

Book Review

Edina Krompák, Victor Fernández-Mallat, Stephen Meyer (Eds.) (2022).
Linguistic landscapes and Educational Spaces.
Bristol: Multilingual Matters. ISBN: 978-1-78892-385-9

This book belongs to the series by Multilingual Matters on 'New Perspectives on Language and Education', and it is one of my recent favourites. The topic of linguistic landscape and educational space has caught the attention of scholars in the last decade or so, and in my opinion, it is generating some very useful research that is accessible to teachers. It can help them become aware of their own schoolscape, and the messages that the schoolscape explicitly and implicitly gives. This book can also inspire them to adopt some very motivating tools in teaching.

The linguistic landscape in general is documented, described and analysed in a variety of ways. The most well-known examples are the analyses of commercial and public signs that tell a story about the multilingualism in many cities around the world, while bringing to the fore examples of translanguaging, multimodality and linguistic ideology (e.g. Putz & Mundt, 2018). Other research focuses on graffiti, stickers, menus, brand names, banners, and more rarely on street names and house names (e.g. Camilleri Grima, 2020). Similarly, the schoolscape is a semiotic category, and it can reveal much about the symbolic value of language use in education. For instance, the article by Krompák, Camilleri Grima & Farrugia (2020) presents a comparative analysis of parts of the schoolscape in two primary schools, one in Malta and one in Switzerland. As a result of this analysis, a number of lessons are teased out for teacher education, such as, ways of acknowledging the linguistic and cultural diversity of the learners, the representation on the walls of language and of cross-curricular relations between subjects.

This book covers two especially relevant areas in education. The first section consists of six chapters covering the assessment of linguistic and semiotic landscapes of educational spaces. The second section includes five chapters

that present the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical resource. In the first section one finds some engaging analyses of noteworthy contexts such as a Learning Club for Young Refugees in Vienna by Sabine Lehner, a Māori Immersion Early Childhood Centre by Harris et al., the schoolscape in Italy by Bagna and Bellinzona, the Health Service semiotic landscape on a university campus in Hong Kong by Fanglei Huang, Saami preschool educational spaces by Straszer and Kroik, and the blackboard as a space within a space by Krompák.

In the second section, the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical resource covers contexts such as language learning campaigns for linguistic integration of migrants in Flanders (by Vandembroucke), how to trigger pupils to consider democratic aspects of their environment in a primary school classroom in Sweden (by Sullivan et al.), outdoor space for effective learning for university students in Belgium (by De Wilde et al.), first language learning in Latvia using the linguistic landscape (by Burr), and an investigation of the linguistic landscape by advanced learners of Chinese (by Li).

I would like to focus on three chapters that I found particularly interesting. The chapter by Edina Krompák about the semiotics of the blackboard is an innovative piece of research, both in method and analyses. Krompák considers the blackboard as a space within a space. Whether it is black, as it still is in primary schools in Switzerland, or white, it occupies an important space in the classroom alongside the more high-tech interactive boards. In this chapter, Krompák reports on a longitudinal ethnographic study and brings together different data sources, namely visual ethnography and the perspectives of adults and children that make use of the blackboard. She answers relevant questions like: Which language is most prominent on the blackboard in a multilingual classroom context? Do languages coexist on the blackboard? Who writes on the blackboard, and why? How is the blackboard divided into sections, some of which include semi-permanent information? The answers provided by blackboard users are insightful, for instance, that the blackboard is a 'sacred' place, or that it may be 'troublesome' in relation to its semi-permanent functionality. Some of the uses of the blackboard ranged from behaviour regulation, subject content, structuring of lessons, learning strategies, and regional identity. Without a doubt, Krompák has succeeded in stimulating much thought and reflection about the blackboard as a semiotic space.

Another chapter I thoroughly enjoyed was the presentation of the linguistic landscape in a Māori Immersion Early Childhood Centre, with a view to the role of landscape design for language revitalisation, written by Leona Harris, Una Cunningham, Jeanette King and Dyanna Stirling. More than twenty years ago, New Zealand embarked on strengthening the visibility and use of the Māori language. This chapter narrates the story of the building of an Early Childhood Centre in 2005, landscaped in a style to reflect a Māori world, including native trees, an outdoor playground with a garden for food gathering, a performing area and a space indoors with no separation between the areas for children aged zero to five. Many significant cultural and linguistic artefacts were included to complete the traditional ecosystem highlighted in this centre, and to connect the education space and the children's home environment. It is striking how schoolscape and education can be interrelated.

The chapter by Solvita Burr tackles the issue of linguistic signs in textbooks for language learners of Latvian. She conducted an analysis of fifty-two textbooks published over a period of almost twenty years, following Latvia's independence. Burr studied the inclusion and the type of linguistic landscape signs included in the books, the language used, the function of the sign, the type of exercise associated with the sign and the topics related to the signs. She presents a detailed quantitative analysis, and explores one book in more detail. From Burr's research we come to appreciate that the inclusion of linguistic landscape signs in textbooks can be carried out purposefully to teach about language as a system and to illustrate the historical and cultural significance of text in the environment. It has additional benefits like deepening the first language learners' knowledge about linguistic diversity and multilingual practices, and to involve them as active co-creators of meaningful knowledge.

The book also includes a comprehensive introductory chapter written by the editors, where they provide complete picture of the field. The concluding chapter is written by well-known authors Durk Gorter and [Jasone Cenoz](#). They not only comment on the contribution of this book to knowledge, but they also evaluate the theoretical approaches and research methods that need to be further developed in the field. In the end, they conclude 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).

I strongly recommend this book to all educators. Among other aspects, this book will exemplify the relevance and importance of the myriad features of multimodality related to schoolscape and the linguistic landscape in education.

References

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