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Learning to Translate Linguistic Landscape

Abstract

As an experiment in thinking between research and pedagogical design, this narrative essay argues that translation holds particular promise, both as an approach for language learning and teaching in the linguistic landscape and, more broadly, as a figure or metaphor through which linguistic landscape researchers may reinterpret their work. In the essay, three salient aspects of translation are developed: as revelatory of gaps or “faultlines” of meaning in texts, as response to the social and political demands of time and place, and as a form of public action. The relevance of a translational approach to linguistic landscape research is argued through the figure and real-world examples of second language and literacy learning, in which the active disposition, exploratory operations and still-incomplete knowledge of the language learner offer new possibilities to the subject position of the linguistic landscape researcher.

Keywords: language learning, methodology, pedagogy, practice, reflexivity, transdisciplinarity, translation, visibility

1. Introduction

Since its ascendance a decade ago, the field of Linguistic Landscape has depended upon the objectivist logic of the photographic image, offering the “visibility and salience” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) of languages on signs as evidence of social heterogeneity and political change. Only relatively recently, with an increasing concern for the human practices and physical processes through which discourses in place may just as easily remain unseen as seen, have critical and ethnographically-inclined researchers endeavored to privilege other means of knowing (e.g., Blommaert, 2013; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2010; Waksman & Shohamy, 2015). Still, in name and in practice, Linguistic Landscape remains bound to that which is visible, in certain places and at certain times, always made salient through ideologically valenced “ways of seeing” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) and their modes of expression.

If representational practices and their claims on real-world truth remain a definitional problem for the field, then one valuable mode of inquiry might be to subject both (representational practices and the truths they tell) to exposure, critique, and constructive forms of testing and challenge. This narrative essay proposes *translation* as a rubric for understanding the knowledge work already being done, and available to be done, by practitioners in the field of Linguistic Landscape. Translation, as a palette of mobile practices of translingual inscription, has of course been recognized in the LL literature as a technique by which bi- or multi-lingual signage presents itself in the urban scene with duplicate, parallel, overlapping or fragmentary content (e.g., Backhaus, 2007; Koskinen, 2012; Reh, 2004). However, this paper borrows from a body of literature in Translation Studies embodying a more critical, postmodern approach in order to draw lessons from translation as *process* rather than *product*. As one might study urban

social dynamics through observation of ongoing interaction and exchange on the street corner, focusing attention upon the negotiations and choices through which knowledge in the field of LL—and of the linguistic landscape as site of research—helps to center attention on the “difference and friction” and “tension and conflict” attendant to all languaging practices in heterogeneous geographies (Simon, 2012; cf. Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). In a series of writing experiments on translation as revelatory of gaps or “faultlines” of meaning in texts (Miller, 1992), as responsibility and response to social and political demands (Robinson, 1997), and as a form of public action and activation (Venuti, 1995), this paper invites self-reflexive inquiry on the part of LL researchers on the methodological choices and representational practices of the field as a collective whole.

As a practical mode of developing more translational practice in linguistic landscape research—and as an end unto itself, with its own long developmental trajectory and goals—this essay argues for a pedagogical approach. Assertions about the suitability of translational approaches to linguistic landscape research are illustrated through the example of second language (L2) and literacy learning, where efforts to understand the LL as a learning resource have been underway for years already (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Dagenais et al., 2009; Rowland, 2012; Sayer, 2009). After illustrating areas of potential traffic between LL research methods and L2 pedagogy, the essay narrates an experimental project currently underway between language students and faculty at the author's university, the university language center, and the local city government to envision a more diverse urban environment through translation of the city's LL, thus highlighting the potential of LL translation as public action.

2. Linguistic landscape as ‘translational space’

In introducing her small-scale photographic analysis of translation activity in the Tampere suburb of Hervanta, Koskinen (2012: 79) remarks that “since translation is often the process through which any documentation comes to take on a new linguistic form, translatedness is an issue closely related to linguistic landscape research.” Indeed, whether named as such or not, studies of the bilingual or multilingual linguistic landscape, by the very nature of their objects of analysis, have investigated in detail the enabling conditions and traits of translated texts in public spaces. Spolsky and Cooper’s three rules for determining what language(s) should appear on signs from an authorial perspective ([1] Write in a language you know; [2] Prefer to write in the language or languages that intended readers are assumed to read; [3] Prefer to write signs in your own language or in a language with which you want to be identified; cf. Spolsky & Cooper, 1991: 74-94) may be interpreted as an early recipe for translation in signage. In a complementary sense, Reh’s (2004) “reader-oriented typology” of translation types in bilingual signage (duplicating–fragmentary–overlapping–complementary) has had lasting influence in the field (cf., Backhaus, 2007; Gorter, 2013).

