: An Introduction' (pp. 1-22). LL is broadly defined as multilingual and multimodal repertoire or '*multimodal signage*' (p. 1) that includes semiotic assemblages encompassing verbal and non-verbal communication, imagery, graffiti, smell, food, sounds and movements, in line with definitions proposed earlier by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) and Pennycook (2017). The Introduction discusses issues related to language policy, ideology and superdiversity in the city, and targets the contribution of LL research to

the study of linguistic minorities, struggles and protests of language users, loss and survival of endangered languages, language contact and language attitudes. The authors offer some theoretical preliminaries for the next 12 chapters, which are divided into three parts, discussed in turn.

Part 1, 'General Issues, Methodology and Linguistic Landscapes as a Pedagogical Resource' consists of three chapters that examine urgent topics in LL research. In Chapter 1 (pp. 25-37), 'Linguistic Landscape after a Decade: An Overview of Themes, Debates and Future Directions', Elana Shohamy offers a general overview of LL studies over the period 2006-2016 focusing on major research findings, activities, publications and developments. The author identifies five themes in LL research: quantitative LL approaches to representations of different languages in public spaces, LL and multimodality, LL in cities and neighborhoods, LL and contestations in public spaces, and LL and education. In Chapter 2 (pp. 38-57), 'Methods and Techniques for Linguistic Landscape Research: About Definitions, Core Issues and Technological Innovations', Durk Gorter addresses the need to improve the technical standards of the photographic data presented in publications, and discusses technological innovations, such as digital screens in urban landscape, QR codes, smartphones, virtual reality and AR (augmented reality), and their potential impact on LL data collection. In Chapter 3 (pp. 58-71), 'Learning to Translate the Linguistic Landscape', David Malinowski writes on the pedagogical benefit of LL by deploying an interdisciplinary translational approach. In his narrative essay, the author conceptualizes 'translation' as a metaphor for understanding the work done by LL researchers and makes a case for translation as a valuable language learning resource.

Part 2, 'Broadening the Field of Semiotic Landscapes: Semiotic Assemblages, Multimodality and Contemporary Urban Spaces' consists of four chapters that deal with multilingualism, multimodality, spatial repertoires, and semiotic assemblages in the cities. In Chapter 4, 'Linguistic Landscapes and Semiotic Assemblages' (pp. 75-88), Alastair Pennycook presents his analysis of semiotic assemblages and spatial repertoires in a Bangladeshi owned corner shop in Sydney, Australia, drawing on extensive urban ethnography and studies of intersectional sensescapes. The author addresses the role of language in relation to the broader semiotic field, the intersectional relationships among different types of semiosis and advocates an expanded view of the semiotic terrain in relation to material objects and space. In Chapter 5 (pp. 89-114), 'The Art of Silence in Upmarket Spaces of Commerce', Adam Jaworski writes on the commodification of silence as a multimodal resource indicating luxury, exclusivity and elite spaces in the commercial urban semiotic landscape. The author shows that designers, advertisers and marketers use silence to brand their products, index trade secrets and a sense of distinction and, thus, position target customers as elite. In Chapter 6 (pp. 115-131), 'Multimodality in the City: On the Media, Perception and Locatedness of Public Textscapes', Christine Domke analyzes different kinds of communicative forms in train stations in German cities, such as directional structures on pavements which are permanently visible and non-time-bound

perceivable or commercials which are valid only for a certain time and time-bound perceivable. The author demonstrates that a city's semiotic landscape is visible, audible and also tactile. In Chapter 7 (pp. 132-149), 'Multilingual Audio Announcements: Power and Identity', Ying-Hsueh Hu reports the findings of a soundscape study on the use of Mandarin Chinese, English, and dialects of Holo and Hakka in the public audio announcements on the Taipei Mass Rapid Transit System in Taiwan. The author analyzes language attitudes by different ethnic groups and treats multilingual announcements as processes of glocalization that construct a Taiwanese identity.

Part 3, 'Expanding Linguistic Landscape Studies: Power Relations, Acts of Resilience and Diachronic Changes' includes five studies on LL as sites of demonstrations, power relations and political tensions between official language policies and local language practices. In Chapter 8 (pp. 153-179), 'Linguistic Landscapes and the African Perspective', Karsten Legère and Tove Rosendal offer an ethnographic perspective on language politics and policy shaping the LL of three east African countries, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. The authors examine the official empowerment of the national languages of Swahili and Rwanda and their symbolic and ideological use for commercial interests. In Chapter 9 (pp. 180-202), 'Slogans as Part of Burkina Faso's Linguistic Landscape during the Insurrection in 2014', Sabine Diao-Klaeger and Rosalie Zongo present their qualitative analysis of slogans written on urban walls, monuments, posters, banners and T-shirts during the political demonstrations in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, West Africa. The authors focus on revolutionary references, references to current and foreign political events, the metaphorical notion of disease and the use of abbreviations. In Chapter 10 (pp. 203-228), 'Investigating the Bilingual Landscape of the Marshall Islands', Isabelle Buchstaller and Seraphim Albanides present their geo-spatial analysis of the distribution of English and Marshallese in Majuro, the capital of the Marshall Islands in the North Pacific. The authors examine language policy and the relation between the public expression of indigenous linguistic identity and English language hegemony in urban public space. In Chapter 11 (pp. 229-263), 'Linguistic, Ethnic and Cultural Tensions in the Sociolinguistic Landscape of Vilnius: A Diachronic Analysis', Irina Moore uses multimodal discourse analysis to examine new language policies, de-russification, language removal and language replacement in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. The author shows how textual signs, such as street toponymy, and physical objects, such as consumer goods, shed light on ethnic tensions and narratives and the emergence of new memory landscapes. In Chapter 12 (pp. 264-299), 'Attitudes towards Visual Multilingualism in the Linguistic Landscape of the Ruhr Area', Evelyn Ziegler, Ulrich Schmitz and Haci-Halil Uslucan investigate the attitudes of the urban population towards visual multilingualism in the cities of Duisburg, Essen and Dortmund where migrants from Bulgaria and Romania and Syrian refugees have settled in the last decade. The authors report that informants living in ethnically diverse areas hold more positive attitudes towards visual multilingualism. The book ends with an index of subjects (pp. 300-302).

The volume is well-structured, easy to read and provides the reader with fascinating and original data on LL. It offers solid theoretical and methodological contributions to LL research that foreground the interdisciplinary framework and diverse scope of the field. The analyses presented in the volume move beyond 'logocentric approaches' to LL (Chapter 4, p. 75), as they contextualize language into the wider set of semiotic relations and, thus, challenge the boundaries between verbal and non-verbal, symbolic and material. I would particularly like to draw the reader's attention to the contributions included in Part 3 of the volume, which enhance our understanding of LL in under-examined areas, such as East and West Africa, and fill a significant gap in the literature. The volume will be useful for sociolinguists working on language policy and ideology, language attitudes, sociocultural diversity in the city, and language and education, as well as scholars interested in how languages are used in urban public spaces.

## REFERENCES

- Jaworski, Adam and Crispin Thurlow (eds) 2010. *Semiotic landscapes: language, image, space*. London: Continuum.
- Pennycook, Alastair 2017. Translanguaging and semiotic assemblages. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 14(3): 269-282.

**Angeliki Alvanoudi** is Lecturer at the School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and Adjunct Lecturer in Linguistics at James Cook University, Australia.

**E-Mail:** [alvanoudiag@yahoo.gr](mailto:alvanoudiag@yahoo.gr)