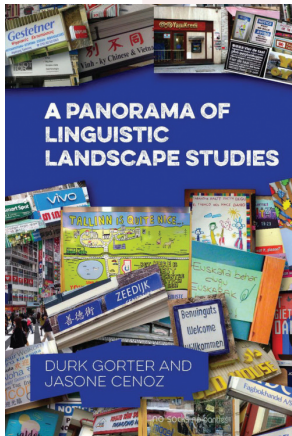


Linguistic Landscapes: What we have learned and where we are headed

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A Panorama of Linguistic Landscape Studies

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This book is both a timely and highly useful addition to the literature on linguistic landscapes: Timely, because it comes at a significant moment in the development of the field, when more wide-reaching and extensive ethnographic studies are being carried out in various areas of the world and valuable because three decades after research into linguistic landscapes began to flourish, we are at a place where we can look back at what we have discovered and learned from the field and think about how we want to move forward in the future. In those three decades, a substantial amount of change has taken place. For instance, earlier studies in linguistic landscapes primarily used quantitative methods to ascertain the types of signs visible and their presence in the landscape. However, in what has become known as second-wave linguistic landscape research, studies have turned to qualitative and ethnographic methods in an attempt to flesh out sociolinguistic aspects of language use in public spaces, such as identity, ideology, and social (in)equalities that cannot be explained through quantitative accounts alone. Since then, an increasing number of studies and accounts of linguistic landscapes have been written in conjunction with a variety of topics including, but not limited to, semiotics (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010), superdiversity (Blommaert 2013, Blommaert and Maly 2014), education (Malinowski 2019, Shohamy 2019, Gorter and Cenoz 2022), and translation (Backhaus 2006, Lees 2024).

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Another aspect of this book that makes it especially useful is that it has been written by two authors who have significantly contributed to contemporary linguistic landscape research. This includes their work on minority languages (2006), the use of linguistic landscapes in education (2022), and Gorter's early edited volume (2006) on linguistic landscapes as an emerging field for the study of multilingualism. This background has enabled the authors to observe the development of the field and affords them a unique perspective to offer a detailed account of how the field began, where it is now, and how it may evolve in the future.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, each dealing with a separate aspect of linguistic landscape studies. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the history of linguistic landscape studies and how it has expanded, as well as the key definitions that have been used to describe the field, from Landry and Bourhis's earliest definition (1997) focusing on the visibility and salience of language on signs in a given area to more sociological definitions which see linguistic landscapes as symbolic constructions of social space (cf. Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael 2019). It also refers to more recent – perhaps controversial – approaches to looking beyond the text and examining aspects of multimodality. Related to this is a helpful discussion of the – often interchangeably used – terms *linguistic* and *semiotic landscapes* (see Jaworsky & Thurlow 2010), which is pointed out. However, the former would appear to focus more on language and the latter on broader aspects of multimodality; both terms refer to the same concepts with a significant degree of overlap, meaning that, in essence, the two terms refer to the same field.

Chapter 2 provides more details on the field's history and how it has emerged into a highly productive and interdisciplinary area of study. The chapter begins with a historical overview of how linguistic landscape studies started in the late 20th century. One of the advantages of the author's approach to this is that it tells the story by looking at significant studies that were carried out in various regions, such as Israel, Belgium, and Japan, both before the field was established and had a name through to studies in the first decade of the new millennium which defined the field. Examples include Backhaus's (2006) study on language contact and multilingualism in Tokyo, Cenoz and Gorter's (2006) article on bilingual and multilingual signs in the Basque Country and Friesland, and the development of a scientific journal, *Linguistic Landscape*, in 2015 with three issues per year. As opposed to a mere summary of these studies and developments, the authors provide a detailed analysis by commenting on the data used and demonstrating how these contribute to the progression and expansion of the field. The chapter concludes with a valuable account of the various waves and turns used to refer to multiple phases of linguistic landscape studies, including first and second-wave LLS, the first referring to earlier quantitative approaches and the latter to the more prevalent qualitative-focused research we see today.

