Exploring Local Linguistic Scenery amongst Superdiversity
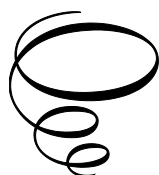
Exploring Local Linguistic Scenery amongst Superdiversity:

A Small Place in the Global Landscape

By

Svetlana Atanassova

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INTRODUCTION

The present book is the result of four years of fieldwork and ethnographic research in the public linguistic landscape of the city of Veliko Turnovo in Bulgaria. It is rooted in the study of language use and interaction in shared urban environments from the perspective of linguistic landscape studies (LLS). Most research in this area takes as its object of research metropolises and large cities. In these places, people from all over the world congregate driven by various motives—finding a better job, a better way of life, or better professional realisation. Therefore, this book focuses on what remains on the "other side"—namely, public inscriptions that one can find in smaller towns and places. Since "small" and "big" are relative concepts and "better" implies a myriad of interpretations, it would be more appropriate to refer to places that are not considered to be big metropolitan centres as "the other part" of the dialogue between huge metropolitan conglomerates and the rest of the world.

Smaller urban places are equally affected by processes like globalisation, mobility, and political dynamics, and this inevitably influences the atmosphere of their public space. In the first place, smaller places are part and parcel of the transnational flow of people, and the spread of products and cultures across the world is reflected in the landscape of every city. Secondly, new forms of communication—online and in non-shared contexts—create the need to use languages other than one's own, whose knowledge and acquisition is often partial and incomplete. Thus, finally, by breaking the boundaries of their own language and of the foreign languages they study, local users resort not to the use of named languages but to the use of linguistic repertoires (a set of linguistic features and other semiotic resources). The third factor, mobility, is by default discussed in terms of people congregating in big super-cities rather than as people moving away from big cities to smaller places. However, this process can also be looked at as people going in the opposite direction. This implies either "being at home" and keeping in touch with friends and relatives who stayed there through the use of modern technologies (the internet and smartphones) or leaving big cities and metropolises and exploring different ways of life.

Linguistic landscaping studies is a branch of sociolinguistics that studies language in social space. The central object of study is no longer the individual speaker but the physical space inhabited by people. Language

and space are explored in conditions of mobility, globalisation, and superdiversity. Qualitative LLS research in this area is associated with the names of Elana Schohamy, Adam Jaworski, Jan Blommaert, Ben Rampton, and other scholars, whose works, in turn, are rooted in the ethnographic traditions set by Dell Hymes, John Gumperz, Ron Scollon, Suzie W. Scollon, and others. The enterprise of making a linguistic portrait of a place in the broader panorama of the global landscape eventually implies the study of the linguistic landscape from the perspective of superdiversity. First discussed by Stephen Vertovec (2006) and envisaged by J. Blommaert to be "diversity within diversity," superdiversity is characterised by mobility, complexity, and unpredictability. It makes concepts like social, cultural, and political diversity even more complex. Within this context, language becomes, as J. Blommaert (2012, 8–10) writes, "a tool for detecting features of superdiversity." Related to superdiversity is the concept of transnationalism, which refers to the increasing tendency among migrants to maintain ties with their countries of origin. In this way, people are no longer rooted in only one country at any given time. They develop identities and social relations in multiple national contexts and, as a result of this, new forms of multilingual communicative behaviour emerge— referred to as translanguaging, polylanguaging, crossing, and transidiomatic practices (cf. chapter 6, 3). Thus we cannot neglect the study of the linguistic landscape of smaller urban places by focusing only on huge metropolitan centres. Since the tendency is for people to be in contact with their native countries, since life is mobile, local urban scenery cannot remain untouched by the process of globalisation, and deserves to be the object of research along with big cities and super-cities. As a result of such processes, global and non-native values and practices interact with local ones to create unique scenery.

Language in public space resides in signs. An important characteristic of signs is their indexicality. A public sign is usually created by a person (or a group of people) who are responsible for its making and emplacement. They choose the materials out of which the sign is created, select the language for the inscription on the sign, and, finally, make the entire design, including colours, fonts, and layout. The sign is emplaced in public space with the purpose of being seen and interpreted by someone else, which means that it has a particular function. Therefore, a sign always bears traces (indexical clues) revealing the historical processes that brought it into existence. At the same time, a sign contains clues (also indexical) about the way it has to be interpreted. This means that the most important component of our analysis of signs in public space will be their doubly indexical nature (Blommaert 2012, 53–54).

The study of public inscriptions eventually involves the study of literacy. Issues surrounding the ability to read and write are extremely important for the social interpretation of globalisation and nationalism. Benjamin Spolsky (2009, 29) explains that literacy is related to semiotics, and we cannot neglect it in our study of all instances of written signs, including tickets, receipts, advertisements, and other written objects, because in all of them, language is the most significant component. In this respect, the choice of language for writing in public is significant in multiliterate areas. Literacy practices are always contextualised and are socially and culturally sensitive. The particular area where I carried out my research brings into focus two mainstream types of literacy—one is the ability to write in a foreign language, and the other is the attempt to write one's own language or to produce one's own voice by means of the employment of a foreign code. These two types of literacy practices are manifested in two main ways of public writing—mirror imaging and translanguaging, discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

The ethnographic research of the local landscape is based on the assumption that human action is situated (contextualised). My first inspiration came from Jan Blommaert's (2012) study of the Belgian town of Antwerp. I adopted the analysis of a place as a complex and polycentric sociolinguistic system, consisting of different layers. This system is best studied from a historical perspective—not as a static phenomenon but as the result of a process of becoming. I also draw on R. Scollon and S. W. Scollon's model of ethnographic analysis. It takes into consideration three essential components. The first component is the emplacement of discourse and language in the landscape. This emplacement is socioculturally authorised. The second component is the interaction order, which means "the set of social relationships we take up and try to maintain with the other people who are in our presence" (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 16). The third component is the historical body, embracing the life experiences of individual social actors. Out of the interaction of these three forces emerges discourse as social action. A public sign is an ethnographically situated object, which is historically grounded and generated. This kind of nexus analysis gives us the ground to consider public space as an assemblage of various discourses. The internal and external forces that shape this complex system are constantly changing. Public space as a sociolinguistic system is dynamic, fragmented, and never fully completed. This immediately implies that it is difficult to describe thoroughly. However, I hope that I have managed to map the most salient features of the public landscape of Veliko Turnovo and to prove that they reveal an urban space that is dynamic and

responsive to the challenges of globalisation and superdiversity in its own unique way.

