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Review

Linguistic Landscapes and Educational Spaces **Edina Krompák, Víctor Fernández-Mallat and Stephan Meyer** **(eds) (2021)**

In today's linguistic circles, it is stating the obvious that the Linguistic Landscape (LL) approach has become a remarkable success story since the first studies were conducted, the first workshops organised, and the first collections of papers published about 15 years ago. During these years, Linguistic Landscape studies have moved from mostly quantitative to more qualitative approaches and multi-method research. The field has experienced an expansion into semiotic landscapes and all different types of '-scapes' in a variety of geographical areas and academic and social contexts which have been collected and discussed not least in edited volumes. This started with Gorter's 2006 ground-breaking introductory collection and travelled via more specific collections on, for example, semiotic landscapes (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010), minority languages in the LL (Gorter, Marten and Van Mensel, 2012), sociolinguistic studies (Laitinen and Zabrodska, 2015) to relatively recent collections by Pütz and Mundt (2018) or Malinowski and Tufi (2020), just to mention a few.

One important strand in this development is the connection between LL studies and education. Early influential individual studies and educational projects (e.g., Cenoz and Gorter, 2008; Lazdiņa and Marten, 2009; Sayer, 2010; Brown, 2012) were succeeded by collections of articles (e.g., Marten and Saagpakk,

2017; Badstübner-Kizik and Janíková, 2018; Malinowski, Maxim and Dubreil, 2020). It is in this light that the volume *Linguistic Landscapes and educational spaces* by Edina Krompák, Víctor Fernández-Mallat, and Stephan Meyer has to be evaluated. It consists of 13 chapters which address the relations between LL studies and education in different ways, divided into two sections which broadly represent the two strands of scholarly LL activities in the educational field. The first is the investigation of the LL of educational institutions (or other educational settings), and the second the use of the LL in teaching and learning processes at all age levels from pre-school to adult education. The focus of the latter may be language(s) as such, but LL approaches have also been applied to other fields such as history, art, or culture or focus on interdisciplinary topics such as democracy, ecology, or migration.

The book starts with an introduction which, in addition to providing the usual overview of the chapters, stands out because of its summary of studies on educational aspects in the LL; the chapter talks even of an ‘educational turn’. These are connected not least to semiotics and linguistic justice and to questions such as ‘how to balance the benefits and disadvantages of mono-, bi- and multilingualism’ (p. 3). The authors here identify four additional ‘turns’ relevant to the relation between education and linguistic and symbolic landscapes: linguistic, material, visual and spatial. The introduction then provides a valuable overview of the development of LL studies with a focus on education. It explains the evolution of the concept of linguistic schoolscapes, which was first seen as the ‘physical and social setting in which teaching and learning take place’ (Brown, 2005: 79) via ‘the school-based environment where place and text, both written (graphic) and oral, constitute, reproduce, and transform language ideologies’ (Brown, 2012: 282) to Szabó’s (2015: 24) focus on the ‘visual and spatial organisation of educational spaces’. Notably, language policies and ideologies play a particularly relevant role here. Similarly, the use of the LL as a pedagogical tool provides different approaches to analysing the relation between language and social processes. In this sense, the contextualisation of the LL has not only been used in teaching to raise general language awareness, to show linguistic diversity, but also just to make language classes and other teaching more interesting and sustainable. The introduction finally provides a brief outlook into possible future topics of LL research in education – with regard, for example, to changing teaching practices in pandemic times or LL trends that focus on virtual schoolscapes and other cyber spaces. Overall, the introduction is a very well-structured and content-rich overview which explains the role of the LL in the complex structures of contemporary super-diverse societies where relations

between multilingualism and learning processes are at the core of so many social actors – teachers and students as much as parents, educational authorities, and the general public.

