Linguistic Landscape and the Language Classroom: Opportunities for Critical Engagement with Society, Technology, and Place

Language Learning and Teaching with Urban and Linguistic Landscapes Workshop
Columbia University, October 14-15, 2016

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Goals for the next 14 minutes...

of language teaching and learning in & with the linguistic landscape
The world doesn’t look or sound like this (anymore?)

Other Major Languages Spoken In The World:
1. French & Sango
2. French & English
3. Setswana
4. English & Others
5. Malagasy & French
6. Pashto & Dari
Postmodern globalization: “The multilateral flow of people, things, and ideas across borders has made more visible mixed forms of community and language in highly diversified geographical spaces” (Canagarajah, 2013)

Superdiversity as today’s urban condition: An increased level and kind of diversity building upon “increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants” (Vertovec, 2007)
The 5 C’s in context of multilingual texts, neighborhoods:

- Communication
- Cultures
- Connections
- Comparisons
- Communities - “Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting”
Communities as “The Lost C”?

“The most striking, and troublesome, feature emerging from this comparison [of student and educator rankings of the 5 Standards] is that for students the Communities Standards were first; for teachers they were last.”

- Magnan, Murphy, Sahakyan, & Kim, 2012, p. 177.

Elements that constitute:
- Ecosystem and geographic meanings
- Architectonic meanings
- Etc.

Spatial Design
Language must be understood not as an abstract system, but rather as a local phenomenon, arising first from the utterances of speakers in tangible places, at particular historical and ideological moments (Pennycook, 2010)

“the ongoing production of space-time is a rich process that draws upon multiple material and discursive resources, is imbued with relations of power, and is malleable through individual agency and imagination” (Leander & McKim, 2003)
a need for ‘emplaced’ L2 learning
In both senses of the word, “signs” tell us...

where we are, where to go, what to do—or not
In both senses of the word, “signs” tell us...

where you belong, and where you don’t
In both senses of the word, “signs” tell us...

where you belong, and where you don’t
“Signs” as manifestation of struggle to make meaning in place
“Signs” as manifestation of struggle to make meaning in place
What German word belongs on the white sign?
What German word belongs on the white sign?
Police Take Notice
No Loitering
Police Take Notice
No Loitering
Sin Merodear
Police Take Notice
No Loitering
No Se Permite Vagabundos
“The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government building combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration”

Landry & Bourhis (1997)
LL as an “independent variable” contributing to a group’s “ethnolinguistic vitality” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997)

The LL “signals what languages are prominent and valued in public and private spaces and indexes the social positioning of people who identify with particular languages (Dagenais et al., 2009, p. 254)
“we argue for an approach to language from the vantage point of the social circulation of languages across spaces and different semiotic artifacts”

“attention needs to be paid to how constructs of space are constrained by material conditions of production, and informed by associated phenomenological sensibilities of mobility and gaze” (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009)
A sampling: Research in linguistic landscape


Learning activities and competencies developed in LL projects

- Walking, observation, note-taking
- Photography, street recordings
- Recorded interviews
- Neighborhood drawings
- Mapping
- Writing, blogging
- Digital stories, video projects
- Classroom and/or community-based art projects, exhibits, installations
- Civic events, protests

Competencies
- linguistic
- pragmatic
- intercultural
- multimodal, multiliterate
- symbolic, critical, participatory
Building (upon) pedagogical approaches in the LL:
Project-based language learning

National Foreign Language Resource Center

6 Tenets of Project-based learning
1. Organized around real-world activities
2. Learner-centered
3. Collaboration as integral part of learning
4. Use of assessment with dual purpose: guiding the process and measuring progress
5. Instructor as knowledgeable participant and facilitator
6. Creation of real-world product involving real audience
- Byram’s (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence 1st “savoir” (savoir être): “attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (p. 50)

- Ethnographic methods applied to language learning offer students “…new ways of looking at the ordinary and the everyday, drawing out patterns from careful and extended observations of a small group.” (Centre for Languages, Linguistics, and Area Studies, University of Southampton course documentation)
Yale-Télécom ParisTech French/English telecollaboration (C. Skorupa, 2016)
NEW HAVEN

Settlement of Quinnipiac, afterward named New Haven, began on April 25, 1638 with the arrival of a large group from London by way of Boston, under the leadership of merchant Theophilus Eaton and the Reverend John Davenport. Later that year, the present downtown area was laid out and mapped in nine squares with a central common, now called the New Haven Green. This is the first example of a planned community in the United States. The town was invaded by the British in 1779 during the Revolutionary War, but escaped serious damage, despite extensive plundering. The City of New Haven was incorporated in 1784 and its first mayor was Roger Sherman, the only person who signed all four of the Nation’s founding documents: the Articles of Association, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution of the United States.

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Our challenge is to innovate here…
...while fulfilling our goals here
Thank you!

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