CHAPTER ONE

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING STUDIES:
THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES, METHODS
OF RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS

1. Linguistic landscaping studies

Linguistic landscaping studies (LLS) is a branch of sociolinguistics that straddles a wide range of disciplines. Starting from the study of language in its social environment, which itself is an interdisciplinary enterprise, it overlaps with anthropology, social geography, urban studies, and other disciplines. LLS brings into focus a different component into the field of analysis—the physical spaces that individual speakers and groups of speakers inhabit and in which they communicate by using language and other systems of communication. The study of linguistic diversity is firmly grounded in the tradition exploring the relationship between language, culture, and thought. The new focus of interest—space—forms a different triad of relationships: the one between people, language, and space. Although LLS emerged as a quantitative study, the analysis of language in space cannot be reduced to simply being indicative of the number of languages spoken in a certain place and of the groups of people using these languages. The people using the language in a given milieu need not be the true bearers of this language. A more precise definition of the object of analysis of LLS will then be the ways in which people adopt the use of different linguistic forms. Such a use, in turn, can be regarded, as Jan Blommaert and Ben Rampton explain, as indicating the people's alliance with or detachment from different linguistic groups, aggregations, and ideologies (Blommaert and Rampton 2011, 5).

2. Space as an agent

Speaking about agentivity, we can regard space as an instrument of power. W. J. T. Mitchell remarks that the linguistic landscape, which can be observed in public space, does not merely symbolise power relations. It

itself is "an instrument of cultural power" (Mitchell 1994, 1–2) and as such is independent of human intentions. Space is not something fixed that we can only observe and describe but something that works as a cultural practice.

Space as an instrument of power is one aspect of agency. Signs in space construct social reality. They are real social agents and, as such, they have real effects in social life. The meaning of signs is always specific, "tied" to the place where they reside, and is rarely general (Blommaert 2012, 47). Public inscriptions both reflect and regiment the structure of the space in which they operate. All public places are organised in a certain way and signs are one of the means that help to maintain this organisation. They select who is addressed by a message and indicate the intended audiences. A message on a public inscription is never neutral and always displays the relationships between social structure, power, and organisational hierarchies. Jan Blommaert elaborates on the metaphor of space not as a neutral canvas but as a social arena in which communication takes place. The author writes that we need to change our idea of it as a background, against which interaction takes place, and to consider it as an important factor in human communication. Physical space is socially, culturally, and politically loaded (Blommaert 2012, 7). The signs that exist in it turn it into a non-neutral zone. The social milieu becomes a material force generating specific identities, actions and meanings, which circulate in social, cultural and political life. Space is a normative and social actor (though not human), which imposes its own rules on communication (Blommaert 2012, 38–45). Such rules include possibilities, restrictions, and normative expectations about communication and about the relationships between particular spaces and the signs abiding in them. We normally expect certain signs in certain places. When signs are in "their" place (e.g., "entrance" on a door), we interpret their meaning in a habitual way. This reflects our expectations of "normalcy" for different places—we know, for example, which way to go in and which way to go out, how to cross a street, how to queue to pay at the cash desk in the supermarket, what to do at the doctor's, or how to perform any other activity.

The perspective of analysing space as an instrument of power and as a social actor makes it historical. It is full of expectations, norms and codes regarding people's behaviour and is closely associated with cultural traditions. Space is controlled by people and at the same time, it controls them. If we analyse this relationship deeper, we will see that it is indexical. Social, cultural, and political structures are inscribed in the linguistic landscape and the landscape reflects these structures. It is the link between space and our normative expectations about how to behave there that

characterises space as agentive and historical. Our shared expectations about what to do in different places are rooted in history. People before us behaved there in a certain way and we know about it; therefore, we try to act as they did. The process of getting used to such forms of behaviour is called "enskilment" (Blommaert 2012, 37). Due to our enskilment, we are able to act appropriately and normally in different places. In this way, space is turned into a historically configured phenomenon. From a diachronic point of view, a space is semiotised and at the same time semiotises. It is turned "into a social, cultural and political habitat" (Blommaert 2012, 22). In this political habitat "'enskilled people' co-construct and perpetually enact the 'order' semiotically inscribed in that space" (ibid.).

3. Linguistic landscape

The term "linguistic landscape" is used to refer to all the linguistic objects that occur in the public space (Ben Rafael 2009, 40). It includes all types of inscriptions and written signs one can find there. The linguistic landscape comprises road signs, street names, shop inscriptions, public building inscriptions, school names, and so on. While the originally quantitative approach to LLS focused on counting and mapping publicly visible languages and studied their distribution over a specific area, qualitative analysis is a semiotic approach. Unlike quantitative analysis, it does not study how the absence or presence of certain languages is related to specific populations and communities but seeks to explain the patterns of social interaction between people in a particular space. In a semiotic approach, the focus of analysis is the signs themselves. They are analysed as multimodal objects, both individually and in combination with each other. It is written signs in combination that make the linguistic landscape.