Part 1, ‘Assessing the Linguistic and Semiotic Landscapes of Educational Spaces’, starts with Sabine Lehner’s chapter 2 on a young refugees’ club in Vienna. The author shows that the LL of the club lacks the instructions or prohibitions frequently found in other educational settings, and thereby serves as a ‘safe space’ for its visitors. It is interesting to read that the chapter invites discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of the dominance of German and English in the LL in the club: on the one hand, the relative lack of other languages is disrespectful towards the language repertoires of the visitors; on the other hand, it supports the learning of, in particular, German, the main language of Austria without which it is difficult to succeed in Austrian society. Lehner here also adapts Pennycook’s views that attention in LL studies should be paid not only to the production but also to the reception of signs. This is a very significant remark for understanding and exploring how people actually read texts, including signs in public spaces, which contributes to the creation of even more interdisciplinary studies by inviting readers to connect the LL to cognitive approaches. The chapter reports an interesting case study – yet it is important to note that some of its conclusions seem to be based more on interpretations and lack openly visible evidence. This applies particularly to the discussion of monolingual norms in Austria in the context of respect for other cultures and languages and the encouragement of psychologically safe learning.

Chapter 3 by Leona Harris, Una Cunningham, Jeanette King and Dyanna Stirling takes the readers to a Māori Early Childhood Centre in New Zealand. In an innovative application of Bronfenbrenner’s 2005 bioecological model, in connection with a highly multi-method approach to data collection, their analysis of interviews on the visible LL in the Centre generated five common themes, among them the normalisation of the use of Māori, individual achievement, and Māori identity. The authors show how the macrosystem of language policies and practices in New Zealand affects interactions on the mesolevel of an educational institution such as the Centre and thereby also influences the microlevel of individual perception of the LL. As an important aspect, the authors show how both the physical space in the Childhood Centre and the digital landscape connected to it, as well as the connection between the physical educational space and the children’s homes, can meaningfully contribute to Māori normalisation. In this way, including the LL in language revitalisation processes may encourage the use of a language such as Māori, and thereby contribute to the empowerment of Māori speakers.

Carla Bagna's and Martina Bellinzona's chapter 4 then investigates relationships between the schoolscapes and the increasingly multilingual composition of 12 secondary schools in Italy. They apply classic concepts of overt and covert language policies and contextualise them in the setting of their study: official and hidden school agendas, the interrelation between, for example, the schoolscape and official curricula, and differences between the LL outside and inside the schools. The chapter concludes that, besides Italian, the languages most frequently found in the LL of the schools are languages which are part of the official curriculum, i.e., mostly major European languages such as English, German, or French, but also Japanese. Other languages, however, including the home languages of many children with a migrant background, are rare and, if they exist, are related to practical issues of managing school life. Interviews reveal how the LL is influenced by top-down language policies and perspectives. At the same time, however, the interviews also show how the promotion of Italian is perceived as important for integrating society on the grounds of a common language.

Corey Fanglei Huang's chapter 5 then moves to higher education in Hong Kong. The author analyses two series of posters on a university campus which advertise university services for the benefit of students' psychological well-being and provide consultation for students who feel they need emotional or practical support. The author links the posters to the ideological construction of education in Hong Kong based on autonomous and self-reflexive learning by the students. The chapter provides enlightening insights into university practices in Hong Kong. It is, however, somewhat less convincing with regard to its main criticism of the situation: whereas it is interesting to read how the posters aim to create specific self-images of the students, it is less obvious what is problematic about educational approaches, which lead a university to turn their students into autonomous thinkers and independent, critical graduates. This applies even more since the services under investigation explicitly assist students who feel that they need support – and are entirely voluntarily. The conclusion that the students 'seem to show a resistance toward the neoliberal model of "the care of the self"' (p. 123) therefore seems to be overly interpretative or, at least, not to take into account the abilities of the students to choose for themselves what services they wish to use. At least, the link to Foucault on which the paper is based would need to be explained better, contextualised, and discussed critically to make the notion of 'students as neo-liberal selves' sound less artificial and constructed. In addition, it has to be noted that the study is based on a rather small data set, including interviews with no more than four students and three senior staff members, which is hardly sufficient for allowing generalising remarks about

students' perceptions, especially since, as the author explains, the students did not even take the posters very seriously. It has to be agreed, however, that the institutional semiotic landscapes may reveal agendas and discourses in place in a university – and for a discussion of such discourses, the chapter is certainly an interesting read.

