

Linguistic Landscapes

Visible language is widespread and familiar in everyday life. We find it in shop signs, advertising billboards, street and place name signs, commercial logos and slogans, and visual arts. The field of linguistic landscapes draws on insights from sociolinguistics, language policy, and semiotics to show how these public forms of language relate to multiple issues in language policy, language rights, language and education, language and culture, and globalisation. Stretching from the earliest stone inscriptions to posters and street signs, and to today's electronic media, linguistic landscapes sit at the crossroads of language, society, geography, and visual communication. Written by one of the pioneers of the field, this is the first book-length synthesis of this exciting, rapidly-developing field. Using photographic evidence from across three continents, it demonstrates the methodology and approaches used, and summarises its findings and developments so far. It also seeks to answer common questions from its critics, and to suggest new directions for further study.

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Linguistic Landscapes

A Sociolinguistic Approach

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Figure captions in this volume give the names of places succinctly. The lack of detail can create ambiguity: *Arlington* in Figure 1.2, for example, could be in Virginia, Texas, Massachusetts, or any other of the many locations detailed by O’Conor (2003), but it could also be in Gloucestershire (the inspiration for the American Arlingtons) or other locations in England and elsewhere. This list thus provides further information in order to locate the places referred to in the figure captions. Standard two-letter state abbreviations are used for locations in the United States, county names are given for locations in Ireland, and other territorial categories are given as appropriate. This information is indicative, not exhaustive. To facilitate searches for photographs of particular places, the relevant figure numbers are also given for each place.

Place	Jurisdiction	Figure
Albany	New York (NY)	1.10; 3.14
Amsterdam	Netherlands	3.10; 7.2
Annapolis	Maryland (MD)	5.5; 5.6; 6.5
Arlington	Virginia (VA)	1.2
Astoria	Queens, New York City (NY)	4.6; 4.12; 4.14; 4.16; 5.1; 5.6; 5.9; 6.5; 6.12; 7.3; 8.6
Bangor	Co. Down, Northern Ireland	4.13; 8.3
Beijing	China	4.5
Belfast	Northern Ireland	1.6; 1.8; 5.6; 6.14; 6.15
Berkeley	California (CA)	3.16
Bern	Switzerland	3.1
Brighton	Brighton and Hove, Sussex, England	1.5; 3.13; 3.16; 5.4; 5.7; 6.11
Carrickmacross	Co. Monaghan, Republic of Ireland	8.3
Champaign	Champaign-Urbana (IL)	3.7; 3.13; 4.18; 6.6
Charlotte	North Carolina (NC)	3.4
Chicago	Illinois (IL)	3.6; 3.12; 4.5; 4.9; 4.14; 5.1; 5.10; 6.3; 6.6; 6.9; 6.13; 7.5
Coeburn	Virginia (VA)	8.2
DCA airport	Washington, D.C./Arlington (VA)	1.4; 3.2
Dublin	Republic of Ireland	5.7; 5.13; 6.4; 6.6; 6.7; 6.8; 6.9; 6.12; 7.7; 7.9; 7.10; 8.1; 8.8; 8.1; 8.13; 8.14

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Place	Jurisdiction	Figure
Dundalk	Co. Louth, Republic of Ireland	4.10
Erbach	Hesse, Germany	4.16
Fränkisch- Crumbach	Hesse, Germany	7.6; 8.9
Fredericksburg	Virginia (VA)	6.4
Fukuoka	Chikuzen, Kyushu, Japan	3.9; 3.11; 3.16; 4.2; 4.10; 4.17; 5.13
Galway	Galway city, Republic of Ireland	1.12; 1.13; 3.14; 4.6; 4.18; 5.5; 5.11; 6.1; 6.10; 8.4
Grey Abbey	Co. Down, Northern Ireland	1.7; 8.3
Haifa	Israel	3.3
Hong Kong	Hong Kong, China	4.3; 6.10
Jonesborough	Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland	7.3
Kilkeel	Co. Down, Northern Ireland	1.7; 5.8
Kilkenny	Co. Kilkenny, Republic of Ireland	5.4; 6.12
Liverpool	Merseyside, England	3.2; 3.5; 3.8; 4.13; 5.12; 6.13
London	England	4.7; 4.17; 6.2
Michelstadt	Hesse, Germany	1.4; 3.9; 3.16; 4.18; 5.11; 6.6
Montreal	Quebec, Canada	1.8; 3.1; 3.12; 4.1; 6.13; 7.2; 7.4; 8.5
Newry	Co. Down, Northern Ireland	3.9; 3.15; 8.7
Norton	Virginia (VA)	3.14
Oak Park	Illinois (IL)	4.11
Rosh Pina	Israel	3.13
Rostrevor	Co. Down, Northern Ireland	1.7
St. John's	Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada	4.15
Strasbourg	Bas-Rhin, France	1.14; 3.12; 4.11; 6.9; 7.8
Vienna	Austria	3.15; 6.9; 6.13
Warrenpoint	Co. Down, Northern Ireland	1.6; 5.8; 6.12
Wexford	Co. Wexford, Republic of Ireland	8.10
Woodside	Queens, New York City (NY)	6.13