Public space includes the linguistic landscape, but it also comprises two other components—architectural buildings and flows of passers-by (ibid., 42). These last two components are independent of social interaction. The architectural units accumulate over time. The extent to which people as passers-by (not as social actors) are visible in public space (walking around shops, for example) fluctuates according to the climate and cultural habits. The most important component of urban life that is directly influenced by people as actual social actors is the linguistic landscape. It is dynamic and constantly changing. In it, new items spring up quickly and some of them shortly disappear. New institutions and shops open, businesses go bankrupt, stores and cafés are closed, renewed, or reopened. These processes are particularly active in central areas in large cities, in which countless actors with different motivations act in various ways. In big urban centres,

"numberless actors speak to mass audiences." From this perspective, the linguistic landscape can be seen as a mechanism of controlling behaviour by valorising norms and expectations, which the linguistic items stand for and symbolise (ibid., 44).

4. Public signage

4.1. Materiality of public signs

The study of signs in public space means the study of their different aspects—from their materiality to problems like literacy, agency, and historicity. R. Scollon and S. Scollon propose a framework for an extensive study of the material aspects of public signs. Their research focuses on semiotic resources like emplacement, inscription, and visual semiotics. Emplacement (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 142–65) is a central concept in explaining the function of the signs. By "emplacement" we mean the actual semiotic process that produces meaning from the specific location of signs in the material world. A sign by itself has only a potential meaning. This meaning can only acquire social and semiotic realisation when the sign is emplaced in a particular place on earth. Inscription (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 129–41) covers meaning systems that are based not only on the words but also on the physical aspects of the signs—fonts, physical substances, layering, and others. Visuality (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 82–105) is not restricted to the purely physical aspects of public signage. It covers not only modality based on colour exploitation (saturation, depth, illumination, brightness), but also the construction of a depicted life, the representation of real action and interaction in visual images. The attention of analysis is directed at the ways in which visual images index the real world and on the way social actors index these images.

4.2. Semiotic aspects of signs

Stepping away from the purely material study of signs entails studying different ideological positions, frequently expressed through the choice of language code. Outlining such aspects of linguistic landscaping as a branch of sociolinguistics, B. Spolski points out that the study of public multilingual signage is a valuable tool for the analysis of language choice and language policy. Some of the key issues of this study are the focus on literacy, the exploration of agency, and the problem of counting signs (Spolski 2009, 29–33). The study of literacy fits the study of signs into the general study of semiotics where choice of language is a fundamental

aspect. Within the sphere of purely linguistic choices fall problems like the actual command of the language that has been chosen, spelling mistakes related to this, and the density of public and private literacy. A general belief is that the denser the literacy, the more likely it is to see more signs in a given area. Therefore, an important criterion for the classification of public spaces is the density of signage in general. Then, there comes the contrast between verbal and non-verbal signs. This criterion is more likely to be indicative of the existence of language power rather than evidence of literacy.

The observation, counting, and analysis of actually finished signs leave the analysis of public signage incomplete. There emerges the need to explore the processes by which particular signs are produced. The study of agency becomes an important aspect of their study. In the first place, we can try to interpret why a particular sign-maker chose a specific language. We can also attempt to trace the decision back to the sign initiator, which can become very complicated in the conditions of the globalised world. Identifying the participants and their motifs in the process of sign production is of critical importance in the study of public signage as it can give insight into the motivations for their choices. These problems are discussed at length in chapter 6 in relation to the particular landscape.

4.3. Counting signs and sign boundaries

An important aspect is the counting of public signs in the sense of identifying the boundaries of an individual sign (Spolski 2009, 32). Simply, this could also mean deciding what to count as a single sign. Some signs seem to be unproblematic, for example, street names. However, looking at new boards with street names in Veliko Turnovo will show that identifying sign boundaries is not an easy matter. Materially, such signs have inscriptions on two different plates—one bearing the name of the street and the other providing information about the name. Such inscriptions (shown in figure 4.1) have two material realisations, but there remains the question of whether we should consider them as two different signs or as one sign. The real question, then, will be what criterion we should use to delineate one sign from another—the languages used or the material body on which the inscription occurs. I consider the "indexable" unit (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 2–6) that lies behind a sign to be the governing principle in identifying the sign boundaries. If the indexable is a street and both signs index this same street, then they should count as one complex sign.

4.4. Historicity

Signs, just like the places in which they occur, have a history. In this sense, every sign is considered to be indexical as it points back to its origin of emergence (Blommaert 2012, 53–57). We can judge the reasons why a language was used as the preferred code and thus we can make inferences about people's ethnolinguistic identity and language behaviour. We can also focus on linguistic items that occur on public inscriptions and discuss them in terms of their cognitive saliency, syntactical, and semantic aspects and pragmatic functions. Finally, we can study the relationship between normative linguistic behaviour and people's actual linguistic usage. Thus, observed actual usage may manifest persistent patterns that defy normative expectations but at the same time find justification for their employment.

5. Major theoretical approaches to LLS

5.1. Geosemiotics

In *Discourses in Place*, R. Scollon and S. Scollon maintain a theory that studies the materiality of signs in place. This theory, *geosemiotics*, is an ethnographically oriented model of analysis that is defined by the authors as "the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs in the world" (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 110). The primary interest of their research is not to show how language is embedded in context (the indexicality of language), but to show how meaning is inscribed in the real and physical world. The focus is on the indexable world, which includes situational structures, layout, and designs, social role performances and sign equipment (ibid., 111). The authors explain that the meaning of "signs" is not restricted only to language but includes other semiotic systems as well. Social action is the product of the interplay of three broad semiotic systems—the interaction order, visual semiotics, and place semiotics (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 7). The focus of geosemiotic analysis is not on the text itself, but on these three semiotic systems.