The outcomes and merits of quantitative and qualitative approaches used in LLS are detailed in Chapter 4. The chapter also provides an overview of research combining the two approaches, providing a tentative answer to Canakis's (2017) question of whether the field may see a combination of methods in future research. This discussion is preceded by an in-depth discussion of the various perspectives adopted in both quantitative and qualitative studies, including language and space, sociology, and pragmatics. The book then moves on, in Chapter 5, to a discussion of how data collection is conducted in linguistic landscape research. As can be expected, photography is referred to as the most prevalent method of collecting data (cf. Blommaert 2013). However, more recent data collection methods are discussed, such as video analysis and eye tracking, which monitor the types of signs people notice and pay attention to in the landscape. As the authors stress, although this method has been used for some time in other disciplines, it only appears in a minority of recent linguistic landscape studies (see Seifi 2015, Vingron et al. 2017). It is usefully pointed out that while such research helps determine what people notice, it does not say much about how they process the texts in question. As the authors note (151), "To figure that out, a second step is needed, for example, by questioning participants during the experiment or retrospectively about which signs they read and in which language(s)." One way of doing this is through interviews conducted during walking tours. As mentioned by the authors (144), "during walking tours, the researcher can observe how the participants interact with the environment and what their relationships are to certain places." In referring to such studies (e.g., Michalovich et al. 2021), the authors point out (144) that participants can also include the owners of businesses where signs are visible. As I have argued in my research (Lees 2021), such an approach enables the researcher to obtain valuable information on signs that would not otherwise always be obvious to the researcher.

Chapters 6 and 7 then discuss how LLS fleshes out aspects of multilingualism in the various landscapes under study and the visibility and status of minority languages. Chapter 6 provides an overview of new trends in multilingualism, including translanguaging, and then presents the application of multilingualism in LLS and the challenges of researching signs that display more than one language. The main reason for these challenges is that the languages present on a sign sometimes refer to different entities. One of the most valuable solutions presented to overcome difficulties of this kind is the typologies suggested by eminent researchers, such as Reh's classic typology (2004), and approaches proposed by other researchers, such as Sebba (2013) and Cook (2013). Chapter 7 provides a sound theoretical discussion on the study of minority languages in general and makes the point that the visibility of minority languages mirrors the (in)equality experienced by minority groups in various regions. As the authors state (180), "official state languages commonly have an all-round presence in public spaces, and their presence and visibility are taken for granted, whereas for minority

languages, often an extra effort has to be made.” This is an important observation, as the lack of visibility and representation of minority languages is a characteristic of the urban landscape (Gorter 2021). The chapter then discussed some indicative studies on well-known minority languages such as Catalan, Irish, and Galician. Following this, the authors provide an informative comparative overview of studies looking at Chinatowns in various cities where Chinese is a minority language, concluding that it is the most obvious language in the linguistic landscapes under study and that the Chinese script contributes to what has effectively become a tourist attraction in many cities. In this sense, the status of Chinese differs from other languages.

The context of minority languages is then widened by looking at policies and how these influence the languages visible in the linguistic landscape in Chapter 8 and the ubiquitous presence of the English language in Chapter 9. More specifically, Chapter 8 provides the context of language policy and planning and then discusses prominent cases where significant LLS research has taken place, such as the case of English and French in Canada and French and Flemish in Brussels. Chapter 9 then discusses English's role in linguistic landscapes worldwide in the context of globalization and language hierarchy. It uses the framework of Kachru's (1992) circle model, according to which the inner circle represents countries where English is spoken as the first language of its inhabitants, such as the United Kingdom; the outer circle refers to countries that adopted English as a result of colonial expansion, such as African nations, and the expanding circle which represents countries where English was never an official or colonial language, but where English is widely taught and used, such as Greece, where English enjoys a privileged social status (cf. Boklund-Lagopoulou 2003). The chapter then proceeds with an in-depth discussion of several linguistic landscape studies that have been conducted throughout the world, leading the authors to conclude that English is the predominant language observed on signs throughout the world, either because it is taken for granted in the inner circle or because of globalized trends in the expanding circle. Moreover, the valid point is also made that the prolific use of English can intensify inequality for other languages that may be used in a particular area but are not represented in the linguistic landscape (308).

