

## The Impact Of Linguistic Landscape On Learning English As A Foreign Language

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### Abstract

This paper explores the concept of linguistic landscape (LL) and its application to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments, focusing on the range of multimodal texts displayed in public spaces. It discusses how these texts can inform pedagogy and the design of teaching resources in language and literacy education. Specifically, the paper examines how public, out-of-school texts can be utilized to develop students' critical language awareness and enhance their communicative competence. By incorporating images from the linguistic landscape into language instruction, the paper suggests that the language learning process can become more engaging and motivating for students. It addresses the challenge of insufficient exposure to the target language by highlighting the prevalence of linguistic and cultural representations in authentic contexts, thus advocating for the use of the linguistic landscape as a valuable learning space to facilitate language learning. Through active engagement with the linguistic landscape, learners develop critical language awareness and a heightened appreciation for the multifaceted nature of language in society.

**Keywords:** Landscape Linguistics (LL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Critical language awareness (CLA)

### Introduction

Research in linguistic landscapes underscores the potential for extending language learning beyond traditional classroom settings and into our everyday environments. By leveraging linguistic landscapes as valuable resources, we can offer learners a more inclusive, comprehensive, and dynamic learning experience. Through exposure to the language present in the streets we walk, the media we consume, the conversations we hear, and the signs we observe, learners gain insights into the practical application of language in real-world contexts.

Furthermore, the strategic utilization of linguistic landscapes can foster deeper language awareness and promote an integrated approach to learning that encompasses not only linguistic elements but also cultural nuances, norms, and ideologies. By engaging with linguistic landscapes, learners are encouraged to explore various facets of language, thereby enhancing their overall understanding and proficiency. Moreover, linguistic landscapes serve as catalysts for critical reflection and analytical thinking, prompting learners to consider the underlying meanings, contexts, and connotations of language use.

In essence, by connecting the power of linguistic landscapes, educators can facilitate a more dynamic and immersive language learning experience that not only enhances language skills but also cultivates a deeper understanding of language in its cultural and social contexts. Initially focused on six major types given below, linguistic landscape research has evolved to encompass a broader repertoire of elements, including digital texts, graffiti, murals, and language in virtual spaces, reflecting the influence of technological advancements and enriched perspectives in the field.

According to Shohamy & Gorter (2009), "fast emerging virtual spaces, the internet and cyber spaces". As defined by Gorter & Cenoz (2017) "electronic flat-panel displays, touch screens, and scrolling banners"; "Posters"; "moving signs such as protest banners, advertisements on buses, etc" are the concepts of linguistic landscapes laid by Gorter (2018), "warning notices and prohibitions"; "building names"; "informative signs (directions, hours of opening)"; "commemorative plaques"; "objects (postbox, police call box)"; and "graffiti" Spolsky(2009) are all included in the study of LL.

### Literature Review

The concept of linguistic landscapes (LL) originated with Landry and Bourhis (1997), who initially described it as the languages showcased on public and commercial signs. However, the scope of LL has since been broadened to encompass any visible written language, as articulated by Gorter (2013). This expanded definition includes inscriptions found on clothing, newspapers, and personal items, as noted by Barrs (2013). LLs can be approached from various perspectives, spanning from their creation and usage to viewers' perceptions of signs and individuals' relationships with specific linguistic landscapes, as well as their attitudes toward the languages depicted therein (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Chesnut, Lee, & Schulte, 2013; Gorter, 2013).

In today's increasingly globalized world, purely monolingual linguistic landscapes are rare, as acknowledged by Gorter (2013). Instead, LLs are often bilingual or multilingual, reflecting the linguistic diversity present in different social contexts or geographic areas. Consequently, English frequently emerges as a prominent language among those publicly displayed, especially in urban environments. This prevalence of English underscores its status as a global language and highlights its widespread use in various spheres of public communication worldwide.

As LLs continue to proliferate globally, the presence of English alongside other languages reinforces its significance in contemporary society, shaping both local and international discourse and interactions. Yulismayanti et al (2022) describe Landscape Linguistics as a study that focuses on the use of language in public spaces, both monolingual, bilingual and multilingual. Landscape linguistics helps analyze the use of language in public spaces, identifying formal and informal functions in Buru Island community.