Koskinen (2012) suggests that the field of Translation Studies (TS) itself can lend valuable tools to the analysis of LL data. In approaching the written discourse on public signage, she suggests that TS gives strategies for identifying “overt and covert translations, non-translation, foreignising or domestication strategies, and pragmatic adaptations such as explicitation and implication, additions and omission, simplification, and so on” (Koskinen, 2012: 80). Indeed, Robinson’s history of “centrifugal” moments in 1980s and 1990s translation theory (Robinson,

1997) offers lineages for each of these conceptual pairings, while underlining the human element of the act of translating itself: translating is not just a textual/literary process between source and target but an ethical and cultural one that draws upon the person of the translator, pushing her to find a third, separate space beyond the assumed binarisms of the field. As he writes, “What can we do about these phantoms that continue to dominate our debates? How can we poke fun at them, parody them, say NOT! To them, thumb our noses (and whatever’s in front of our noses) at them—and begin, gradually, to work past them?” (Robinson, 1997: 131).

It is this orthogonal relationship—the emergence of the translator in relation to, and even as a product of, the effort to translate between texts—that is of interest to this essay’s purpose of furthering the pedagogical potential of linguistic landscape through translation. As Cronin and Simon (2014) note, this potential can be seen in the material logic of language contact in (most often) urban space. Drawing upon Pratt’s (1992) notion of the *contact zone*, they remark that the “border logics” of disparate groups coming into contact in closed spaces are expressed through language; the mutual understandings (or lack thereof), conflicts, and negotiated coexistences among people make language visible as a primary instrument of identity and difference, and it is the translator who occupies a unique place as cultural mediator (122). Of this role, Simon (2012: 6) writes,

The translator emerges as a full participant in the stories of modernity that are enacted across urban space—modernity understood as an awareness of the plurality of codes, a thinking with and through translation, a continual testing of the limits of expression.

Translators are flâneurs of a special sort, adding language as another layer of dissonance to the clash of histories and narratives on offer in the streets and passageways.

As the remainder of this chapter argues, the figure of the translator—and the task of translation—can profitably be read in at least three ways as they pertain to knowledge creation in and of the linguistic landscape (summarized in Figure 1, below). At the meta-level, practitioners in the interdisciplinary field of linguistic landscape may be able to engage in self-reflection and critique by confronting ‘translations’ of the field into neighboring or mirroring fields, such as Landscape Studies. At the meso-level, focusing on strategies of translation in light of the social and political responsibilities of the vocation gives impetus to consider how LL research methodology and the methods of language pedagogy might mutually inform one another. And, at a more local level, a focus on the ‘visibility’ of the translator (Venuti, 1995) in her word-by-word navigation between two often incommensurate worlds of discourse urges us to consider translation as a form of public action and, potentially, as an activation of the public.

	Translation Studies orientation/goal	Instigating text	Response/application
1	Translation as revealing ‘faultlines’	Miller (1992), “Translation as the double production of texts”	Cross-disciplinary meta-reflection: Nash, 2016, “Is linguistic landscape necessary?”
2	Translation as responsibility and response	Robinson (1997), <i>What is translation?</i>	Pedagogical design: Transferring LL research methods to L2 pedagogy
3	Translation as public action and activation	Venuti (1995), <i>The translator’s invisibility</i>	Classroom application: “Translate New Haven” civic/ L2 educational project

Figure 1: Orientations and textual instigations from Translation Studies

3. Translation as revealing faultlines in the primary text

In the edited collection, *Text and Context: Cross-disciplinary perspectives on language study* (Kramersch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992), the American literary critic Joseph Hillis Miller explores the word *Bild* in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, a text that performs the difficulties of translation even as it is, in an abstract sense, about those difficulties. As Miller analyzes a number of existing translations of this text, he remarks that one thing the translator discovers through what cannot be translated is “the way any text in any language, both the 'original' and the translation, are idiomatic, timebound, marked by their places in history” (125). As he argues, translators are confronted with the inevitability of loss of situated meaning but what they can gain is twofold:

Translation produces two texts. As translators move from word to word and from sentence to sentence through the text they produce bit by bit replicas of the original in a different language. At the same time [...] an original text is also produced. A different translation produces a different original, by emphasizing different faultlines in the original, that is, by traducing the original in one way rather than another. The original is led out into the open where the translator is obliged to see hitherto hidden features. [...] To encounter them is to encounter what is, strictly speaking, untranslatable in the original (124).

