BOOK REVIEW

Jaworski, Adam and Crispin Thurlow (eds.). 2010. *Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space*. London and New York: Continuum International.

Linguistic landscape (henceforth LL) research has, within the past few years, become an increasingly fertile area of study. A testament to its growth are the number of single-authored and edited volumes dedicated to the topic in the past six years, numerous articles in recent issues of such scholarly venues as *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language, The International Journal of Multilingualis* and *The Journal of Sociolinguistics*, and a whole issue of *World Englishes* (31:1, 2012) devoted to the topic.

Although its roots go back much further, the conventionally cited source for LL research is an article appearing in the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* in 1997 by Landry and Bourhis. They define, LL as the study of all environmental print that 'mark(s) the public space, including road signs, names of sites, streets, buildings, places and institutions as well as advertising billboards, commercials and even personal visit cards.' (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 24) Some years later, the earliest work on LL within applied linguistics appeared in colloquia at conferences of professional organizations like AAAL, AILA, and EUROSLA and in volumes such as Ben-Rafael et al. (2004) and Gorter (2006). Backhaus' monograph on the stops along the Yamanote train line in Tokyo appeared in 2007 (Backhaus 2007). The goal of these studies was an understanding of the socio-politico-cultural context of the LL

and of the sociolinguistic dimensions of language contact and language change.

Later work refined the methodology by addressing "the challenges posed by the sampling of empirical data, the complex task of defining a unit of analysis and subsequently devising categorization and coding schemes of the signs studied." (Lauer 2007:1) Additionally the scope of inquiry has broadened to include, for example, both the internet as access to the LL (Malinowski 2010) and the internet as the LL itself (Troyer 2012). In addition, an increasingly wide range of disciplinary perspectives have been brought to the investigations. In particular, the increasing use of qualitative approaches and critical discourse analysis has added depth to our understanding of the LL.

Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space, edited by Adam Jaworski and Crispin Thurlow, represents yet another step on the frontier of inquiry. In the title, the use of "Semiotic" rather than "Linguistic" and the subtitle "Language, Image, Space" reflect the influence of Kress and Leeuwan's Multimodal Discourse[1] and Scollon and Scollon's Geosemiotics.[2] The editors state in their lengthy introduction that their intention in this book is "to emphasize the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment." (2) They define the semiotic landscape as "any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making." (2) Their thorough

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[1] See more details about Multimodal Discourse in Kress and Leeuwan (2001)
[2] See more details about Geosemiotics in Scollon and Scollon (2003)

critique of the field of LL research through 2009 is followed by a description of the thirteen papers in the volume and an explanation of their sequencing, reflected in the subtitle of the book. The introduction concludes with a comprehensive bibliography, an invaluable resource for anyone embarking on LL research.

Each of the first five chapters of the book is written from a more "traditional" LL orientation, dealing primarily with language as socially situated practice. But each also pushes the field forward in its own way. In his study of Dublin, Jeffery Kellen proposes that LLs are not territorially defined but rather are "layered" and reflect social hierarchies. Domains identified for Dublin include the marketplace, "portals" (e.g., airports and train terminals), "the wall" (i.e. graffiti, temporary posters, and the like), the detritus zone (i.e., the transient effects of consumption and the discarding of language-labeled commercial goods), the community (social clubs, sports groups, religious units), and school (education at all levels, public and private). He argues that the analysis of Dublin's linguistic landscape as a single unit would fail to capture "the separate expectations operating in different frameworks" (56).

In his examination of the relationship between English and Manx on the Isle of Man, Mark Seppa extends the notion of LL beyond texts fixed in space to "mobile" public texts such as product labels, pamphlets, banknotes, stamps, tickets, handbills and flyers. He points out "the potential for drawing different conclusions depending where we draw the boundaries of the linguistic landscape" (73). At the same time, this raises the methodological issue of how to survey a landscape not fixed in space, and the theoretical issue of 'how prototypically 'public' they are (or are perceived to be) at different points in their trajectory" (74). He proposes ethnographic observation as a potential solution to this problem.

In Chapter Three, Nikolas Coupland asks "What forces and processes have conspired to give Welsh linguistic landscapes their particular contemporary characteristics?" (78) In addressing that question, he challenges the notion that the language of public signage indexes the actual spoken environment. Instead, it may reflect an "aspirational political ideology" (78). He identifies place names as "a significant focus for ideological work because they are very obviously metacultural resources. [They] have official status, appearing in authorized maps, guides and directories, and of course on road signs and on many commercial and public buildings" (81). But he also considers the language of T-shirts and distinguishes between what he calls core and peripheral texts, leading to a reconsideration of the "from above / from below" distinction" (97) made in earlier LL work. He concludes that all LL is generated from above, since "it is conditioned by language-ideological forces and strategies that find value in putting linguistic text into the visible environment for some particular purpose" (97).

The relationship between the visual language of signage and other systems of meaning making in Jamaica is explored in Susan Dray's chapter. In it, she confronts traditional conceptions of diglossia, and points out how the local Creole, while marginalized from a global perspective, within the local context, through a discourse strategy she calls

"conversationaling," influences perceptions of what it means to be Jamaican. A distinction is made between embedded signs, those which are usually hand-made and embedded within the social activity that is physically co-occurring, and disembedded signs, which "perform exchanges that take place at a different time and place from the activity and so communicate without the benefit of the context supplied by the activity" (109). The chapter shows that, despite a 2001 language policy designed to maintain status quo and hegemony of English, in practice hand-produced signs provide space for the vernacular, where institutional regulatory processes have little control.