    Within the framework of geosemiotics, social action takes place in the material world and in real space. Participants in social action bring their real bodies into the spatial domain. Their bodies have their histories. This means that they have experience, different types of knowledge, and motivations for their actions. The movements and positions of these real bodies in space follow certain normative patterns of behaviour. Participants in social action interact closely not only with each other but also with space and in space, which is an aspect of the surrounding world. There exists a

very close relationship between the bodies of the participants and the space in which they communicate, referred to by K. Basso as "interanimation" (Basso 1996, 55). The spatial world, which is a material environment, is full of objects and signs. During their lives, people learn how to use social and physical space and how to communicate there. They create an order of interaction with each other. The relationship between people, space, and interaction order is referred to as a nexus. The term was introduced by R. Scollon (2001, 140–71) to include all the constellations of linkages that human practices form (Scollon 2001, 142). Human action is seen within the history of practice and these nexuses of practice are the central resources that form personal identity. Blommaert argues that the nexus understanding of interaction is the result of the relationship between the historical body and historical space:

> It is the actual order of communicative conduct that ensues from enskilled bodies in a space inscribed with particular conditions for communication. It has very little existence outside of it, and the elements of the triad now form one ethnographic object of inquiry. (Blommaert 2012, 40)

The concept of "interaction order" originates from Goffman's dramaturgic analysis but Scollon and Scollon use it in a modified way (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 16–17). They understand it as "a semiotic system of discourses in place" (ibid., 17). The semiotic systems, which we find in a public space, are part of the sign inventory we use to produce our actions in the world. People make use of all the meaningful signs that are available for them in the material environment to build their actions. The resources to which people resort in order to construct the interaction order include perceptual spaces and interpersonal distances as well as the sense of time and the construction of the personal front (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 45–64). The elements of interaction order include eleven types of interaction, among which, being on one's own, being together with each other, standing in a queue, service encounters, platform events (ibid., 61–62). The second semiotic system is based on G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen's visual semiotics. The focus is on texts (scripts), pictures, images, and other kinds of visual objects and their arrangement in the landscape. The goal is to find out how these elements are combined to produce meaningful wholes for visual interpretation (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 82–105). The third component, place semiotics, is interested in the location of semiotic aggregates (systems of meaning) not in persons or visual artefacts, but in public space, including architecture, urban and landscape planning, and

other aspects of place semiotics such as choice of code and materials, sign emplacement, and so on. (ibid., 116–39).

As can be seen, geosemiotics is not limited to language but includes other sign systems as well. All these external elements exist outside language. Language points to them and is used in them. The term "geosemiotics" implies that this is the study of the "indexability" of the material world. The concept of indexability is not identical with the concept of indexicality. It is different from the conception that a linguistic form is indexical by contiguity with an object. Indexicality is about language and about the way, in which it is inextricably bound and dependent on context (cf. Hanks 2018). Indexability is about the material world that is being indexed by language. Geosemiotics is rooted in the real, physical, material world in which we live and act. There is a general set of conventions on how and where meanings may be inscribed there but it is not rigid. The process of inscribing meaning in the material world is referred to as to "emplacement." Shop signs and road signs are the most widespread type of public signs and can be used as an illustration in explaining what counts as indexable in geosemiotics. A one-way sign will mean nothing until it is erected on the pole on a roadway. In this case, the indexable is the roadway and it is "this roadway" and "all its associated meanings that give the geosemiotic meaning to the sign." That type of indexability is called emplacement (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 115).

5.2. Mapping technique

The mapping technique is an approach to linguistic landscaping that studies diversity in multicultural contexts. This method was proposed by M. Barni and C. Bagna (2009). Their approach is multidisciplinary and is rooted in sociology, statistics, geography, and information technology. It relies on triangulated data collection, which allows interpretation from different points of view (Barni and Bagna 2009, 129–30). Signs are studied in terms of their static visibility and vitality (inscriptions on motor vehicles are also considered to be static). All collected data are georeferenced (their precise location identified by geographical co-ordinates). Georeferencing is performed on two scales—synchronic (the daily changes of a menu) and diachronic (regular observation over time). From the analysis of the static dimension the researchers produce linguistic maps in a digital format. This calls attention to the static intensity of presence of languages in the social space. The authors conclude that the occurrence of monolingual signs indicates that such signs are usually intended for people belonging to a specific linguistic community. The presence of a single language on public

signage signals that it has the prestige and autonomy to stand alone. If two or more languages are used, then the sign is intended to make the message comprehensible to people belonging to different linguistic communities. This multidimensional framework is applied to the initial analysis of the semiotic and textual functions of the signs. It relies on the textual genre to identify the function of an inscription in the communicative landscape (posters, leaflets, menus, announcements, or regulations). Taking into consideration the external position of a sign is similar to the discussion of emplacement by R. Scollon and S. Scollon. Its semiotic function is interpreted according to its position and degree of visibility (to a large group of people, to a limited group of people, to a specific community, etc.). Apart from the purely physical aspects of space, the social space is also considered. Spaces are classified in terms of the different social classes that inhabit them—urban and rural areas, commercial and industrial areas, posh residential quarters, ethnic neighbourhoods, and so on. This criterion is a reliable indicator of the degree of distribution of a language over a given territory. "Domain" refers to the contextualised spheres of social life (public, educational, entertaining, work-related). It takes into consideration aspects like who produced the text, for whom, and what the function of the sign was intended to be. For each domain, there is an inventory of potential contexts—public services, courses, entertainment, sales. The criterion of place visualises the specific spatial arena where communication takes place—restaurant, cinema, shopping centre, or another place. The framework offers detailed criteria for dividing the semiotised space into components—social place, domain, and place (ibid., 131–34)

The linguistic analysis of the collected material has two dimensions—macro-level and micro-level analysis (ibid., 134–36). The two-fold analysis is particularly useful in situations where more than one language is used. The dimension of macro-linguistic analysis identifies the language or the languages present in the landscape and the communicative functions that they perform. The communicative functions can generally be informative or symbolic. The language to which the author intended to ascribe semiotic importance (using size and style of lettering) is the relevant language. This language may be different from the semantically dominant language, which most fully conveys meaning when more than one language is used.