In this sense, a productive understanding of the nature of knowledge production and representation in linguistic landscape research may be invited by asking how it has been ‘translated’ (or how it could be) across disciplines, and then taking note of the disciplinary and methodological ‘faultlines’ within the field of LL studies that come to the surface in the process of such an inquiry. This is a form of reflexivity at the trans-disciplinary level, an invitation and responsibility for LL researchers “to examine our own positionings, our own investments ‘in the game,’ so to speak—that is, how and why we come to subscribe to and appropriate certain ways of thinking, doing, and being, and how and why we become attached to certain positionings” (Byrd Clark, 2016: 11). In the linguistic landscape literature, a call for such reflexive awareness and critique may be read in Spolsky’s “Prolegomena to a sociolinguistic theory of public signage” (Spolsky, 2009), in which he asks of this “awkwardly but attractively labeled” new area of study, “Whatever we call it, is linguistic landscape a phenomenon calling for a theory, or simply a collection of somewhat disparate methodologies for studying the nature of public written signs?” (25). The entire project of Jaworski and Thurlow’s influential *Semiotic landscapes* (2010) may be seen as another translational effort, as it critiqued the narrowness of a field that appeared (and often still appears) to identify itself with the appearance of isolable linguistic codes despite the richly multimodal semiotic fabric of the signed environment.

In light of the continued alignment of the preponderance of linguistic landscape research with the theories and methods of language study (broadly speaking), one might find productive faultline-revealing insights to LL studies from spatially-oriented vantage points of disciplines such as Cultural Geography and Landscape Studies. This is precisely the opportunity presented by Nash’s (2016) short critique, “Is linguistic landscape necessary”—taken up here not for its

thoroughness, but primarily from its disciplinary situatedness and assumed audience in the pages of the journal *Landscape Research*. In his six-page essay, Nash uses readings of Blommaert (2013) and Hélot et al. (2012) to give two basic critiques: first, that Linguistic Landscape does not substantially advance the study of *landscape* per se, and second, that what passes for most LL research amounts basically to old sociolinguistic wine in new bottles. As he writes, “The methodological and theoretical thrust of LL can be posed as a logical extension of any detailed consideration of elements of analysis necessitated under what can be considered traditional sociolinguistics” (Nash, 2016: 381).

He finds some exception in the first of two pieces he briefly reviews, Blommaert’s *Ethnography, superdiversity and linguistic landscapes: Chronicles of complexity* (2013). This he reads as a positioning in “classic and modern sociolinguistic research” that shows that “modern scholarship must involve and concern new and dynamic interpretations of cultural and linguistic complexity and diversity as measured by, among other things, analysis of the LL” (382). The benefit of Blommaert’s work, according to Nash, is primarily in the way that an historically-aware and textually ethnographic approach implicates the landscape as a changing, agential force more than synchronic analyses that would see it as mere backdrop for language. Nash praises Blommaert’s work for what it offers to sociolinguistics, while still remarking that “With a lack of an explicit foregrounding of the relevance of LL to landscape, it is unlikely hardcore landscape scholars will be satisfied” (383); a similar charge is leveled upon the Hélot et al. volume, where he disappointedly remarks, again, that the frame of linguistic landscape is applied to “already well established and directed” (383) areas of sociolinguistic research and not to phenomena or effects of landscape.

From within the disciplinary foci of Linguistic Landscape Studies as it has come to be known in sociolinguistics and language policy and planning circles (to name a few), such critiques may appear trifling or even irrelevant: as popular glosses of the very term “linguistic landscape” make abundantly clear, *language* (multilingualism, code mixing, pragmatics, etc.) is the focal object of analysis and is contextualized by the landscape—and not the other way around. And yet, critique’s such as Nash’s, or even Spolsky’s, Jaworski and Thurlow’s, Pennycook and Otsuji’s (2015)—who argue in *Metrolingualism: Language and the City* that language use is inextricable from place-embedded ‘spatial repertoires’—may be seen in Miller’s (1992) sense as “traducing the original in one way rather than another,” bringing to the fore the “faultline” of landscape in linguistic landscape studies. Such a translation might profitably leave scholars of linguistic landscape with questions such as the following (while other translations would of course yield others):

- What is the responsibility of linguistic landscape research to *landscape*? To its modes, and practices of representation and interpretation? To avenues of inquiry informed or inflected by the concerns of landscape studies, geography, urban planning, architecture, visual studies, or other fields?
- More locally, what are the affordances, limitations, and ideologies of the visual mode—and the medium of the digital image—for the representation and interpretation of data and phenomena of interest?

