

Mónica Castillo Lluch / Rolf Kailuweit /
Claus D. Pusch (eds.)

Linguistic Landscape Studies

The French Connection



FREIBURGER
ROMANISTISCHE ARBEITEN

rombach

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herausgegeben von

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MÓNICA CASTILLO LLUCH (LAUSANNE) / ROLF KAILUWEIT
(DÜSSELDORF) / CLAUS D. PUSCH (FREIBURG IM BREISGAU)

Linguistic Landscape Studies and the French-speaking world: An introduction to the present volume

Despite the fact that some pioneering work in the realm of studies on Linguistic Landscapes (LL) focused on the French language (e.g. the contribution by Louis-Jean Calvet [1990], who compared the LL of Paris and Dakar, or the fundamental paper by Landry & Bourhis [1997] on the use of French in Canada), comparatively few publications exist which are devoted to the LL in the francophone world. Robert Blackwood is without doubt the scholar who has worked most intensely on this subject (cf. the bibliography of his chapter in this volume), studying, among other things, the presence of regional languages alongside with French in the public space of continental France and of Corsica. In France, the work by Bogatto & Hélot (2010) and Bogatto & Bothorel-Witz (2012) describes and analyzes the LL in the city of Strasbourg, a very attractive place for this type of research due to its bilingual (Alsatian-French) and multilingual (migration-induced) status, and to its position on a political border. Unsurprisingly, territorially or administratively bi- or multilingual areas with a presence of French are those which have most strongly attracted the researchers' attention, in Canada – apart from the aforementioned landmark article by Landry & Bourhis, cf. also Bourhis & Landry (2002), Gade (2003), Backhaus (2009), Mettewie, Lamarre & Van Mensel (2012), Boschung (2016) and Leimgruber (2017) – as well as in Belgium – cf. Janssens (2012), Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael (2012, 2015), Mettewie, Lamarre & Van Mensel (2012), Van Mensel & Darquennes (2012), or Vandembroucke (2018) –. The unavailability, in the field on LL studies on the French language, of an exploration going beyond this Metropolitan-France/Belgium/Canada circumscription was the starting point from which the present collective volume evolved, and the target that we had fixed was to bring together case studies with <francophone> areas in a broad sense as a basis for empirical research; i.e. spaces where French is involved either as a dominant or as a (sociolinguistically) subordinate language, or as a contact language. The 11 chapters included in this volume explore various phenomena that are observable in the LL of different francophone regions in Europe (in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy), in the Middle East (Israel), in North

America (Canada), the Caribbean (islands of Guadeloupe and St. Martin), and in the Indian Ocean (island of Réunion), and they apply various methodologies, theoretic frameworks and research perspectives. On the one hand, many of the contributions deal with towns and areas where French is a (co-)official language on the state or the regional level (Deva Gresa: Perpignan/Perpinyà and Céret; Kailuweit: Perpignan/Perpinyà, Toulouse/Tolosa and Corsica; Davidson: Eupen and Sankt Vith; Castillo Lluch: Lausanne; Mitschke: Aosta/Aoste; Leimgruber: Montréal; Blackwood: Guadeloupe; Pusch: Saint-Martin; Staudinger: Réunion), and one of their objects of study is the use of another (inter-)national and (co-)official language (German in Eupen and Sankt Vith; Italian in Aosta; English in Montréal and on Saint-Martin), or of regional languages with variable degrees of official recognition (Catalan in Perpignan and Céret; Occitan in Toulouse, Corsican on Corsica; Francoprovençal in Aosta; Creoles on Guadeloupe and Réunion), or, although marginally, of the non-territorialized languages of migrant communities, and their relation to French. Generally speaking, in these diglossic situations, the vernacular language that, in oral communication, to different degrees and according to the case fulfills the more immediate communicative needs, extends its use also in the writings visible in the LL and may then be understood as an index of solidarity. In other cases, one observes processes of language commodification (Kelly-Holmes 2010), e.g. Catalan in Perpignan and Céret or French on Saint-Martin and in Israel, but also Creole in the gastronomic sector on Guadeloupe. On the other hand, Ben Rafael & Ben Rafael and Vandenbroucke deal with areas where French is neither an official nor a vernacular language (in the Flemish town of Kortrijk and in Israel) and is perceived as a minority language with different connotations, which deserve closer study in the context of the local historical and ideological background.

This link to history and sociology is indicative of a general feature of LL studies, which tend to be at the interface with many other disciplines of social sciences and humanities; however, anthropological and ethnographic approaches have become most prominent in this respect. Authors like Malinowski (2009: 124), Shohamy, Ben-Rafael & Barni (2010) or Blommaert (2013: 50s) have emphasized that it is necessary and fruitful for LL research to take into account the lives of, and interactions between, the persons who write and read the signage of the LL, and the historical as well as the psychological dimensions have become more and more prominent in LL studies. This tendency is also reflected by the contributions in the present volume, some of which are clearly oriented towards anthropological and

ethnographic analyses (cf. particularly the chapters by Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael, Castillo Lluch, Davidson, Leimgruber, and Mitschke) or towards Critical Discourse Analysis (cf. Blackwood and Vandenbroucke) and take into account the agents and the public in the LL. The agents, i.e. the authors of signs or the actors which are responsible for the establishments where these signs are posted, have been interviewed and are in the focus of the contributions by Davidson on two German-speaking towns in Wallonia and by Castillo Lluch on the history of the Spanish-speaking community in Lausanne. The public exposed to the LL is at the heart of Mitschke's study devoted to an exploration on how passers-by perceive and psychologically structure the LL when moving around the trilingual Italian town of Aosta, and is also within the scope of Davidson's empirical fieldwork by means of an online questionnaire testing the reactions of a group of German-speaking subjects to specific signs.

