
Book Reviews

Melo-Pfeifer, S. (Ed.), *Linguistic Landscapes in Language and Teacher Education: Multilingual Teaching and Learning Inside and Beyond the Classroom.* Springer, 2023, ISBN 978-3-031-22866-7; ISBN 978-3-031-22867-4 (eBook)

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Reading *Linguistic Landscapes in Language and Teacher Education* edited by Silva Melo-Pfeifer proved to be an interesting experience on several counts. It is a collection of researches that teachers-cum-researchers did with the students they were teaching, I was excited. The numbers in their classes are really small; their linguistic demographic is very different; their student expectation from education are more nuanced and pedagogical tools they use are also very different. My curiosity of how they negotiate the space between teaching and research was something I was very keen to understand.

The assumption of the group whose work is represented in the book is that language that is displayed in public spaces is useful for pedagogic purposes and more; though, this is not the view that some scholars take and empirically show. The basic premise that the LoCALL (<http://localproject.eu/>) project takes is that Linguistic Landscapes (LL) manifests the multilingual reality in which we live and can be effectively used for language learning.

A few words about what Linguistic Landscapes (LL) is. Earlier, the area of study that is now commonly referred to as “language landscapes,” was referred to in a variety of ways, for example, “language of advertising,” “language of public spaces.” In the account of LL that the editor gives in her introductory essay and Durk Gorter, University of the Basque Country, Spain gives in the foreword, the present avatar emerged from Masters and PhD thesis, like Tulp’s in 1978 and is yet a popular topic for dissertations and other academic writing. Its early precursors were Spolsky and Cooper (1991).

LL can be broadly understood as language, signs, images, etc. that are available in public spaces and are “potentially read by multiple viewers” (Schmitt, 2020). Other terms like ‘public language,’ ‘spatial language’ have emerged in the literature which culls out different

aspects, theoretical and methodological tools. In brief, with LL we have moved beyond traditional linguistics of phonology, morphology, syntax to multilingualism, writing systems and onomastics.

The empirical studies in this volume demonstrate the success of Language Landscape as a pedagogic tool in a wide variety of context and countries. By perceiving and scrutinising the real-life manifestations of multilingualism around us, language awareness can be raised; starting points for valuing the presence of various languages and linguistic resources in mother tongue, foreign, second and other languages can be created. It favours active discussions on language hierarchies, linguistic prestige, comparisons of languages, translanguaging, development of linguistic repertoires, etc.

Though proponents and practitioners of Linguistic Landscapes believe that it should be treated as a “linguistics genre” and developments within it as occurring in three waves –quantitative, qualitative and critical; there are those who show that those claims do not stand scrutiny, for example, Swales,1990. LL, is at best, an umbrella term for a complex assemblage of diverse theoretical approaches. Interestingly, a wide array of writings such as those on vehicles, clothing, bags, tombstones, stickers, tattoos, graffiti, etc. are subjects of its scrutiny.

What I think is a takeaway from this volume is the ingenious and doable ways that researches are being conceived of, conducted and reported. To take a random example from the many that are reported here, Klaudia A. Kruszynska and Melinda Dooly demonstrate how a team of self-reflexive research and teacher use a small set of 5 LL tasks with 17 students to make students aware of the LL in their communities, which in turn enhances their metacognitive skills and understanding of their sociocultural milieu. The student thinking aloud transcripts show how linguistic landscapes-based projects for higher-order and critical thinking skills gave them authentic real life learnings life skill which would help them in the fast moving, ever-changing work-life scenarios that they will necessarily have to face. Perhaps the best illustration comes from the chapter by Oyama, Moore and Pearce in which they show how the Japanese six-grade student Y⁻uki becomes a co-researcher of his own language and literacy practices. By walking and taking pictures, the child starts to make discoveries, raises questions about language and explores the diversity of his local environment. Real-life material can provide an engaging way to teach about literacy and language