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Preface

Not long ago, the phrase *linguistic landscape* carried with it only a general metaphorical sense of having something to do with languages and their distribution or role in society. Just as people speak of the *political landscape*, the *employment landscape*, and the *football landscape*, talk of the linguistic landscape appeared as no more than a recognition that languages were not uniform, either formally or in their positions of relative power and prestige, in societies across the world. Since the early part of this century, however, the phrase has taken on a more specific sense in the academic world to refer to the display of language in public, and now designates one of the fastest-growing research areas in such established fields as sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Not only do conferences, journal articles, and published volumes continue to expand our understanding of the linguistic landscape (or LL), but discussions of the LL regularly make their way into more general sociolinguistics introductions for students: Androutsopoulos (2014), Lou (2017), and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021: 213–17) provide some recent examples. The expansion of the field's geographical coverage and conceptual diversity provides an opportunity for reflection on fundamentals, methodology, and future research developments. The reflections presented in this volume are not directed towards the LL of any one place, but towards the construction of a more general notion of the LL as a way in which human beings relate language to space. Joining together such fundamentals as language, social relationships, and space determines that the origins of the LL lie deep in historical time and have universal reach. No single volume can address comprehensive evidence from within this universal framework, but this volume is intended as a contribution towards the development of a distinctive sociolinguistic perspective that is open to the analysis of the LL whenever and wherever it may be found.

The plan of this volume follows a path which starts with a panorama of LL data, taken from fieldwork of mine that is described below. The selection is designed to illustrate several types of problem which I consider to be fundamental to the LL: code choices in the display of language, the relation of language to space, discourse in the LL, and the historical dimension of the LL. Every reader will have their own prior experience of LL, but the panorama in

Chapter 1 provides a common frame of reference for many of the problems which LL research encounters in looking at the real world. Chapter 2 aims to develop a sociolinguistic perspective for the LL, reviewing the development of the field and advancing reasons for maintaining *linguistic landscape* as the term of choice for a particular approach to the display of language as an act of discourse in public. The next three chapters focus on elements which are so fundamental to the LL that they are often taken for granted: roughly speaking, they concern *codes* (Chapter 3), *space* (Chapter 4), and *people* (Chapter 5). This separation is purely for the purpose of analysis, so that each chapter can focus on examples which bring a particular element more clearly to the fore. In the real world of signage and other such inscriptions (graffiti, stickers, labels, tattoos, T-shirts, etc.), it is precisely because these elements are brought together in the LL that they achieve their communicative impact.