Hatoss, A. (2019) confirms that linguistic landscape projects can improve intercultural competence by increasing learners' critical awareness of how identity, ideology, and attitudes influence language choices and interactions.

Carr, J. (2019) asserts Linguistic landscape studies explore the language in spaces, focusing on advertisements, billboards, and other signs, and have expanded to include the Internet. With language ideology, linguistic landscape is a novel field that allows sociolinguists to analyze how spaces are constituted through the language(s) employed in public signage as signs enable a dynamic process in which the language(s) used in these signs and those who pass by said signs influence each other to shape the landscape of their community (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009).

### **LL and critical thinking skills**

Using a linguistic landscape can indeed foster critical thinking skills by promoting metalinguistic awareness of linguistic diversity and encouraging ethics of respect towards multilingualism. Critical language awareness (CLA) advocates for questioning language as a carrier of ideology, particularly in deconstructing hegemonic notions of 'appropriateness' often perpetuated by mainstream language education, which tends to prioritize standard academic literacy (Fairclough, 1992b). By engaging with the linguistic landscape, learners are prompted to critically examine the socio-cultural and political implications embedded within language use, challenging dominant narratives, and promoting inclusivity and respect for linguistic diversity.

### **LL as a source**

Linguistic landscapes offer authentic contextual input within naturalistic settings, providing learners with a valuable source of language input to stimulate their understanding and representation of the target language. Typically, objects within linguistic landscapes serve both informational and symbolic purposes, representing various communicative contexts in which they are produced and displayed. For instance, commercial advertisements aim to persuade consumers, while warning signs serve to inform people. By engaging with linguistic landscapes, learners gain exposure to real-world language use and develop insights into the diverse communicative functions of language in different contexts.

The immersive language input provided by linguistic landscapes fosters a nuanced understanding of the target language, guiding learners towards mastery of not only its structural components but also its pragmatics, including nuanced aspects such as indirect speech, metaphors, and implicatures. Research by scholars such as Cenoz & Gorter (2008) and Dagenais et al. (2009) underscores the role of such input in enhancing both linguistic and pragmatic competence. By encountering diverse language use in real-world contexts, learners develop a deeper appreciation for the subtleties and complexities of language, thereby contributing to their overall language proficiency and communicative effectiveness.

Language input is indeed fundamental in language learning, but its significance goes beyond mere exposure. Characteristics such as quantity and frequency play vital roles in shaping learners' linguistic development. Linguistic landscapes offer a valuable resource in this regard, providing a rich source of language input that enhances both the quantity and frequency of exposure for learners. By immersing students in real-world linguistic environments, linguistic landscapes contribute to a more comprehensive and immersive language learning experience. This heightened exposure facilitates the acquisition of language skills and fosters a deeper understanding of language in context. Therefore, integrating linguistic landscapes into teaching methodologies can effectively augment language input, benefiting learners' language acquisition processes.

### **LL as perception**

According to researchers like Melo-Pfeifer (2023), Pennycook (2019) Pütz & Mundt(2019) states that items within a linguistic landscape offer tangible and visually accessible depictions of authentic language use in naturalistic settings, providing insights into the social and cultural nuances inherent in language variation. These representations illuminate the coexistence of language varieties alongside standard languages, showcasing the rich linguistic diversity characteristic of bilingual or multilingual environments.

In regions marked by bilingualism or multilingualism, linguistic landscapes offer abundant material to heighten language awareness, showcasing the prominence and vitality of different languages and varieties through signs and posters. These visual representations not only reflect the relative power and status of languages but also serve as a mirror of the sociolinguistic dynamics shaping the linguistic ecology of the area Aronin & Ó Laoire(2012) Barni & Barna, (2010) Cenoz & Gorter (2006) Landry & Bourhis(1997) Puzey(2012) Shohamy(2019).

