

Languages in motion: Multilingualism and mobility in the linguistic landscape

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This special issue of the *International Journal of Bilingualism* is concerned with the interplay of multilingualism and mobility in the linguistic landscape (henceforth LL). The various contributors to this special issue view LL studies as offering a way of investigating multilingualism and mobility. The LL is understood herein as an expression of multilingualism in society, a site where language, together with other semiotic resources, is involved in the symbolic construction of multilingual spaces. The LL is a crucial site in which the mobility of language resources can be mapped. This dual attention to multilingualism and mobility is motivated by recent theorising in sociolinguistics, as well as our collective interest in the ever-expanding discipline of LL studies. The aim is to bring together research that addresses complex theoretical and methodological issues within the emerging paradigm of the sociolinguistics of globalisation (Coupland, 2010; Heller, 2007; Pennycook, 2010) in which mobility plays a crucial role in the study of multilingualism (Blommaert, 2010). By investigating language practices in the LL, our focus is specifically on language in motion, a process by which different linguistic resources are in a state of translocality, meaning they are on the move across various trajectories of time and space (cf. Blommaert, 2010; Johnstone, 2010). Such a focus allows us to begin to examine what the consequences for languages may be through these processes of mobility enabled by globalisation. Specifically, we seek to investigate how these processes manifest themselves in the LL. We take an approach to LL research proposed by Stroud and Mpendukana (2009), where the LL embodies the social distribution of multilingual resources that in turn have consequences for language ideologies, discourses and practices. Throughout each of the articles we seek to trace the trajectories of mobile linguistic resources and analyse the consequences of these flows for language ideologies.

Recently, there have been calls for a more contextualised, historical and critical approach that can produce a 'greater understanding of the larger socio-political meanings of linguistic landscapes' (Leeman & Modan, 2009, p. 332). Indeed, the LL of a given community has become an influential site of contestation and negotiation, appropriation and resistance of multilingualism. The LL provides important clues to the nature of multilingualism in the community and often provides a more accurate account of the lived sociolinguistic reality of a given community than official language policies do. By viewing the LL in this way we see it as an important site for the investigation of how the processes of mobility are impacting on the linguistic hierarchy of given

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places and spaces. From this perspective, the current volume will investigate the discourse of multilingualism across four research sites located in Ireland, Finnish Lapland, Ethiopia and the United States. More specifically, our goal within this special issue is to examine what linguistic resources get (re) mobilised and the potential consequences of such mobility. With this in mind, each of the articles is orientated around the following set of questions:

1. What linguistic resources get mobilised and for what purposes?
2. What is the indexical value of these language resources?
3. How do varying language communities use the LL in different ways to address the issues of global flows and mobility?
4. In what way do the processes of language mobility stir language hierarchies and values attached to the language resources evident in these spaces?
5. What are the consequences for language ideologies?

Key to such an investigation is an understanding of language as a mobile resource, in line with Heller (2007, p. 2) who argues: ‘(...) language as a set of resources which circulate in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces and whose meaning and value are socially constructed within the constraints of social organisational processes, under specific historical conditions’. In turn the mobility of language resources focuses on their movement across various overlapping spatio-temporal frames (cf. Blommaert, 2010). Many scholars in the field argue that the processes of language mobility have provided new opportunities for the use of linguistic resources in unexpected ways that in turn has consequences for the local political economy of language.

Mobilising linguistic landscape studies

Much of the early work in the field of LL studies relied on Landry and Bourhis’ (1997) definition of the LL as: ‘The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the LL of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration’ (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25). Landry and Bourhis outlined two principal functions for the LL, an informative function and a symbolic function, and advocated the use of LL data in the study of issues of ethno-linguistic vitality and language policy and planning. Traditional approaches to LL studies have largely focused on Landry and Bourhis’ binary approach and have examined issues such as the counting of languages in order to uncover the hierarchy of linguistic resources in multilingual settings; and the global spread of English and the differences in language use in public and private signage (cf. Backhaus, 2007; Shohamy, 2006; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). While many significant and fruitful studies have made a contribution to this approach to LL, there are many shortcomings. One such shortcoming to the Landry–Bourhis approach, as outlined by Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, and Barni (2010), is how place is taken as fixed and static. Such an approach ignores the reality of space as dynamic, fluid and ever-changing. Our focus on mobility demands an interpretation of space in this way and for this reason we seek to interpret the LL within the context of a given moment in time.