> The presence of languages, their various combinations and modalities within a text, load the language or languages found in it with different symbolic values and functions. (Barni and Bagna 2009, 135)

The ancillary languages are subordinate to the dominant language. They can have explanatory function (translation into local languages or into a global language), informative function (provide additional information on products), or grammatical function (when they adapt the words of the dominant language to their own grammatical structure) (ibid.).

Micro-linguistic analysis comes after the entire data sample is analysed. It includes grammatical analysis and usage classification. This analysis can be very helpful when we want to identify whether, for example, a word is treated as a loanword. More generally, we can use it when we want to identify language boundaries. In addition, the use of a lexical unit may or may not be indexically related to the presence of a group of immigrants who have entered a society. It may be an indicator of the influence exerted internationally by a specific sector of a given culture (e.g., cuisine) (Barni and Bagna 2009, 137).

5.3. The linguistic landscape as a gestalt

From a sociology-of-language point of view, as discussed by E. Ben-Rafael (2009), language signs that fill public space can be regarded as social facts. A social fact is a reality related to and marking social life independently from the will of the individual (Ben-Rafael 2009, 43). The linguistic landscape is a phenomenon that belongs to social reality. Its sociological study focuses "on the articulation of linguistic symbols" in public space and on the forces that shape them (ibid., 40). Their variations can be regarded as the result of different social phenomena. Ben-Rafael explains that the apparent disorder of a public space is taken for granted and is viewed as one whole, usually called "the centre," "the shopping area," or "downtown" (Ben-Rafael 2009, 43). Thus, the linguistic landscape is perceived as a gestalt. *Gestalt* refers to "observations of different phenomena understood as elements of one structured setting" (ibid., 43). This entails that the overall pattern made of different objects is not identical to the sum of its individual constitutive elements and exhibits properties of its own. The gestalt effect comes from the items appearing and functioning together and, as such, they tend to be seen as one whole:

> Personal preferences and inclinations, external fashions and new styles locally designed all influence choices of LL designers in their selection of sizes, colours, phrasings and wordings. These designers act as different actors to one another as they are independent shopkeepers, public relation officers, marketing experts, officials in public administrations, school masters, individual professionals, and many others. Nothing warrants the

congruence of these actors' tastes and considerations though altogether and without any preliminary consultation, each of them contributes to create this overall picture of the place most often perceived by passers-by as a "forest" of signs. (Ben-Rafael 2009, 43)

5.4. Ethnographic approaches

A great part of the research in the field of linguistic landscaping is anchored in the traditions set by the anthropologist Dell Hymes. Dell Hymes remarks that there is no unified conception of ethnography and emphasises that one of the major characteristics of ethnography is its validity (Hymes 1996, 7–19). Validity depends upon accurate knowledge of meanings, which people ascribe to terms, events, persons, and institutions. Such meanings are not uniform, but are "subject to change, reinterpretation, and recreation" (ibid., 9). In addition, they may be implicit or explicit. Finally, the deepest meanings and patterns may not be talked about at all. Ethnography cannot be restricted to just collecting facts. It seeks to explain the connections among them and to discover their place in the lives of people. Ethnography can be defined as the "interface between a specific inquiry and comparative generalisation" (ibid., 19). Research in this field is supposed to be cumulative (based on long-term observation), comparative (carried out across communities and involving past experience), and cooperative (involving others) (ibid., 17–22). In his study of myth, D. Hymes outlines two ethnographic approaches (Hymes 1981, 274–76). The first approach pays great attention to detail and is based on a universal theory, which tries to explain the essence of myth. The second approach takes the verbal genre on its own and studies its role in the lives of people. It seeks to describe its structural characteristics and functional role ethnographically, i.e. within individual cultures.

Dell Hymes (1986, 59–65) designed a mnemonic grid (bearing the acronym SPEAKING) to be used as a guideline for ethnographic analysis. Thom Huebner offers an adaptation of Dell Hymes's speaking grid for the analysis of public signage (Huebner 2009, 72–84).

According to it, "setting and scene" refer to the immediate context of an inscription in a public landscape. This component focuses on the way the nature and content of a sign are affected by its orientation to readers. It determines the quantity of text and number of images and the type of language. The discussion of setting and scene is closely related to geosemiotic analysis of signs' emplacement discussed above.

"Participants" (discussed in chapter 8 in relation to the local landscape) includes two large groups—agents and audience. Agency can be

performed in two main directions—top-down and bottom-up (Spolski 2009, 31). Institutional agencies exhibit control and their performance in public space is top-down. Bottom-up participants are individual and corporative actors; although they act autonomously, their action is still performed within legal limits. The impression might be that top-down signs will be more influential, but in fact, the situation is quite different. For example, globalised markets and companies like KFC "often exert more pervasive and lasting influence on language choice and language use than government policy" (Huebner 2009, 74). The distinction between top-down and bottom-up is not absolute, but socially situated. For example, a sign posted in a lift in an office building will be top-down from the perspective of the tenants. But it will be bottom-up from the perspective of the national government (ibid.). Audience is part of participation. Each item in a linguistic landscape reflects and requires a particular audience. In this way, some signs recruit large audiences. Others are accessible to limited groups. "Audience" does not imply passive participation by simply reading public inscriptions. More often than not signs are designed with respect to the expected needs of the intended audience.

Signs in public space may have different "ends." Discussing the ends that signs in public space may have will lead to a discussion of sign typology. Some signs (street names, road signs) stand in a public space to identify streets, buildings, monuments, and other places and physical objects. Very often, they also have an informative function. Other signs (billboards and advertisements) have a persuasive function. Such signs promote products, events, and services. The primary function of regulatory signs (warning and prohibition signs) is to regulate social action and behaviour in the public realm. Finally, there are signs whose primary end is to challenge social authority. Herein fall graffiti, usually considered a transgressive form of discourse.