Chapter 6 by Boglárka Straszer and David Kroik then returns to pre-school age, in this case a Saami school in Sweden, and relates the LL research more explicitly to official language policies. An interesting observation is that, though the school succeeds in creating a somewhat Saami space, this takes place more through different objects (e.g., toys, lamps, or the Saami flag) than through language. Different Saami languages are regularly present in the schoolscape, in total even to a higher degree than Swedish and exceeding English and other languages by far. A true picture of the 'Saaminess' of the schoolscape, however, can only be attained when the Saami artefacts which strengthen the role of Saami on a symbolic level are also considered, whereas Swedish can be found more for communicative purposes. The authors conclude, therefore, that the hegemony of Swedish as a means of communication prevails, as in Swedish society including the traditional Saami regions at large, notwithstanding Sweden's generally Saami-favouring language policy. This is grounded not least in a lack of proficiency in Saami by many members of the school community, and by the lack of speakers of Saami in general, including schoolteachers. The chapter thereby points to the necessity to have more proficient Saami speakers as linguistic role models for both children and staff. Like chapter 3 on the Māori children's centre, however, the strong Saami component in itself is an important element in young children's identity formation. It should also be noted that the chapter includes excellent self-reflections about the research process as such and about the data collection from different perspectives. By explaining in detail how the fieldwork was done, including the discussion of different challenges, the chapter practically takes the readers by their hands and provides valuable advice for researchers who wish to conduct similar studies elsewhere.

Chapter 7 by Edina Krompák concludes the first part by investigating blackboards in a primary school in German-speaking Switzerland. Blackboards (or their more modern successors) are important places at school because they are used for ritualised interactions between teachers and pupils while at the same time expressing institutional authority. Through photograph analyses, interviews, and field notes, the author identifies different roles of the blackboards – as the 'teacher's calling card' (p. 158) or as 'sacred places' (p. 159) where teachers' as well as learners' entries are officially accepted and thereby legitimised – if they are allowed to stay. Blackboards may, in the author's view, be

considered a 'heterotopia' in Foucault's sense where 'two opposite poles' meet (p. 165). Through blackboards, the schoolscape therefore 'signals linguistic and social practices and not only represents but also co-creates a classroom community' (p. 165). The chapter stresses very well the benefits from bringing together schoolscape studies and ethnographic education research since it is very clear and detailed in describing the study design, including the complexity of the methodology and the major preparatory work when planning the study.

The book then moves on to part 2 'Linguistic Landscape as a Pedagogical Resource' – i.e., the use of LL approaches for educational purposes rather than the investigation of the LL in educational institutions. It begins with a chapter which is, in some ways, the most unusual one in the collection. Mieke Vandenbroucke expands the notion of 'educationscapes' to institutional rooms, in her case in Flanders. She argues that a (flyer, poster, website, and media) campaign which aimed to encourage migrants to speak Dutch conveys a 'linguistic doxa' that using Dutch is the norm and that police or migrant offices where such posters are displayed thereby also 'educate' people. This may have negative effects on migrants' communicative success, including, for instance, in situations where interviews are conducted to identify marriage fraud. Even if the authorities principally offer interpretation services, migrants with limited Dutch skills may fear that use of another language may have negative effects for them. This chapter is innovative with respect to the data of investigation and the effects of such a campaign aimed to encourage language learning; some of its conclusions and implications would, however, require better evidence and seem to be rather speculative in part.