Active engagement with linguistic landscapes is vital for learners aspiring to become bilingual or multilingual, as these experiences serve as crucial milestones in their language development journey. Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding learners through this process by providing them with guiding questions or structures to actively interact with the linguistic practices encountered in these landscapes. This includes tasks such as observing, analyzing, and reflecting on the linguistic features present in linguistic landscape items, as well as the communicative contexts in which they are embedded. By prompting learners to consider both quantitative aspects, such as the prevalence of certain languages or varieties, and qualitative aspects, such as register and discourse patterns, teachers facilitate the development of learners' awareness of the rich social and cultural nuances shaped by the diverse uses of the target language.

### **LL and multilingualism**

Multilingual individuals can navigate the relationships between these elements and make meaning of various forms of texts and information in different contexts (Pennycook, 2019). In our contemporary interconnected and digital world, the importance of multilingualism is increasingly recognized as it equips learners with the skills to effectively communicate, express ideas accurately, and critically evaluate information from various sources. Scholars like Burr (2022) Lozanoe et al (2020) emphasize that developing multilingualism encompasses acquiring digital skills, media literacy, critical thinking, and cultural comprehension. Scholars advocate for structuring multilingual activities around four knowledge processes: engaging in situated practice (experiencing), providing explicit instruction (conceptualizing), framing critically for analysis (analyzing), and implementing transformed practice (applying). This sequential approach ensures a comprehensive development of multilingual skills, enabling learners to navigate and thrive in today's complex information landscape.

By integrating task-based language instruction, teachers can create meaningful tasks such as vlogging, menu design, or urban street design, which naturally immerse learners in the practices of the linguistic landscape. These tasks serve a dual purpose within the multilingual pedagogical framework: during the "experiencing" phase, learners engage in situated practice, facilitating inductive learning and exploration of language use in authentic contexts; during the "applying" phase, learners apply their previously scaffolded instruction to real-world tasks, consolidating their learning and demonstrating their multilingual skills in practical situations. Through these task-based approaches, learners not only develop language proficiency but also enhance their ability to navigate and interact effectively within diverse linguistic environments.

### **Further Research**

Future research in the realm of language and literacy instruction should focus on the extensive and diverse linguistic landscape (LL) as a valuable educational resource. This avenue presents a promising area for teacher action research, necessitating educators to design, implement, and evaluate the impact of LL utilization on students' language competence and attitudes toward language. Given the significant influence of language attitudes on language learning, investigating how LL usage shapes students' perceptions, and learning outcomes is imperative. Additionally, exploring the integration of spoken text, such as taped advertisements, talk shows, and speeches, alongside visual and printed signage, provides rich opportunities for contrastive language exploration. Further research avenues could include examining readers' interpretations and understandings of the multi-lingual, multi-dialectal, and multimodal aspects of LL within their environment, offering insights to enhance language instruction and foster a deeper appreciation for linguistic diversity among learners.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the integration of linguistic landscapes into language learning offers a comprehensive and nuanced approach grounded in real-world experiences and cultural understanding. By immersing learners in the linguistic environment surrounding them, we provide them with additional target language input while fostering language awareness, multiliteracy, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, by engaging learners in actively shaping and contributing to these landscapes, we empower them to take ownership of their language learning journey. Achieving these objectives requires a commitment to purposeful pedagogical strategizing and execution. Let us embark on the pedagogical innovation of integrating linguistic landscapes into our approaches, enriching our learners' experiences with vibrant and immersive language learning opportunities.

Language teaching methodologies aimed at enhancing students' language awareness can play a crucial role in making students mindful of the linguistic features present in their landscape, which they may have previously overlooked. An effective pedagogical approach involves helping students recognize public spaces as arenas where various actors, such as advertisers and businessmen, exert influence in subtle and covert ways. By engaging with linguistic landscapes, students not only develop critical literacy skills but also improve their pragmatic competence, enabling them to use language appropriately in different contexts while remaining cognizant of the persuasive tactics employed within the landscape. Therefore, incorporating the linguistic landscape into language instruction can significantly enrich the learning process and contribute to the development of language proficiency and cultural competence among learners.

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