"Act sequences" concern purpose and form. This component corresponds closely to what is discussed as visuality and code preference (based on the visual design framework of G. Kress and T. Van Leeuwen). It focuses on the spatial organisation of the elements within a given sign where certain elements are more prominent. Meaning is created by the physical positioning of the text with respect to the other two signifying elements in a sign—photographs and headlines, belonging to different semiotic systems. They are arranged with regard to their salience, meaning, and information value. Visual clues, including size of images, sharpness of focus, level of detail, tonal contrast, colour contrasts, and cultural symbolism determine salience. Here also belong font type, font style, foregrounding, colour, sharpness, and upper versus lower case. Information

value is a linguistic dimension. It concerns the pragmatic distinction between given and new, real and ideal, central and marginal. The pragmatic parameters are related to the components of visual grammar. In this way, left is associated with given, right with new. The top is the place of the ideal, the bottom, of the real. The nucleus of the information will occur in the centre, the additional items, in the margin. The placement of each element of the message within this three-part system contributes to the overall value and meaning of the sign (ibid., 76–77).

"Key," referring to the tone, manner, and spirit of the act, is encoded in the message through the amount of text, the explicitness of the message, and the choice of code.

"Instrumentalities" include register and code. In the field of LLS, register comprises word choice, orthography, and syntax. A sharper linguistic analysis will presuppose the analysis of the use of imperatives, commands, questions, parallel structures, ellipsis, substitution, and incomplete sentences. Special attention to the structure of the noun phrase will reveal unique register features like complex pre-modifying structures made up of noun phrases, adjective phrases, adverbial phrases, and prepositional phrases. These pre-modifying structures operate as independent clauses in the main part of a piece of writing. In addition, noun phrases or print ads share unique word order features—the product or trade name will come in an early position in longer expressions. Analysis on the lexical level will include analysis of pronouns, indexing the relationships between reader and hypothetical speaker/author. Billboards, which are part of the linguistic landscape, share these register characteristics. Public notices exhibit different characteristics. They rely on the use of deictic terms. As they frequently employ more than one language, the analysis of code will rely on the analysis of multilingual signs—the use of different scripts, lexical units, and grammatical structures (ibid., 80–82).

"Norms" and regulations are related to the analysis of interaction order. Norms can be norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. The norms of interpretation are rooted in the system of beliefs of a community. Their analysis requires the collection of qualitative data from the population. Regulations that are related to authorities may dictate the physical characteristics of the signs, or may make decisions about their emplacement and language choice.

"Genres" are the last component of the grid. Linguistic items in public space may belong to different textual genres, the most common among them being ads, notices, warnings, and inscriptions of identification. Inscriptions of identification, warnings, and notices depend heavily on their immediate context for interpretation and will contain a large number of

exophoric deixis. Advertisements are generally independent of their immediate context. Plaques are a very characteristic genre. A plaque is an ornamental tablet, typically of metal, porcelain, or wood that is fixed to a wall or other surface in commemoration of a person or event. They are officially loaded with historical significance and in my environment they are exclusively monolingual (I believe the same to be true in other places, too).

Ethnographic methods of research are often criticised for being eclectic. Jan Blommaert (2007, 2011, 2012), however, argues that ethnography is not restricted only to a certain set of methods of research, but is an autonomous theoretical position, presupposing a particular interpretative stance. It focuses on human conduct in its entirety and minute particulars, not trying to reduce its complexity to a set of essential features. Ethnography is a theoretical position, which is characterised by the assumption about the situated (contextualised) nature of human action. It accepts complexity and comprehensiveness and assumes that we can successfully "explore macro-structures through micro-detail" (Blommaert 2007, 18–21).

Space as a "historically configured phenomenon" (Blommaert 2012, 29) and as a material force operating on human behaviour is a central object of research in an ethnographic theory of linguistic landscapes. The aim is to find out how space is filled with signs by people, and how these signs, in turn, influence people's behaviour. In R. Scollon and S. W. Scollon's model of geosemiotic analysis, this relationship is explained through the concept of "nexus analysis." One of its most important aspects is the theorisation of embodiment, conceptualised in the term "historical body" and the theorisation of "space as agentive and non-neutral" (Blommaert 2012, 29–30). J. Blommaert (2012) adopts the conceptualisation of the nexus between historical bodies, historical space, and the interaction order that is grounded in them. These are the key concepts that allow ethnography to take the "uniquely situated events it describes" and use them in the interpretation of higher-order structural and systemic regularities (ibid.). The ethnography based on nexus analysis helps us use the analysis of the unique and the particular to make generalisations about larger-scale social, political, and cultural phenomena. J. Blommaert and B. Rampton elaborate on this perspective, distinguishing two mainstream approaches to the ethnographic study of landscape (Blommaert and Rampton 2011, 11–15). One of them is linguistic ethnography, focusing on everyday communicative practices. The other one is the study of language and communication exploring the interaction between normativity and semiosis. The outcome of ethnographic research and study is to reach the stage where scholars and researchers can make "cumulative comparative generalisation." This will

enable them to explore how "the orderly and partially autonomous aspects of language and interaction reduce superdiversity's potentially pluralizing impact on communication" (Blommaert and Rampton 2011, 13).

The objectivity of ethnographic knowledge is an important aspect of research. J. Fabian points out that it does not lie in the logical consistency of a theory or in the givens of data but is rooted in human intersubjectivity (Fabian 2001, 14). Ethnographic knowledge is "based on what is intersubjectively and communicatively produced" (ibid., 15).

J. Blommaert points out that valid ethnographic research requires that the notion of practices should not be artificially separated from that of products. Practices always yield products. Products contain traces of practices. They can disclose the nature of such practices and can, in turn, themselves yield practices. Every text displays features of its unique context of production. It also has the potential to move across contexts. Even when a text is detached from the original context of its use, we can still make contextualising inferences about it (Blommaert 2007, 19). Ethnographic analysis is a reliable analytical perspective regarding the fact that we are living in a global world, characterised by mobility and unpredictability. Close ethnographic inspection helps us deal with this unpredictability.