Chapter 9 by Kirk P. H. Sullivan, Christian Waldmann, and Maria Wiklund moves back to the Sámi area in Sweden, albeit to a different municipality than chapter 6. The chapter reports on a project with primary school students who documented the LL in their environment. The aim of the project was to 'educate pupils to be independent, critical thinking citizens' (p. 193) and thereby raise democratic conscience when for example, discussing why the minority languages Sámi or Finnish were almost absent and when contextualising the monolingual mindset of many pupils in a multilingual environment. The focus is an interesting example of being 'didactic' in a positive way since it shows how the LL can serve as a 'pedagogical tool to draw children's attention to the non-neutrality of written communication' (p. 199). In an interesting experiment, the children were asked how they would invest a small sum of money into changing the LL. The discussions which evolved brought young children to reflect upon some fundamental discourses on language in Swedish society – for example, when suggestions to help in acquiring Swedish were contrasted

to more presence of other languages. In this way, the LL project triggered an awareness of core democratic values – i.e., discussing and respecting different opinions voiced by one’s peers. In addition, the chapter offers a highly valuable practical manual for implementing similar projects, such as when suggesting how to design a 90-minute lesson and showing the lesson’s structure step by step (pp. 202–203).

Chapter 10 then reports on a project with MA students in the Belgian city of Ghent which sees LL studies as a way of connecting theoretical teaching with awareness raising “to stimulate learner autonomy, motivation and deeper understanding” (p. 217). July De Wilde, Johannes Verhoene, Jo Tondeur, and Ellen Van Praet first summarise some important earlier outdoor learning LL approaches (even though one may add that the literature in the field encompasses far, far more than what the authors include) before they discuss their own, methodologically highly innovative, study. In particular, they suggest a connection between the outdoor LL and outdoor education by integrating it into a ‘learning by doing’ approach. In addition to documenting the LL through taking pictures, the students were asked to audio-record interviews, to live-tweet on their fieldwork and to make digital video glasses recordings for using point-of-view filming and think-aloud protocols. Using two surveys, the researchers investigated how the students’ attitudes and perceptions of the LL changed during the project. The authors conclude that the project succeeded in motivating students to conduct research and in increasing their intellectual curiosity. But the paper also shows possible fallacies, such as when the researchers understood that the qualitative analysis had not been sufficiently prepared and when the students said that the use of Twitter was disturbing instead of providing additional input for reflection.

Solvita Burr’s analysis of LL signs in textbooks for teaching Latvian (chapter 11) then offers yet another approach to LL analysis by providing insight into an important aspect of L1 education. Based on ideas of edusemiotics and on the pedagogy of multiliteracies, the author first provides an overview of how the LL is used in such textbooks. She then discusses three examples that stand for different uses of the LL – a ‘language city’ in which meta-comments on language use are placed on a street map, a mostly symbolic and illustrative use of a commemorative LL sign, and a street scene which is used for discussing language practices and ideologies. The examples are remarkable in that they reflect a nation-building context in which the LL is used for language teaching which focuses on monolingualism, in this case the consolidation of Latvian as the main language of society in Latvia and including elements of linguistic purism. In this way, the chapter contrasts with the promotion of multilingualism dominant in

most other chapters (and many other LL studies). These ideological differences could have been discussed and contextualised in more detail in the chapter, but the chapter is noteworthy in that it reminds readers that an LL analysis and its use in education may, of course, be applied from very diverse ideological perspectives. The chapter finally provides an alternative approach to applying the LL in language learning when presenting specific methods and tasks from the author's 'Guide for Exploring City Texts'. In this way, Burr shows how to use real-life examples for developing awareness of multimodality and multilingualism and, thereby, also for understanding different strategies of expressing oneself in the LL. In addition, the statement that 'reading multimodal signs requires more than an ability to read written texts' (p. 234) reflects once again the advantages of integrating LL studies in education research (e.g., on literacy) and in this way (like chapter 2) suggests collaborating closer with cognitive sciences for addressing questions of, for example, how reading takes place in practice and which cognitive processes are involved during reading.

Yu Li's chapter 12 finally discusses a project with undergraduate students of Mandarin in the United States focusing on 'cultural authenticity'. The main achievement of the study course is that the students' perception of what constitutes 'authentic' Chinese culture changed. Whereas prior to the project the students had perceived 'culture as something pure, fixed and absolute' (p. 268), they learned to appreciate 'the complexity, diversity, fluidity and context-dependency of Chinese culture' (p. 268) in the US and that 'the hybridisation between Chinese and other cultures had been pervasive and cross-fertilisations observed in the field were just as valuable as the "pure" Chinese culture they had imagined' (p. 269).

