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BOOK REVIEW

Linguistic landscapes, multilingualism and social change, edited by Christine Hélot, Monica Barni, Rudi Janssens and Carla Bagna, Bern and New York, Peter Lang, 2012, 348 pp., SFR 68.00 / $72.95 (hbk), ISBN 978-3-631-61716-8

This book is a collection of presentations from a workshop on linguistic landscape which took place at the University of Strasbourg in May 2010. Apart from a foreword by Durk Gorter and a general introduction by the editors, there are 19 chapters (16 in English and 3 in French) under five headings. The classroom, the workplace, menus, brand names, political demonstrations, religious conflict and artwork are among the settings explored here. Highlighting uncommon settings, and employing different research methodologies from different disciplines, the book provides fresh insights into the study of linguistic landscape.

The five chapters in the section on 'Linguistic Landscape and Language Policy' consider government language policy and its effects on the linguistic landscape in both cities and rural areas. Monica Barni and Massimo Vedovelli compare signs in two cities, Rome and Prato, chosen to examine the effect, if any, of immigrant language usage on signage in the two communities. The second chapter is by Rudi Janssens; it surveys the linguistic battlefield between French and Dutch in Brussels, and the role of both local and state government in the encounter. Next, Deirdre Dunlevy compares the use of the minoritised language (Galician) and the state language (Castilian) in an urban area of Spain (A Coruña) and in a rural one (the village of Cee). Eliezer and Miriam Ben-Rafael reflect on the complexity of the three official languages (English, French and Dutch) used by the Flemish- and French-speaking communities in Belgium. In the last chapter, Georges Lüdi considers language practice in two companies in the Upper Rhine region. He concludes that the complex relationship between spoken and written language practices calls for further analysis.

'Linguistic Landscapes as Language of Dissent' also comprises five chapters. Elana Shohamy and Shoshi Waksman present data on diverse types of linguistic landscape sources (including photos, art exhibitions, flyers and interviews with activists) in Tel Aviv, looking at the discourse of the languages used. Corinne Seals documents written and spoken words, images and videos obtained from the National Immigration Reform March in Washington, turning them into a qualitative multimodal analysis. Next, David Hanauer examines the types of multimodal representational genres of three different demonstrations which were held recently in Pittsburgh. In the fourth chapter, Aura Mor-Sommerfeld and John Johnston explore the relationship between language and art in Belfast, and make use of the top-down and bottom-up concepts that give rise to spatial practices. Finally, Hirut Woldemariam and Elizabeth Lanza provide an account of the tension between different Christian religions – a traditional Orthodox Church and a Protestant religious community – in Addis Ababa.

Three chapters appear under the section heading, 'Linguistic Landscapes and Languaging.' Here the influences of English on the linguistic landscape of various countries are treated. Philip Seargeant investigates how English is used in globalised contexts, seeking to answer the question of what counts as 'English Language' in the first place. Next, Laurence Mettewie, Patricia Lamarre and Luk Van Mensel describe how sly puns and bilingual winks are reflected in local sociopolitical contexts in the francophone settings of Montreal and Brussels. The last chapter, by Carla Bagna and Sabrina Machetti, displays the results of a global research project examining the level of visibility and interaction of brands and menus related to the Italian language.

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The penultimate thematic section ('Reading the Linguistic Landscape in Different Contexts') offers three insightful chapters related to pedagogy. Kasper Juffermans and Jannet Coppoolse explore how visual messages in the public space of a Gambian village community are perceived and interpreted by people with different levels of literacy. Andy Hancock describes how student teachers analyse and interpret the linguistic landscape in Edinburgh in terms of cultural and linguistic diversity. Mariana Clemente, Ana Isabel Andrade and Filomena Martins present a study in a Portuguese primary-school context which illustrates the different strategies for language awareness in terms of linguistic, cultural and biological landscapes.

There are three chapters in the last section, 'Linguistic Landscape and the Mapping of Multilingualism (Continued).' They focus on the roles of languages played in tourism and its relationship with multilingualism. Heiko Marten, Sanita Lazzdina, Solvita Poseiko and Sandra Murinska explore the linguistic landscape of six medium-size towns in the Baltic States, and the roles played by different languages – especially English, as the dominant language, and Russian as the state variety. Next, Daniel Sáez Rivera and Mónica Castillo Lluch apply the linguistic-landscape framework to look at signs and languages found in Madrid. They focus particularly on multilingualism, on the rise since immigration increases from the 1990s. Lastly, François-Xavier Bogatto and Arlette Bothorel-Witz analyse the urban writings displayed on shop-front signs in the centre of Strasbourg.

This book looks at a wealth of new settings in the hope that they will inspire more researchers to explore the many relationships of signs and their surroundings. It is a useful tool for future study since the contributors have often drawn upon important, varied and sometimes innovative methodologies in their research and analysis – illuminating a vibrant research field that is currently moving in a variety of not always closely related directions. In sum, this thought-provoking collection makes a significant contribution to current linguistic landscape research, and it should be a starting point for taking the work into new fruitful areas.

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