5.5. Ethnopoetics and voice

Ethnopoetics is a subfield of ethnography that studies linguistic structures and their functions in social context. Originally, it emerged in the study of oral myth performance by D. Hymes (1981). It focuses on stylistics and poetics and includes the study not only of words, but also of paralinguistic phenomena such as metrics (measure, including syntactic parallelism and framing), vocables, and patterns of repetition. There is a concern with the aesthetic and evaluative dimensions of people's lives. The structure of a text is studied in terms of lines and stanzas instead of paragraphs. Ethnopoetics is closely related to the study of voice. Usually, the change of a voice or speaker will mark the beginning of a new verse, line, or stanza. Variation of voice will usually lie in a variation in grammar or in a stylistic device, which at first glance might seem insignificant (ibid., 318–322).

J. Blommaert (2007, 21–33) embraces ethnopoetics and the analysis of voice in his studies of grassroots literacy. Ethnopoetics originated as an analytic strategy aimed at identifying inherent aesthetic forms in oral narratives. Spoken narrative is considered to be a level of linguistic structure exhibiting consistent patterns of use. Similar patterns can be detected in written texts, therefore this analysis can be extended to the study of texts in general. Following Hymes's analytic strategy, we should look for principles

of organisation that are emic. They reflect the particular patterns that have been followed by the author when the text has been constructed. The patterns reflect judgements about the function and validity of the particular textual resources that have been used and the language or code that has been chosen. They also reflect the local beliefs and perceptions of what linguistic resources are and what their use reveals about the act of communication and about those who participate in it. By observing such patterns of language use, we can indexically infer all kinds of contextual features and judge the ways in which people organise communicative resources to produce specific meanings. The analysis described above is called an analysis of voice (ibid., 22–23).

The analysis of voice represents the particular and specific ways (often divergent from dominant norms of usage) in which people produce meanings. Voice is "the capacity to make oneself understood in one's own terms, to produce meanings under conditions of empowerment" (Blommaert 2007, 23). Sometimes some people's voices are not taken into account because the texts they produce reflect an unfamiliar pattern. However, the use of an unfamiliar pattern does not entail the absence of a pattern. When we say that a text makes sense to someone, we mean that it makes sense in a specific way. A text makes sense through the particular pattern of use of linguistic and stylistic resources that reflect the specific context and participants. When we neglect or reject the use of different resources, we say that difference is converted into inequality. Then, the emic forms of textual organisation become politically loaded. Ethnopoetics advocates the recognition of variation and variability, considering them to be natural features of societies. Recognising variation in cultural behaviour can bring about many potentially equivalent solutions to problems that arise from the misunderstanding of different aspects of diversity (ibid., 24).

5.6. The sociolinguistics of complexity

Another perspective on the study of space is to explore it as a sociolinguistic system, as "a meaningful system-of-meanings" (Blommaert 2012, 21). In a similar vein, R. Scollon and S. Scollon analyse the public landscape as densely packed with several different discourses in a dialogical interaction with one another, forming a semiotic aggregate (Scollon and Scollon 2003, 180—189). J. Blommaert defines public space as a sociolinguistic system (2012, 15–24; 2014). As such, it is not unified but is characterised by polycentricity and fragmentation. There is interaction between the different fragments. In addition, sociolinguistic systems are mobile. For example, one language variety may have a high value at one point and be considered a

stigmatised accent in another (2014, 11). Finally, sociolinguistic systems are dynamic and subjects of historical changes. The value and the function of the particular aspects of a sociolinguistic system are the outcome of historical processes of becoming. Different features of the system change at different speeds. Communication in these systems is a synchronic act. We have to synchronise features from the system that carry different indexical potential and interpret them as a single meaning. Synchronisation is a very important characteristic of sociolinguistic systems because it helps us resolve their polycentricity. Blommaert uses the term "fractal recursivity" (Blommaert 2012, 17) to explain the fact that if a phenomenon occurs on one scale-level, it is bound to resonate at different scale levels. To synchronise phenomena happening at different historical levels means to perform an act of interpretation. To interpret means to reduce complexity, to bring together different historical layers into a nutshell of "one 'synchronic' set of meanings" (ibid). An example of the struggle to reduce complexity is the position of monoglot ideologies, in which linguistic and cultural policies advocate uniformity, standardisation, and homogenisation. Following these principles implies bringing the sociolinguistic system to a finite state. In reality, due to the never-ending dynamics, the sociolinguistic system can never reach this state of equilibrium. In it, there is always the tension between two controversial tendencies—the tendency to reach uniformity and the tendency towards heterogeneity.

A sociolinguistic analysis of the type discussed above can help us describe and interpret layered and many-sided phenomena. It presupposes the development of a new branch of sociolinguistics—the sociolinguistics of complexity. Through it, we can observe and record different types of social change—from the momentary and evanescent variations (that may go by unnoticed by the general public) to the slow and gradual processes of profound linguistic, cultural, and social metamorphosis. The analysis of the linguistic landscape in this framework can reveal how the landscape reflects the complexities of the sociolinguistic system it houses and controls.

The signs that occur in public space are "chronicles of complexity" (Blommaert 2012, 19–21). The description of one particular space as a sociolinguistic system requires detailed attention to both the minute features of single signs and systemic relationships that exist between signs. The synchronic analysis of the linguistic landscape can freely be combined with long-term ethnographic observation. The fact that we can compare public signs to chronicles that document change leads us to one important aspect of LLS, which distinguishes it from traditional sociolinguistics. This is the emphasis that it puts on literacy. Originally, studies in sociolinguistics and anthropology were biased towards spoken language. Now this bias is replaced

by an attention to literacy and its specific role in human communication. This presupposes a transition from the analysis of narrative literacy to visual literacy or literacies, following the model of G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen (1996). Within an ethnographic framework, literacy practices need to be seen and understood as contextualised, as socially and culturally sensitive. Things become complicated when they are moved into the field of globalisation. When literacy products like texts and documents "travel" from one society into another, difficulties may arise but adequate tools for analysis may help solve the problem (Blommaert 2007, 31–32).