A second shortcoming to this traditional approach to LL is outlined by Itagi and Singh (2002). They argue that the Landry and Bourhis’ definition of the LL is too limiting and that such studies should not show ‘a bias toward written language’. Indeed, this is an aspect of LL studies that has received much attention in recent times. Pennycook (2010) argues that space needs to be seen in a much more dynamic way and we need to account for the other resources that come hand-in-hand

with language in giving meaning to spaces and places. Perhaps it is for this reason that Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) privilege the use of the term *semiotic landscape* over LL. Their rationale for such an approach is based on the idea put forward by Kress and van Leeuwen that language is multimodal, that, as they argue: 'Language always has to be realized through and comes in the company of other semiotic modes' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1998, p. 186). By using the term *semiotic landscape*, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010, p. 2) emphasise: 'the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment'. Similarly, Sebba (2010) advocates the inclusion of mobile and unfixed signs in the study of the LL. He argues that the inclusion of signs on moving vehicles (e.g. buses), stickers, pamphlets, banknotes, etc., also plays a role in the interpretation of the world around us as more fixed and stable signage does. The issue of the materiality of the sign has also been identified as an important aspect of the LL. From this perspective, the diversity and variation of fonts, colours, design and texture, as well as the resources used to create the sign, make the materiality of LL (see, e.g. Edelman, 2009; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009). The materiality of a sign enables a sign to be contextualised as it may index its history and thus enables a more accurate reading of the sign. Such an approach marks a discursive turn in LL studies, especially when one considers that the materiality of a sign involves the interaction of time and space, an idea that is outlined by Scollon and Scollon (2003) in their study of *geo-semiotics*.

This leads us to another shortcoming of much of the early research on LL, the inclination to apply a solely quantitative approach to the analysis of such data. More recently a qualitative shift in LL studies has emerged that posits that the LL is a broader concept than the documentation of signs (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009, p. 4). One aspect of this qualitative turn has been the emergence of a critical discourse analytical approach to LL. For example, Coupland and Garrett's (2010) study on the presence of Welsh in the LL of Patagonia adopts such an approach, while Stroud and Mpendukana (2009, 2010) adopt a multimodal discourse approach to what they call a material ethnography of the LL of a South African township. Such studies show that LL research needs to move beyond the descriptive and distributional approaches favoured in earlier work and to consider the nuances of the given context, where local historical and symbolic processes are at play. All of these shortcomings are addressed in the articles that make-up this special issue.

Framing our approach to the study of linguistic landscape

It is important at this juncture to point out that in the context of this issue, the LL is understood as a collection of semiotic properties that index and perform a localised action. In line with Leeman and Modan (2010) we see the LL as a vehicle for the spatialisation of culture and commodification of space. Similarly, our use of the term LL encapsulates Coupland's (2010) understanding of the LL as *linguistic landscaping*, thus capturing the fluidity of the concept.

As Jaworski suggests in his concluding commentary to this volume, despite the diversity in theoretical approaches, each of the authors align themselves with the social construction of space and place and the role of the LL in giving spaces their meaning(s). The four articles support the idea that the LL is inherently ideological and apply various theoretical and methodological frameworks in an effort to uncover the various, often competing, ideologies that are at play in the specific site under study. The interpretative frameworks used range from sociolinguistics to discourse analysis. For example, Moriarty takes a frame-analytical approach drawing on the notion of interpretative frame as outlined by Coupland and Garrett (2010) in their study of Welsh-language signage in Patagonia. Pietikäinen draws on Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the *chronotope* and she identifies two clear *chronotopes* at play in the LL of Inari, namely *regulative* and *transitory*. Both these approaches

link to Lanza and Woldemariam's grounding of their work in the sociolinguistics of globalisation, while Hult's nexus analytic approach to his data brings in theoretical aspects relevant to the previous three articles.

Account of each article

The four articles that make up this volume take us on a journey from a rural fishing village on the Southwest coast of Ireland to the urban centre that is the city of San Antonio in the United States. While the cultural, socio-economic and political circumstances of places where these studies are located are massively divergent, they share many similarities. Each of these places function as peripheries and as centres. For example, Addis Abba is a large urban centre within the context of Ethiopia but it is on the periphery of the first world order. In contrast, Inari is based within the economic centre yet it finds itself on the periphery geographically speaking. Such a wide range of sites provides a unique opportunity for understanding how mobility works in spaces that are not typically the focus of LL research.

In the first contribution to this volume, Moriarty explores the LL of Dingle, a tourist town on the Southwest seaboard of Ireland. The study uncovers a number of contesting language ideologies that circulate in the LL of Dingle. The contest involves two key actors, namely the State and the local community, which are played out in a number of discourse frames that promote contesting language ideologies. The data suggest that the LL can be viewed as a dynamic space that is significant in indexing and performing language ideologies that are continually being contested and renegotiated.

