

## Book Review



Holger Schmitt, *Language in the Public Space: An Introduction to the Linguistic Landscape*. Independently published by the author, 2018. 205 pages.

You're not likely to find a copy of Holger Schmitt's *Language in the Public Space: An Introduction to the Linguistic Landscape* on the shelves of your favorite academic bookstore but it is available on Amazon for under U.S. \$20. The author of this independently published volume states in the Preface, "No previous experience with LL studies is required but readers should have a general background in linguistics" (p. 8).

A cursory glance at the seven and a half page bibliography at the end of the book suggests that the author is familiar with much of the literature conducted during what might be called LL 1.0, from the publication of the special volume of the *International Journal of Multilingualism* (3.1, 2006) later reproduced as a stand-alone book by Multilingual Matters (Gorter 2006) through the publication of several later collections primarily from the regularly occurring Linguistic Landscape workshops (e.g., Shohamy and Gorter 2009, Shohamy *et al.* 2010, Hélot *et al.* 2012, Gorter *et al.* 2012). At the same time, serious omissions, such as Jaworski and Thurlow's 2010 *Semiotic Landscapes*, anything appearing the international journal *Linguistic Landscape*, and the important work of precursors of LL studies such as Spolsky and Cooper 1991 and, with specific reference to Thailand, Smalley 1994, suggest that the coverage of the field might be a bit narrow and somewhat dated.

The book contains fourteen chapters including the "Introduction" and "Conclusion." The remaining twelve chapters are divided into five sections: Core Topics, Grammar, Texts and Contexts, Variation and Change, and Applied Linguistic Landscaping. Each chapter contains a section at the end labeled "Reflections," containing questions for the reader to consider. Answers to these questions are presented in a separate section following Chapter Fourteen. The book contains no topic or author index.

In the "Introduction," Schmitt adopts a narrow definition of linguistic landscape, namely "all those manifestations of written language in the public space that are designed to be potentially read by multiple viewers simultaneously." (p. 12) He thus explicitly excludes such tokens of the linguistic landscape as leaflets and newspaper articles even if posted on bulletin boards. On the other hand, he does not exclude other venues for written language in the public space, such as writing on vehicles, clothing and bags, tombstones, stickers, tattoos, graffiti, etc., which he claims 'have received little or no attention in LL studies so far' (p. 12), though by the publication date of the volume under review, the field has seen a number of analyses of these phenomena.

The three chapters listed under the section "Core Topics" are: "Multilingualism," "Writing systems," and "Onomastics." Chapter Two, "Multilingualism," focuses on how the languages in multilingual signs are represented in terms of their relative position and prominence, how do they reflect the languages of the community, the policies of the presiding government, the pragmatics of the intended readership and the phenomenon of globalization. The third chapter deals with the indexicality of both orthography and font. Chapter Four, "Onomastics," offers a taxonomy of naming practices, their role in branding and the issues in translating or transliterating names from one language to another.

The next two chapters concern issues of grammar in the linguistic landscape. The very brief Chapter 5 "Morphology" identifies a number of morphological processes typically found in the linguistic landscape: conversion, shortening (including abbreviations, initialisms, clipping and blending), and derivation. Chapter Six, on syntax, is equally brief and describes syntactic processes often employed in the linguistic landscape, such as ellipsis, bulleting and the use of recurrent formulaic lexico-syntactic patterns like "X to go" and "X 'n Y".

In the next two chapters, grouped together as "Text and Context", Schmitt moves away from a granular morpho-syntactic analysis of the language of linguistic landscapes to a slightly broader analysis of LL as discourse. In Chapter Seven "Signs as Text," he introduces the problematic notion, characteristic of many early LL studies, of top-down vs. bottom-up and relies on Beaugrande and Dressler's (2013) framework for text analysis to direct attention to the internal text structure of signs, arguing that cohesion is accomplished through rhetorical devices such as alliteration, parallelism, rhyme and intertextuality. Chapter Eight, "Context," draws on Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic and in particular speech act theory to explore the notion of context in LL research, though surprisingly there is no discussion either of the creativity of hybrid language (c.f., Huebner 2009) or of the importance of emplacement (c.f., Scollon and Scollon 2003).

The section on “Variation and Change” contains two chapters. The first, “Dialects, Puns and Rhymes,” presents a classic sociolinguistic distinction between the terms “language” and “dialect” but what is absent is any mention of the imbalances of power in the linguistic marketplace (c.f., Martin Rojo 2014). The chapter also contains a taxonomy of puns and rhymes in slogans and shop names. Chapter Ten, “Change,” concentrates on changes in the density, code and materiality of signs over time and the effect that may have on language change. Absent here is any discussion of social actors (c.f., Malinowski 2009) and their influence on language change.

The final three substantive chapters (11–13) are grouped under the heading “Applied Linguistic Landscaping.” In “Critical Linguistic Landscape Studies,” Schmitt draws on the work of van Dijk, Fairclough and Wodak to lay out the underlying assumptions of critical discourse analysis and the linguistic and graphic tactics used to influence readers of the LL. Chapter Twelve, on “Language Learning and the Linguistic Landscape,” reviews a number of pedagogically oriented studies that are designed to provide linguistic input to language learners. In Chapter 13, Schmitt provides some common sense tips for collecting photographic data. What is absent from this chapter is any discussion of the ethics of collecting photographs in the public space and the necessity to triangulate those data with data from, for example, interviews, questionnaires, historical documentation and contemporary media. In the “Conclusion” chapter, Schmitt suggests that the LL “deserves to be treated as a linguistic genre.” (p. 177) However, given the vast diversity of linguistic and other semiotic affordances found in the LL, it is hard to imagine how they would all conform to the conventional defining characteristics of a single genre (Swales 1990).

In short, the strength of this volume is in what Garvin (2019) aptly calls its “laser-like focus and analysis of micro-features of linguistic objects, albeit from a slightly positivist perspective.” (p. 105) At the same time, that is its greatest weakness. By viewing LL studies from a traditional sociolinguistic perspective, the book fails to recognize the interdisciplinary nature of both its roots and its contemporary theoretical and methodological trajectories.

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