These contributions are clearly qualitative and work with data samples that are selective and therefore limited in size, an approach that is taken by the majority of contributors to this book (Ben Rafael & Ben Rafael, Blackwood, Castillo Lluch, Kailuweit, Staudinger, Vandenbroucke). Still, it also includes papers based on larger, if not exhaustive, quantitative data bases either gathered in the field (Gresa Barbero, Leimgruber, Pusch) or which had been made available by previous research (Vandenbroucke), and these quantified data have been used in order to better understand underlying phenomena and structures. Even if fundamentally quantitative LL surveys, in the vein of Backhaus' (2007) approach to the LL of Tokyo, are no longer dominating the field (Blommaert 2013: 41), certain case studies cannot get along without an empiric phase of quantifying and classifying signs. An illustration is Pusch's approach to commercial signage in Grand-Case, on the Caribbean island of St. Martin, which leads to a final interpretation in terms of commodification of French in this zone.

Still from a more quantitative point of view, but with regard to the territorial scope of the contributions, the present volume includes examples of studies on both macro and micro levels. While Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael intend, through their observations, to decipher LL phenomena (ethnic usage vs. commodified usage of French) on the level of a country (Israel), and Blackwood and Staudinger consider their findings as indicative for the status of Creole on the islands of Guadeloupe and Réunion, respectively, as a whole, Vandenbroucke concentrates her analysis on the naming of a French-fries outlet on the central square of the Flemish city of Kortrijk, and Davidson pays particular attention to the linguistic conflict in a chocolate

store in the East-Belgian town Eupen. However, analyses with a mid-size scope, frequently taking the main street as a territorial reference, remain a common type of study, represented e.g. by the contributions by Gresa Barbero (Perpignan and Céret), Leimgruber (Montréal), or Pusch (Grand-Case). Papers that present conclusions on a larger geographic scale base their observations mostly on carefully selected functionally prominent urban districts or neighborhoods, like Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael working on specific streets in the Israeli towns of Netanya and Ramat Hasharon. That results of LL studies on restricted samples are claimed to be representative for, and to allow significant conclusions about, more extended territories, is quite obviously also a consequence of the fact that linguistic signs can only partially be ‘grasped’ and documented, first and foremost for practical reasons related to space and time. The temporality of signs, the social practices expressed thereby, and the dynamics of change that can be derived from this temporal dimension through real-time or apparent-time observation (the latter through the analysis of ‘diachronically’ layered elements of the LL) has been a core feature of the chapters contributed by Castillo Lluch, Davidson and Vandenbroucke, and the historical aspect is also part of the papers by Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael and Staudinger.

Methodology issues are in the focus of many current discussions in the LL research community. While the traditional approach, based on the researcher and her/his observations in the field, as described in handbook articles such as Androutopoulos (2014) is still valid and applied by most of the contributors to our volume, there are various proposals, implying technologies others than the digital camera and techniques beyond the classic sociolinguistic interview with experts and laymen, that have been put forward recently; cf. e.g. the thematic issue of the journal *Linguistic Landscape* coordinated by Blackwood (ed. 2017) or some of the papers in Ariolfo & Mariottini (eds. 2018). A core matter of these proposals is to enhance the insights into the perception of the elements in the LL by ‘ordinary’ passers-by and their processing of these elements. In this volume, Mitschke discusses these perceptual and psychologic dimensions of LL impact and includes experimental tasks when studying the effects of multilingual LL facets on informants interviewed on Aosta’s Chanoux square. Another contribution that explicitly addresses methodology issues is Kailuweit’s paper on aspects of the LL found in Southern France (Perpignan and Toulouse) and on Corsica. He advocates a non-quantificational neo-semiotic approach in LL research in the sense of a multi-dimensional study of signs as indicators of processes and strategies through which social actors transform a space into a ‘place’,

i.e. make it accessible and acceptable for various target groups who live in, or experience, this space.

The present volume covers several territories that up to now have been treated marginally only, or not at all, in LL research on the francophone world. However, despite the efforts of the editors, the African continent couldn't be represented here. How is the LL structured in countries like Congo, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or in Tunisia, the country that, according to recent surveys (cf. Wolff & Gonthier 2010), has the highest quotas in reading and writing practice in French among African states? How does the LL differ in these countries from that in the Ivory Coast, in Senegal or in other countries where French is used to a lesser degree by the populations? What are current dynamics of French scriptorality in these spaces, and what kinds of social practices are they indicative of? Given the challenges of writing practices and use of written French on this continent, within the national borders of the African states but also in the French-speaking community as a whole, research on the LL in Francophone Africa would deserve a dedicated monograph as soon as possible. Studies on other areas of Overseas France would certainly be insightful, too, e.g. on Mayotte, where according to the French statistics office INSEE 57% of the population declare itself as bilingual, or on New-Caledonia where some 30 local languages are spoken. But even a closer look, under LL perspective, on a less 'exotic' territory, the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, an ethnically multifaceted space where French is co-official with Luxemburgish and German, would be of great interest. We leave it for future work of the ever-increasing LL research community to fill these gaps.

The idea for the present volume grew out of a workshop on «Languages in the public space in the Francophone world – Linguistic Landscape Studies at the interface of contact linguistics, sociology of language and linguistic ecology», organized during the 9th Congress of the German Association for French Language and Literature (*Frankoromanistenverband*) at Münster in September 2014. Some contributors joined the project later. We thankfully acknowledge the financial support of the Dr. Jürgen and Irmgard Ulderup Foundation and of the Faculty of Philology (*Faculté des Lettres*) of Lausanne University, which made this publication possible.

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