In the second contribution, Pietikäinen explores multilingualism in public signs in Inari, a village in Finnish Sámiland with a particular focus on temporal and spatial dimensions of the signs. She applied the concept of chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981) and identifies two chronotopes through which language change, mobility and multilingualism are examined. Pietikäinen's analysis suggests that the LL often highlights spatial normatively and creativity, as well as local semiotic interventions, all embedded in the historical, political and economic conditions.

In the third contribution, Lanza and Woldemariam address the issue of language and globalisation by focusing on the use of international brand names and the use of English in the LL of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. They identify a curious phenomenon that has evolved in Ethiopia, which is the adoption of international brand names and imparting to them an Ethiopian identity. The article highlights a particular case of cloning an international brand that touches on the discourse of national identity and development. Both the use of English and international brand names in the LL serve to index modernity in this capital of the Global South, with the notion of mobility covering not only geographical movement but also movement on a social scale.

In the final contribution, Hult highlights the centrality of the LL in the discursive construction of multilingual settings. Drawing upon nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) together with principles of geosemiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), his study explores the discursive processes through which a particular image of San Antonio's linguistic sense of place, one of English-dominance despite its demographic bilingualism, is constructed. Hult's data were collected on San Antonio's highway system. His analysis reveals that English is normalised as an unmarked language for all aspects of the LL. This in turn feeds in to broader language ideologies in the US where the English language is privileged over any others. Hult's data reveals an ideology surrounding Spanish that limits to particular domains of use, predominantly the community and the family, about the status of English in the United States.

Sheller and Urry's (2004) new mobilities paradigm can be evoked here in order to understand the relevance of mobility in an analysis of the ideologies of multilingualism evident in the four

research sites. In many ways the type of mobility envisioned by Sheller and Urry serves to reconfigure the relationship between centres and peripheries. Such reconfigurations are evident throughout the four articles. For example, in Hult's paper his data shows how the Spanish-speaking community of San Antonio are ideologically constructed as transient migrant community and therefore find themselves on the periphery. Similarly, in Pietikäinen's article Inari is positioned as an international music centre despite its peripheral location. Another important aspect of Shelly and Urry's paradigm is the idea the mobilities create novel combinations. This is exemplified in the Ethiopian coffee-chain that uses the Starbucks logo discussed in Lanza and Woldemariam's article.

Avenues for further research

In this issue a number of avenues for future research are brought to the fore. A first point relates to our expansion of the traditional reach of sites in which LL research has been conducted. We suggest that linguistic communities that are peripheral in nature or in some way marginalised offer a rich source for LL data. The inclusion of two peripheral minority language communities adds to the growing literature in this field (cf. Gorter, Marten, & van Mensel, 2012; Pietikäinen, Lane, Salo, & Laihiala-Kankainen, 2011). With the exception of these studies, the possibilities for LL research afforded by the linguistic peculiarities of peripheral locations, where often the relationship between majority and minority languages are more flexible and fluid, have been largely ignored. We would argue that the similarities and differences between urban and rural sites are worth exploring because a further analysis of this nature can help us understand how mobility operates on a macro as well as a micro-level.

Secondly, we highlight the need for the qualitative turn in LL studies to be further expanded. In this issue we advocate a discourse analytical approach to LL data in a number of different guises. Such an approach is warranted as it gives further insight in to how the LL encodes spaces and places with meaning. Pietikäinen's focus on Bakhtin's chronotopes is particularly novel in this respect. Similarly, the link to many of the theoretical tropes of the sociolinguistics of globalisation, including scales and polycentricity, has enabled us to question what is happening in the relationship between language and meaning within the context of globalisation. Research that builds on a combination of these analytical and conceptual frameworks can help to further advance the discipline of LL research.

Our third contribution relates to what constitutes LL data. Hult's approach to his data collection where he literally collected his data while on the move provides a further avenue for LL data collection. The inclusion of stickers and flags in Moriarty's article answers Sebba's (2010) call for the inclusion of such data as key aspects of the LL. Similarly, Pietikäinen's focus on the materiality of the Hotel Kultahovai's sign adds a further dimension to LL data analysis, while Lanza and Woldemariam's analysis of semiotic and linguistic resources adds to this growing trend in the literature. The inclusion of ethnographic data has also allowed us to not only interpret the data but also to examine how these signs are perceived by end users.

In conclusion, we expect that the current issues contribute towards developing the discipline of LL further and will bring future dialogues on concepts such as mobility, translocality, etc. We hope that the current issue contributes to the growing body of work that examines issues related to the sociolinguistics of globalisation in the context of the LL. We would argue that research that takes an interpretative stance to the uncovering of ideologies present in a given LL at a particular moment in time is the best chance to contribute to understanding the process(es) of mobility and what becomes of language(s) therein.

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