Chapter 12 essentially concludes part 2 of the book. The final chapter 13 by Durk Gorter and Jasone Cenoz summarises some common threads of the previous chapters and raises several important issues which allow further exploration. They summarise methodologies and theoretical contexts and highlight some particularly innovative or thought-provoking approaches, methods, and concepts (e.g., the notion of the LL as a 'third teacher' in chapter 4). As Gorter and Cenoz stress, it is remarkable that a solid LL study in the educational context seems to apply multi-approach research designs. Yet, as they emphasise, still a lot depends on the perception and interpretation of the LL – here stressing how the creation and reading of signs and their application in education is close to classical sender-recipient models of language. It is highly relevant to repeatedly highlight that the use of a diversity of research methods (including, as suggested, e.g., video recordings) is important for at least trying to provide better understanding of a situation.

In the educational context, this diversity of approaches and methods is connected to an abundance of educational approaches. In this sense, Gorter and Cenoz are right when they say that the volume ‘contributes to shortening the distance between linguistic landscape and educational studies’ (p. 280). As the authors stress, the LL field is still far from being consolidated, which is inherent in its genesis and the diversity of researchers and topics involved. The authors argue that their ‘model of multilingual inequality in public spaces’ (p. 284; cf. Gorter and Cenoz, 2020) may provide some type of common grounds for bridging different approaches. This idea, however, could have been elaborated more in the context of education. But, as the authors conclude, ‘it seems that the ongoing diversity and heterogeneity of theoretical approaches will have to be taken for granted’ (p. 288) and ‘that the plurality of the field of linguistic landscape studies has advantages in providing multiple perspectives, which is an asset rather than a liability’ (p. 288).

Many of the aspects which constitute the value of the book are already mentioned by Gorter and Cenoz in their conclusion. In addition to their observations, among the most remarkable common aspects of the chapters is that it seems to be implicit that learning in and through the LL implies more than ‘just’ language learning. The use of the LL may raise metalinguistic awareness, but it allows also for contextualising political, social, historical, or economic topics. But this should not imply that the use of the LL ‘just’ for language learning could not have a value. At the same time, the chapters show that the LL may be used in education at all age levels. An interesting aspect here is the use of competitive terms for LL in educational contexts. The volume frequently uses ‘educationscape’ as evolved from ‘schoolscapes’ (which again developed throughout different periods). Whatever term is preferred, however, it seems to be obvious that an application of the LL in education may take place at all levels and should therefore be labelled in accordance with the individual study.

A frequent topic of the chapters is the use of the LL to develop respect for multilingualism, both relating to autochthonous languages and revitalisation processes (as in the Māori case in chapter 3 or the Sámi cases in chapters 6 and 9), and to migration-dominant multilingualism as in the schools in Italy (chapter 4) or Switzerland (chapter 7). The role of national languages, of English, or of other languages frequently taught in formal education, in contrast, is discussed only rarely – with the main exception being the investigation of Latvian in L1 textbooks in chapter 11. As the chapters have shown, however, there is great potential to use the LL for studying links between all types of languages used in specific local contexts and the co-existence of languages – with multilingual

signs reflecting (often) multicultural contexts. At the same time, LL research in educational spaces could also be linked even more to the plurilingual repertoires of the children or other learners.

In spite of its richness in studies, contexts, and approaches, a few critical issues of the volume should also be mentioned here. As expected in a volume of this size consisting of 13 chapters, there are relevant aspects which are not covered. For instance, connections to literacy and pluriliteracies or deeper insight into exploring differences between reading in the LL and reading traditional texts are missing. Also, there is little discussion of structural aspects of languages in the public space relating to, for example, questions whether educational spaces have specific structures in common or which structures in the LL are specifically suitable for analysis during language teaching. Similarly, the chapters do not reflect how educational spaces may also be used for understanding language use for marketing purposes, for example, or for designing multimodal information or analysing architecture and broader city spaces (the latter in spite of the frequent application of Lefebvre's space theory). There is also a lack of discussion of virtual LLs in teaching and sociocultural perspectives frequent in LL studies as part of cultural studies going beyond language (e.g., time-space relations, stereotypes, language and gender) are rather underrepresented. Readers should keep in mind, however, that many of these aspects have been discussed in other volumes on the LL and education.