Ingrid Piller looks at the globalization of the Basel sex trade through an examination of the LL surrounding it, including shop fronts, newspaper ads, escort agency websites and client blogs. She also focuses on portals for tourists—the airport, train station, border check points and public transportation. The study highlights the fact that the sex industry has become a key emblem of globalization and another sector where language and communication skills are key employment skills. Nevertheless, sexualization of travel spaces is played out in locally specific ways. In Basel, it is associated with high levels of mobility and multilingualism and in ways consistent with the specific discursive construction of Swiss tourism and Swiss national identity, specifically high-end quality and cleanliness.

The next chapters move further from the more traditionally linguistic toward the more solidly semiotic analyses of the public space. Alastair Pennycook expands on his earlier work on graffiti (Pennycook 2009) by examining hip-hop style pictures and stencil art which emerged as a counter-narrative in Melbourne prior to the 2006 Commonwealth Games. He maintains that the classification of graffiti as vandalism is a discursive move consistent with "a long history of discrimination along lines of class, race, gender and ethnicity that constructs the sullied other" (141). While he concedes that graffiti is an act of confrontation with authority over the ownership of the public space, from the point of view of the graffiti artist, it is public art. In fact, its production resembles medieval guilds with crews of masters and apprentices. He argues that "an understanding of *global graffitiscapes* in relationship to urban landscapes, space and movement, open up alternative ways of thinking about how we interact with cities" (143).

In Chapter Seven, Rodney Jones extends the notion of semiotic space to the attention structures that Hong Kong teens employ in their use of computers at home versus at school. The paper examines the impact of computers on their ability to orient themselves towards the physical space and people around them in the two contexts. At home, the attention is "polyfocal," shifting "rather rapidly among multiple activities in a complex cognitive and social dance" (156). In school, integrated into school-based literacy practices, computer use is monofocal and out of sync with both the technology and the ways students have learned to use it in their daily lives.

Thomas Mitchell examines how an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* uses the discourse of fear to mischaracterize the Latino community in the neighborhood of Beechview. The study illustrates that the discrepancy between the media representation and the actual size of the

113

population can only be understood by supplementing text-based analyses with ethnographic investigations of journalistic practice in general and of how reporters might experience the spaces reported on in the course of their work. By observing not only the visual landscape but also the language varieties heard while moving through the neighborhood, he, like Coupland, challenges the assumption inherent in much LL research that the quantity of signs in a language is directly proportionate to the ethnolinguistic vitality of the communityin which they appear.

Thurlow and Jaworski's chapter examines the marketing of leisure travel to demonstrate the powerful semiotic force of silence. While we often associate it with oppression (groups are "silenced" or "voiceless,"), Thurlow and Jaworski illustrate how, in elite travel ads, the use of minimal body copy, new-age poetry and metaphors, non-interactive participants, disengaged eye gaze, empty vistas, discrete font type and color saturation all serve to index the exclusive segregation and isolation of travel among the super-elite social class. Along the way, they point out the oxymoroa and paradoxes that riddle luxury tourist marketing: safe adventures, planned spontaneity, genuine fakes, casual elegance, exotic familiarity, affordable exclusivity, etc.

The next three chapters deal with iconic physical objects in the public space. Gill Abousnnouga and David Machin apply a multilevel analysis to eight war memorials in the UK. At the first level is a classic two-step analysis of denotation and connotation. The second level looks at metaphorical association, followed by an analysis of symbolic meaning and finally by a critical discourse analysis of the broader social values communicated

through lexical, grammatical and visual choices. As products of different eras in UK history, each monument indexes the ideals of "imagined common national unity and purpose" (219) pervasive at the times of their unveiling.

In their analysis of the Ha'apala monument on the beach in Tel Aviv, Elana Shohamy and Shoshi Waksman see an attempt to (re)write history and uncover several themes central to the national collective memory of Israel: "ownership of the space; reinforcement of a collective identity; a shared traumatic past as a basis for shared national future; and recruitment of the private for the public" (246). In remaking the history surrounding the British Mandate (1971–1947), the monument presents the British as traitors and oppressors who intervened to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state and ignore the fact that the British were allies during the war; nor is there any mention of the Palestinian Arabs who were living there at the time. The language of the site reflects the three distinct audiences for which it is intended: Hebrew for the local Israelis; Jewish English for Jews living abroad, especially in the US; and English for other international tourists. The paper highlights the role of tourist sites such as commemorative monuments in promoting national ideologies.

In their chapter on the architecture of four former Eastern Bloc cities, Irina Gendelman and Giorgia Aiello explore facades "as a genre of global communication to illustrate the ways in which they can be read. The analytical tools they employ to do that are layering (the placement of signs on top of other signs) and referencing (either to specific personages and events or to the cultural cachet that a particular style evokes). The

authors use photographs to analyze the visual composition of linguistic text, images and designs and show that, as with the Ha'aplala monument of Tel Aviv, building facades can also represent ideologies and power dynamics of the city.

In a rather dense final chapter, Ella Chmielewska contrasts her reactions to Warsaw, a city with which she has some familiarity, with Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing, cities new to her. Her report highlights the role that the experiencer's knowledge plays in recognizing, interpreting and responding to the semiotics of space. She concludes that "if we understand an object merely through its images we inevitably lift it from its context and abstract its surface(s), consequently disregarding a possibility of meaning present in the very attachment of the sign to place." Like the other papers in this volume and consistent with unifying theoretical framework of the book, she reminds the scholar of semiotic landscapes of the importance of context.

As one of the most recent volumes on Landscapes, linguistic or semiotic, *Semiotic Landscapes: Language, Image, Space* most certainly represents the direction in which the field is headed. Some linguists and sociolinguists may wish that some of the papers had paid as much attention to language as they have at image and space. But for anyone interested in pursuing this line of research, the diversity of topics, frameworks and methodologies employed here will definitely provide an invaluable resource.

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