These chapters build towards what I consider to be the fundamental point of the LL, which is discourse (Chapter 6). The inscriptions which capture our attention as LL researchers do not exist by accident, and they do not exist simply for the sake of form. They mediate, in the literal sense that they are placed in the middle, between someone who has an expressive goal and someone who perceives an expressive goal from the inscription in place. Understanding the LL as discourse makes it possible to account for a great deal of what we see in the LL, whether it has to do with the way a prohibition is phrased in signage or the simultaneous display of two very different names in reference to the same street. It is the key to understanding genre in the LL and to disentangling the apparent linguistic chaos of many urban vistas. Perhaps most important of all, it drives home the point that the LL cannot realistically be restricted to written language, but also includes a spoken discourse element. Though the discourse of the LL shares many features with face-to-face discourse, it is also strikingly different from it, since LL discourse takes place across a gap of time which may be anything from momentary (as in a note on a shop door which says ‘closed, be back in 5 mins’) to one which spans centuries or millennia. In Chapter 7, I thus turn to the time dimension in the LL, considering not only different ways in which the LL marks the past, but the complexity of determining the ‘observer’s present’ in the LL. Chapter 8 then pulls these points together, suggesting a general model for the LL which includes text, the material aspect, and discourse viewed in the flow of time and the creation of social space. From this point of view, I consider some methodological problems arising from the use of LL photographs as evidence, and the role of interviews and data quantification in going beyond what photographs can tell us. Finally, I give a brief consideration of some further areas of LL research, especially the LL in relation to online and computer-assisted communication and the representation of the LL in visual art and literature.

By way of an informal autoethnographic introduction to the photographs, which are an essential part of this volume, I stress, as I also discuss in Chapter 8, that there is no substitute for direct, personal experience of the LL when doing primary LL research. There is relatively little discussion of the ethnographic element of data collection in LL studies, perhaps because researchers have not interacted with people in the locales which they study or perhaps because the wider experience of data collection is not considered part of the subject. If describing the frequency of particular code choices in the LL is the main goal, then the experience of finding the signage or the activities which went with this experience does not count as relevant information. Given the space limitations of this volume, I have not ventured into this ethnographic approach apart from a few brief vignettes which have arisen in the course of fieldwork: further development from this perspective forms an important agenda for another day.

Because of the importance which I attach to first-hand observation, the selection of photographic data is weighted towards those places I know best. Naturally, Ireland has loomed largest in my sights. In particular, I lived in Galway as a student from 1976 to 1977 and revisit it regularly, I have lived in Dublin since 1979, and I have had various connections with Belfast since the 1980s. I have previously published reports on aspects of the Irish LL in regard to tourism, immigration and minority language use, language policy, globalisation, and political borders in Kallen (2009, 2010, 2014, 2016b); Kallen and Ní Dhonnacha (2010) offers a comparative perspective on the LL, globalisation, and inter-language display in Ireland and Japan.

A second focal point for data collection is North America. The Chicago photographs come from a fieldwork visit in 2017, but they follow from my prior involvement with the city. I grew up in Arlington, VA (lightly referenced here by photographs from Virginia and Maryland), but regular trips to visit family in Chicago gave the city a special prominence in my childscape – to use a term from Porteous (1990), which I discuss further in Chapter 8 – that owes a great deal to the display of language diversity. Greek was especially prominent because it was the language of my maternal grandparents, but signage in Italian, Polish, Chinese, Spanish, and other languages fascinated me, and told me that the question ‘who lives here, and what do they do?’ could not be answered by reference to English alone. The route of the Chicago photo expedition also overlaps in part with the ‘Addams area’ (Suttles 1968), which is now completely changed by urban redevelopment but is where I first did field sociological observations as an undergraduate student in 1973. Another set of American photographs comes from the 2017 ‘Documenting Linguistic Landscapes’ research trip referred to in the Acknowledgements. This trip focused on Astoria in the borough of Queens in New York City; Albany,

NY; and Montreal. Astoria is one of the most multilingual urban districts in the world, and could easily serve as the basis for another volume; I have focused here on markers of Greek language and community from among many possible themes. As I discuss in Chapter 2, Montreal has played a major role in the development of LL research, and demonstrates a distinctive interaction between the LL and language policy at federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Albany provides neither the intensive multilingualism of Astoria nor the elaborated planning measures of Montreal, but it retains onomastic links to historical Dutch settlement and shows its own contemporary sociolinguistic concerns. The photographs here can only represent a small portion of the fieldwork evidence.

Most of the other photographs also come from places I know from repeated visits for personal or professional reasons: Amsterdam; Strasbourg; Michelstadt, Erbach, and Fränkisch-Crumbach; Brighton, London, and Liverpool; and St. John's all fall into this category. A few other photographs are from places I have only visited once, whether as a tourist or in connection with an academic conference, but only photographs 3.13B and 4.5B come from places where I have not been.