One of the most essential parts of the book is Chapter 10, which is dedicated to the relationship between LLS and education. Indeed, how linguistic landscapes can be used for educational purposes has become a prominent area of research in LLS, especially about language learning and literacy (see Dagenais et al. 2009, Shohamy and Waksman 2009, Gorter 2018, Malinowski 2019, among others). At the heart of these studies is the premise that linguistic landscapes provide both teachers and learners with authentic data which can stimulate discussion not just on the languages visible in each landscape and how they are used but also on related social implications, which have already been discussed in the book, such as language (in)equality and

multilingual identities. In short, examining linguistic landscapes in the classroom compels learners to think about the languages visible in their own areas (cf. Dargenais et al. 2009). As the authors point out (354), “the task of schools is to prepare students for the real world, and today this implies that students have to reflect a multilingual reality that surrounds them in the places where they live and go to school. The linguistic landscape items in public spaces offer relevant and useful possibilities for educational activities in the classroom and the community.” The validity of this point is demonstrated throughout the chapter, both in its discussion of previous relevant research and in its dedicated section on schoolsapes, which have become an increasingly prevalent area of LLS and education since they look to examine how the linguistic landscapes that can be found in and beyond educational establishments can be used for learning purposes.

The final chapters of the book deal with the use of names in linguistic landscapes in Chapter 11 and note what the future of LLS may look like in Chapter 12. Chapter 11 discusses the significance of names to LLS, mainly because they convey essential historical and social aspects of a place, including the value attached to specific names, which may reflect social identities and ideologies. Moreover, as the authors note (357), “place names and street names can provide visible proof of a language policy.” In this context, the chapter provides an interesting discussion on how street and place names can reflect social change; for example, how a bilingual sign denoting the town of Dingle in Ireland was changed to a monolingual Irish sign, thus signifying a development in language ideology (Moriarty 2012).

In Chapter 12, the book ends with a reflective account of what the field of linguistic landscapes has achieved and its future directions. As the authors state (369), the relatively new field of LLS has generated groundbreaking research on the visibility of language and how it is used in public spaces, meaning that “the studies have increased our knowledge of how languages are displayed in mainly urban contexts and the practices of different groups of language users, while they have enabled researchers to enhance our understanding of a range of social issues.” It is recognized that the field will continue to evolve in the future, but it falls within disciplines of linguistics such as sociolinguistics and applied linguistics rather than a subdiscipline in its own right. The chapter discusses findings from some of the well-researched topics in LLS, such as gender and sexuality, gentrification, and graffiti. It points towards factors and trends that could affect the field’s future. For instance, using technology such as Google Street View to collect data and QR codes as digital signs are just some instances of inquiry that may become more prevalent in the future. Another area noted by the authors is the increasing level of uniformity in many linguistic landscapes worldwide due to globalization. The authors note that the signs observed globally during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated considerable similarities between countries

regarding messages, the language used, and sign design. Moreover, the existence of globalized high streets worldwide means that the signs visible in the center of New York, for instance, do not show considerable differences from the signs in Paris.

The factors mentioned above must undoubtedly be considered while also recognizing the critical social aspects LLS can still uncover, not least about social inequality and social change. This will necessitate more extensive diachronic studies in various areas with systematic and methodological approaches, which the authors correctly observe is currently lacking in the field (396). In this book, the authors provide a remarkably comprehensive discussion of the entire history of LLS by using authentic data from prominent and less-known international studies that have contributed to shaping the field. At the same time, the authors have produced a highly perceptive and well-presented account of the directions in which the field is likely to go and outline what it will need to do this successfully. In this sense, the book is a must-read for both the initiated researcher in LLS, who can benefit from an organized presentation and analysis of all the major trends in the field, and also for students or those with no or little experience in LLS who can use the authors' work as a textbook on a burgeoning area of linguistics, anthropology, and semiotics. In short, Gorter and Cenoz's book is an exciting contribution to our field, showing us where we have been and where linguistic landscape research may take us in the future.

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