- At the meta-level (after having gone through translation exercises such as these), what is to be gained from ‘translating’ the concerns, frameworks, methods, and practices of one field to another?

4. Translation as responsibility and response

In his historical review of translation theory, Robinson (1997) notes that translation has gone from a concern simply with texts and whether, as St. Jerome said in the 4th century CE, one should translate “word-for-word” or “sense-for-sense”, to the recognition of a more complex ecology of languages, people, and sociocultural contexts of reception and production. Although there continue to be dedicated literalists (such as Walter Benjamin) who argue that the responsibility of the translator is ‘just to the text,’ questions of where, how, and by whom a translated text will be received have cast increasing light on the sociocultural situatedness of translation as discursive action. As Hermans (2009: 95) remarked in light of the growing relevance of cultural studies in the 1980s, “translation, enmeshed as it is in social and ideological structures, cannot be thought of as a transparent, neutral or innocent philological activity.”

In an effort to “traduce the original [text/field of linguistic landscape] one way” (Miller, quote above) while translating across disciplines, I have experimented with applying methodological orientations from linguistic landscape research to second language (L2) pedagogy (Malinowski, 2015; Malinowski, 2016). In the paragraphs that follow, I review the import of this effort as a translation of sorts not only from ‘source text’ (linguistic landscape

studies) to ‘target text’ (L2 teaching and learning), but in the reverse direction as well, considering (as in my reading of Nash, 2016 above) how linguistic landscape research might be pushed in productive directions by adopting the stance of language learners and teachers.

In fact, a significant and growing body of literature on language learning in and with the linguistic landscape has already begun to bridge this gap. Studies include those that see the LL as an additional source of input for second language acquisition with contextualized, authentic texts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Sayer, 2009), to those that highlight the potential of the LL to foster students’ critical sociopolitical awareness (Rowland, 2012; Shohamy & Waksman, 2009), to those that adopt a multiliteracies approach to see youth rewriting their collective and individual identities in place (Burwell & Lenters, 2015; Dagenais et al., 2009). While some learning projects treat the urban landscape of signs more or less as a convenient backdrop of authentic and contextualized materials, others seek to actively incorporate thematic and theoretical concerns of LL research, instances of the kind of traffic in meaning across disciplines argued for in this paper. As Burwell and Lenters (2015: 5) argue, “integrating linguistic landscape research with multiliteracies pedagogy creates opportunities for students to learn about – and through – multimodality, multilingualism, production and critique.”

In my own work spanning linguistic landscape research, L2 teaching and language teacher training and, many years before, as a language learner myself, the face-to-face confrontation with the visible and audible languages of the public sphere has been first and foremost an *educational* one. The linguistic landscape presents a wealth of often hidden and sometimes irreconcilable differences in intent and meaning that must be actively queried and negotiated if they are to be understood in relation to one another; as well, the interpretation of voices in dialogue through the landscape in a particular place and time requires not just a

nuanced reading on the part of a supposedly neutral observer, but may be said to demand participation by virtue of (at very least) the viewer's embodied and emplaced subjectivity.

A growing demand in the field of L2 teaching and learning to make good on these generalizations is clear: the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in the U.S. has since 1996 identified as one of its five National Standards a "Communities" Standard, by which "students [should] use the language both within and beyond the school setting" (ACTFL, 2006); meanwhile, language and literacy instructors following a pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) have for decades wrestled with how to incorporate spatial and visual design elements into their synthetic, critical, and creative approaches that see linguistic meaning as only one facet of the multimodal whole of human semiosis.