As I discuss in Chapters 2 and 8, the orientation of this volume is towards the *linguistic landscape* concept, rather than a notion of *semiotic landscapes* or the hybrid *linguistic/semiotic* landscapes. My argument is neither (a) that the only elements of interest in the LL are those which display languages in the conventional sense, nor (b) that other means of expressing meaning (such as colour, visual imagery, dance, or smell) should be treated as languages. Rather, I proceed on the assumption that language in the lexical-grammatical sense – encapsulated in Chomsky's ([1968] 2006: 23) view that 'a person who has acquired knowledge of a language has internalized a system of rules that relate sound and meaning in a particular way' and that it falls to the linguist 'to construct a correct grammar' which represents this knowledge – is a useful minimal point of reference for understanding the entry of language into the landscape of public space. The lexical-grammatical concept is *useful* because it accounts for much of what we see in the LL, but it is *minimal* because the signage and other texts which form the focus for LL research are not simply the product of grammars. They are actualised, contextually dependent expressions of communicative intent. The actualisation of any LL inscription relies on the display of non-linguistic elements, which may be as simple as the use of paint on a wall or as elaborate as large-scale signage that uses colours, sign shape, visual images, special letter shapes, flashing lights, and other means of expressing a message. Because of the display element, LL texts are not constrained by the same rules as those which set norms for written language in other contexts. Wordplay, cross-linguistic influences of many kinds, deviations from standard orthographic practices, and integration with visual

imagery are expected in much of the LL, and can be more highly valued than strict adherence to the prescriptive rules of the language. There is thus no reason to expect the LL to contain linguistic expressions only from linguistic codes that have a socially recognised written form. The intimate relationships between language and other means of *semiosis* – the expression of meaning – therefore present a puzzle for understanding the *linguistic* in the LL.

The answer to this conundrum lies in taking linguistics back to an earlier sense of language as one of many ways of engaging in semiosis. Saussure's ([1916] 1974: 66) view of language took it as fundamental that 'the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image'. In more technical terminology, Saussure (1974: 67) designated the 'concept' as the *signified* (*signifié* in French) and the 'sound-image' as the *signifier* (French *signifiant*). The relationship between signified and signifier – arbitrary in the sense that there is no natural connection between the two, but one which arises by social convention – is a fundamental feature of the linguistic sign. Though Saussure did not live to elaborate what the semiology of non-linguistic systems would look like, the notion of the arbitrary nature of the sign in language helps to show its relationship to other sign systems, but does not limit the notion of language to grammar alone.

A different approach to semiosis comes from the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. While Peirce did not give language the same central position that Saussure gave it, his concepts of the sign in semiotics also offers much for the LL. To summarise a complex, and at times self-contradictory, line of argument, Peirce understood the fundamental semiotic relationship to consist of three parts: the sign, formally a '*representamen*'; an idea which is meant to be conveyed, formally the '*object*' of the sign; and an '*interpretant*', which, as Merrell (2001: 28) explains it, 'mediates between the representamen and the semiotic object in such a way as to bring about an interrelation between them'. This system differs from Saussure's, and though the details do not concern us here, Peirce's *object* is roughly similar to Saussure's *signified*, and the *representamen* has many of the features of Saussure's *signifier*; Peirce's *interpretant*, however, separates out the meaning element in a way that contrasts with Saussure's notion of the linguistic sign as relating the *signifier* and the *signified* directly. The importance of Peirce for LL research is that since his concern was with meaning more generally, his work provides a well-known (at least in its simplified version) three-way division of ways in which a representamen can represent its object. The ways in which one thing (a sound, a gesture, a hat, a tattoo, a drawing, a mark on paper, etc.) can convey another – an idea or intention – are, in this system, described by the relationships of the *symbol* (where the relationship between the two is arbitrary), the *index* (where there is a causal, historical, or other such connection), and the *icon* (based on a physical resemblance). Burks (1949: 674), comparing uses of the word *red*,

the act of pointing to a tree, and the use of a drawing of machinery, summarises this trichotomy succinctly:

A sign represents its object to its interpretant symbolically, indexically, or iconically according to whether it does so (1) by being associated with its object by a conventional rule used by the interpretant (as in the case of ‘red’); (2) by being in existential relation with its object (as in the case of the act of pointing); or (3) by exhibiting its object (as in the case of the diagram).