6. Social actors, historical bodies, and the author

A person acting in public space is not a straightforward concept. There are three important aspects of this concept. In the first place, a person is a physical body, located in space and time. Secondly, a person is a social human, a concept discussed in the work of M. A. K. Halliday (1978). Finally, a person has sociocultural and psychological knowledge, called for short history. All three aspects of a person are integrated into the concept of habitus, introduced by P. Bourdieu (cf. Jenkins 1992, 40–64), and are brought into the process of social action. Scollon and Scollon (2003) and J. Blommaert (2012) draw on the idea of habitus when they construct their concept of the social actor, acting in public space. They refer to it as the "historical body." The actions of the historical body in social space are explained through processes like "semiotic enskilment" and "somatisation" of social and psychological states and cultural practices (Blommaert 2012, 33–38; Scollon and Scollon 2003, 45–54).

There is one type of social activity that deserves separate discussion. This is the aspect of sign creation called authorship. Thus, B. Spolski remarks that the author need not be the same as the sign initiator or the owner of the sign (Spolski 2009, 30–32). It is also different from the person who wrote the text and from the person who made its artistic design. It is difficult to say which aspect of authorship is more important because the author of a public sign is typically a diffuse and multiple entity. D. Malinowski discusses authorship as a general phenomenon in the light of theories of performativity with particular reference to multimodality in discourse and communication and Hallidayan social semiotics. The author of public written inscriptions is in control of the meanings of written messages only to a certain extent. The attention falls on "the complex and agentive ways" in which the street landscape itself produces meaning (Malinowski 2009, 108). The domain of human agency behind the linguistic landscape is anonymous. The author's intent in the creation of meaning is

the product of the dichotomy of two forces. The first one is the dominance of one linguistic code over another in bilingual (or multilingual) signs. The occurrence of two or more codes in one sign has symbolic and political significance. The second guiding force is the distinction between officially authored (top-down) and individual (bottom-up) signs (ibid.).

There is the question of how to discern authorial intent from connotative meaning. D. Malinowski (ibid.) relates this distinction to the dichotomy between symbolic and indexical sign meaning. Within the scope of LLS, a sign can index the presence of a language community. In such a case, the language of that sign is not intentionally chosen by an individual author but indicates the performance of a standard social practice. Respectively, the symbolic use of a foreign language can lend an exotic air to a café, shop, or restaurant and can be seen as a deliberate manipulation by the sign-maker.

There is an analogy between the authoring of shop signs and the performance of speech acts. Malinowski (2009, 115) discusses two alternative views of performance in public space. One is based on J. Austin's theory of speech acts performance (Austin 1962). The illocutionary force of utterances is backed by the speaker's sincerity of intention. The emplacement of a bilingual sign with a specific linguistic and visual message can be compared to a speech act. Therefore, a bilingual sign in public space cannot be said to have truth-value. We can talk about success or failure to elicit a response to the sign. The "felicity conditions" for public inscriptions include in the first place the appropriate emplacement in an environment with similar signs. Then, there are the legibility of the text and the relevance between the sign's content and the type of goods or services offered by the business. The inclusion of another language on the inscription can be intentional. It can be designed to create an affective response among readers. P. Bourdieu offers an alternative conception (Jenkins 1992, 99–115). According to this view, "felicity conditions" are not features of the utterance and are not related to the intentions of the individual speaker. Illocutionary acts are acts of institution and cannot be realised unless they reflect the whole social order behind them. Bourdieu does not deny the speaker's (writer's, sign-maker's) intention, but discusses them in relation

with larger social forces that determine the success or failure of an utterance. In conclusion, we can say that, according to the two positions discussed above, authorship in linguistic landscapes is "mutually constituted by individual intention and social convention" (Malinowski 2009, 116).

Malinowski (ibid., 116–19) explains that the views of both Austin and Bourdieu can be referred to as deterministic, because of their focus on the felicity conditions that predetermine the success or misfiring of an utterance. There is a view of speech as an embodied action, which focuses on the ways transformative meanings are performed that escape the speaker's control. Such meaning is called "meaning-in-excess" (ibid., 118) and it is produced not only in speaking but also in writing. The difference comes from the fact that we cannot see the "source" of the message or the "writer" in writing. Due to this absence, the meaning-in-excess is produced by the materiality of writing itself, which includes the use of different fonts, colours, sizes, and spatial configuration. This diversity gives the inscriptions the potential to mean beyond control. The different communicative modes employed—linguistic, visual, and spatial—interact in complex ways producing multiple meanings. These modes transcend the initial intention of the author.

> . . . speakers are involved in a transformative process whenever they give voice, intentionally or not, to words that bear histories and point to futures that surpass the scene of the utterance. Critically, the outcome of this process is, because of the unique context of utterance and embodied production of language, uncertain. (Malinowski 2003, 118)

In the parallel that can be drawn between speech acts and multimodal texts, we can also say that the meanings emerging from both speech acts, which are at the same time bodily acts and the multimodal texts that dwell in public space, exceed the intent of the speaker and do much more than merely reproduce and reflect social structure. In this framework, the opposition between the denotational value of language and connotational meaning of the images becomes an important factor in the representation and interpretation of a singular meaning across different semiotic modalities. Therefore, authorship in the linguistic landscape "appears to have been produced in dialog between human interlocutors, a changing social setting, the various communicative modes present in the linguistic landscape of street and shop signs, and the interrelationships between therein" (Malinowski 2009, 123). Any interpretations of symbolic content and code choices may result as much from the agency of landscape as from that of the individual.