A final critical issue should be mentioned here and address a technical aspect: The illustrative pictures in the book might at times have been more carefully chosen by the editors before printing. Unfortunately, details in some of the pictures are very difficult to discern, including aspects which are relevant for the discussion. It is certainly a difficult decision whether to print pictures in colour, since this usually involves far higher printing costs. But in a book on a topic like the LL with its focus on publicly visible signs and their reception, and in particular in cases where the text discusses topics like colours as markers of educational practices, greyscale illustrations obviously do not always allow all important aspects to be recognised.

A remark should also be added here about the different approaches and academic backgrounds of the authors. As common in social sciences, it should be kept in mind that the chapters obviously reflect the authors' individual experiences and stances. For instance, some aspects of the discussion of 'culture' in chapter 12 on the authenticity of Chinese culture in the US seem to be rather obvious and may lack relevant aspects of understandings what 'culture' might mean (but then, this does not seem to be so obvious for the students who were involved in the project discussed). It is also interesting that the understanding of

'democracy' in chapter 10 is very much based on the Swedish (quite inclusive and far-reaching) conceptualisation of the term. Moreover, the interpretation of the 'Speak Dutch' campaign in chapter 7 might surprise some readers since the campaign's intention is essentially to provide migrants with better ways to be integrated into Flemish society. In contrast to the Flemish study, the potential contradiction of aims between promoting the main language of society for integrational purposes, and respect for migrant languages is discussed in a more balanced way in chapter 2 regarding the youth club in Austria. In addition, it is noteworthy that there is also some contradiction between the chapters: for instance, chapter 5 criticises autonomous and self-reflexive learning in Hong Kong as part of a perceived 'neo-liberal agenda' – and the author does not seem to reflect on a potential bias because of his own ideological stance which he expresses very clearly. In contrast, chapters 9 and 10 explicitly appreciate the potential of LL projects to develop learner autonomy and independent, self-reflexive thinkers. But, as emphasised in the introduction, these examples of approaches and stances just show how diverse the LL field is, and researchers and authors always reflect their diverse own backgrounds and convictions, even if that implies that it is not always easy to maintain the highest possible level of academic neutrality.

In light of all these aspects, the volume is therefore a useful addition to other collections on LL studies in general and on LL and education in particular. The structure of the volume with its two parts indicates how educational spaces may be an object of exploration, as well as being open to use as a subject to base one's own educational practices and research on. The case studies provide food for thought and invite the implementation of similar studies in other contexts or the application of the ideas in teaching in other situations. The wide range of topics, research directions, geographical contexts, and methodologies is highly suitable as a fresh, state-of-the-art overview of, if not all, many current approaches. At the same time, the chapters allow deep insight into smaller communities and micro-situations for exploring the co-existence of local, indigenous, national, migrant, and international languages. In this sense, the volume shows once again how the LL approach is useful for studying authentic environments with different kinds of language constellations and for building bridges between these environments and educational practices and institutions.

Complemented by the theoretical summary in the introduction, and the outlook in the final chapter, the book is therefore an inspiring read for anybody interested in LL studies, as well as an enriching source for educators who have not yet incorporated the LL approach into their teaching – in addition to other volumes which provide insight into other educational LL approaches and

methodologies. The book is thereby a highly solid contribution pointing to the integration of two fields: linguistics (mostly sociolinguistics and applied linguistics) and educational sciences. In line with, for instance, Nicholas and Starks (2014), the volume enhances bridges between the two fields while emphasising cognitive and social aspects as highly interrelated concepts in language learning. In this book, we see a continuity of such approaches which include deeper practical ideas. In this way, the volume will hopefully contribute to spreading the word about the benefits of LL studies not only in linguistic but increasingly also in the educational sciences and other academic disciplines.

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