Language in this scheme is not the only symbolic system – traffic lights, flags used to signal the start or finish of races, and musical and numerical notation systems are also based on symbolic relations – but it exemplifies the symbolic well. Other means of semiosis, though, are constantly present in our world, and very often in mixed form. Much semiosis arises from intentional human activity, but in its widest sense, humans are constantly interpreting other messages as well: smoke as a sign of fire, particular smells as a result of food having turned rotten, and a rash as a symptom of a particular illness are all indexical signs which we interpret as having particular meanings, even though they have not been emplaced intentionally by someone else.

The semiotic conundrum, then, comes down to recognising that in the LL, the term *linguistic*, and with it *language*, necessarily include all manner of linguistic variation and cross-language effects, and is to be understood within a broader context which includes iconicity and indexicality as means of semiosis. I rely especially on the notion of indexicality in the general sense that one thing can ‘point to’ another, especially by historical and social connections. This approach maintains a focus on language – taken as a universal cognitive faculty which is also inherently social – without losing sight of the broader semiotic picture, and without allowing that picture to obscure the specific contribution which language makes to the expression of meaning. It is, in short, only when our view of language makes due recognition of semiosis in general that maximum value comes from the term *linguistic landscape*.

One consequence of this approach is that some specific terminological choices are necessary. Because of the way *sign* is used in semiotics, I refer here to such things as road signs, commercial signs, and street name plaques as *sign units* in order to avoid ambiguity. Any unit which constitutes part of the LL will consequently be referred to as an *LL unit*. This term provides a way of referring both to sign units and to other elements in the LL, such as graffiti, which are not signs in the conventional physical sense. I will use the term *sign instigator* to refer to the person or people who are responsible for a particular LL unit, recognising that many such units are put together by a team of people who may include planners, writers, graphic designers, sign makers, bill posters, and others. The person who writes a sign text is often not the person

who commits it to paper or plastic, or the one who attaches it to a shopfront, and though these different levels of agency present important micro-level questions (e.g. when a signwriter may be required to write in a language they do not understand), they are not considered here. In turn, LL units are designed to be perceived and interpreted by people. To call such people ‘sign readers’ privileges the literacy element in ways that are not always accurate or necessary, so I use the term *sign viewer* to refer to any individual who perceives and interprets, by whatever means, an LL unit. Like *sign*, terms such as *icon* and *symbol* are not used in their popular sense but in the semiotic tradition of Peirce.

I turn finally to some more technical matters. Many languages and writing systems are mentioned in this volume, and it is not possible to discuss them in detail: Cruttendon (2021) provides an especially informative linguistic overview of writing systems in languages around the world, which includes illustrations from the LL. Of particular concern here is the variety of character sets found across different writing systems. Japanese LL material, which is discussed in the following chapters, for example, includes the four different character sets of the Japanese writing system: *kanji*, based historically on the Chinese writing system; *hiragana* and *katakana*, which are syllable-based character sets used (roughly speaking) for grammatical functions and for foreign words and names, respectively; and *romaji*, which represents the Roman alphabet as used in Japanese writing. Chinese is represented in both its traditional letter forms (now found especially in overseas Chinese contexts) and in the simplified character sets that were introduced in the People’s Republic of China in 1956 and 1964. In all these cases, there can be sociolinguistic significance attached to the use of one character set or another, but usually I will simply note the choices rather than explore them in detail. Most of the presentation of material follows general practice in linguistics: sample words are in italics, with English translations in single quotation marks: Irish *crann* ‘tree’ provides an example. I use angle brackets (< >) to indicate not only letters of the alphabet and spellings, as is common practice, but to quote from sign units. In these quotations, I make every effort to use the letter shape of the original sign unit as part of the quotation. Within quotations, I have followed emphasis as in the original source, neither adding it nor taking it out. With regard to pronouns, I have used singular *they* where the context calls for it. I have usually used *we* in an inclusive sense, understood as one which is intended to draw the reader into the act of observation or contemplation of LL data. It should be taken as an invitation to join in LL research.

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