In the view taken in this paper, the 'translation' of linguistic landscape methods to the site of L2 learning offers a powerful opportunity to fulfill this mandate. In particular, the so-called qualitative turn in linguistic landscape studies (Blackwood, 2015; Milani, 2013) has foregrounded processes of textual interpretation and on-site, interpersonal communication (interviews, walking tours, etc.) that are well adapted to scenarios of applied language learning. As a tangible illustration of this borrowing of research methods for the purposes of language pedagogy, I have drawn from the work of Nira Trumper-Hecht (2010), who asserted the need for a multilayered spatial approach to understanding discourse in the linguistic landscape that would not overlook local inhabitants' (or, as she put it, "walkers'") readings of place (see Malinowski, 2016: 105-6). What resulted was a map of teaching and activity strategies that sought to ground L2 learners' understandings of discourse in place (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2003) in three distinct, yet overlapping, kinds of spatial knowledge: "perceived space", "conceived space", and "lived space" (cf. Lefebvre, 1991; Trumper-Hecht, 2010). Visualized as a three-bladed wind turbine to

evoke both the division of a two-dimensional space into three equal parts and the electric power/L2 knowledge-generating action of the rotating blades, this map appears as Figure 2:

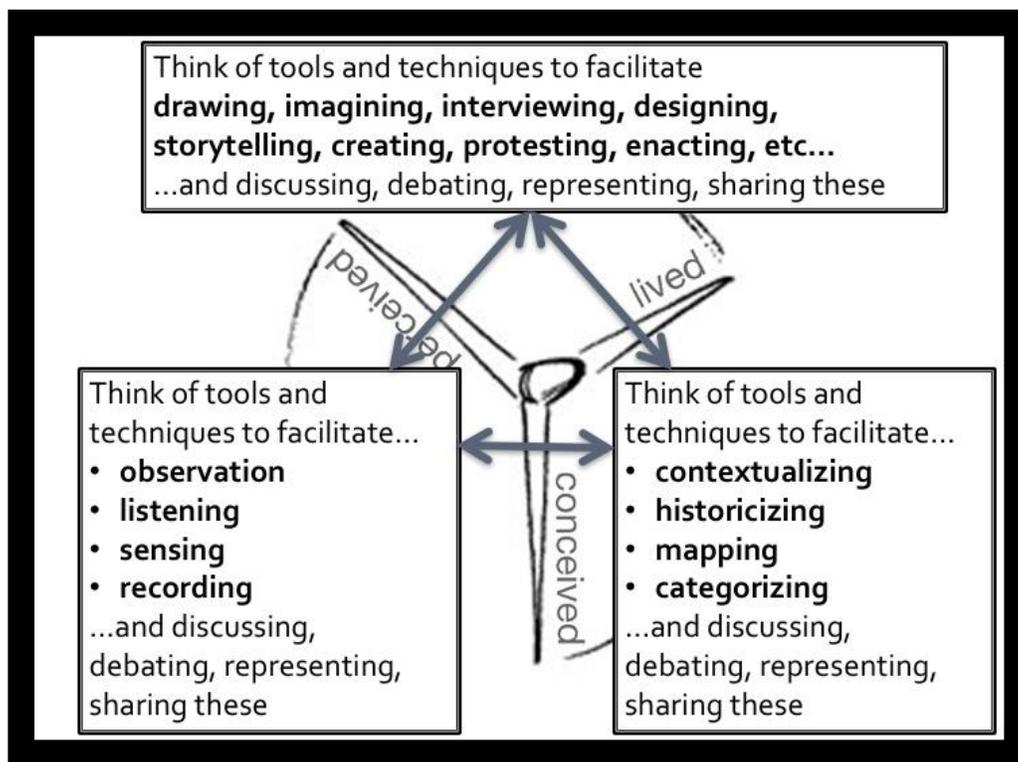


Figure 2: Illustration of L2 learning ideas in three separate spaces of knowledge (perceived, conceived, lived) based on Trumper-Hecht's (2010) adaptation of concepts from Lefebvre (1991)

In Trumper-Hecht's estimation, linguistic landscape research up to the time of her chapter had privileged official, governmental, or other top-down knowledge about language use in signs ("conceived spaces"), as well as the plainly visible and audible "perceived spaces" to the eye and ear of the LL researcher. What it had largely overlooked, however, was the "lived spaces" of local inhabitants—the understandings of the significance of the appearance of Arabic, Hebrew or English on this sign or that, for instance, in ways that might well diverge from the top-down (conceived) or researcher's (perceived) interpretations. Only by taking all three into account

together, she asserted, could a more accurate and *ethical* understanding of linguistic landscape be reached.

This is the premise of the translation of methods to L2 learning in the linguistic landscape as well: while language students could read textbook histories of a place, for instance, and then observe, listen, and otherwise document the linguistic landscape of a given place with their own senses and recording devices for applied ‘fieldwork’ (“perceived space” activities), they would *also* need to attend to the sensory, artistic, and interpretive meanings of others through such techniques as collaborative storytelling, artistic creation and interviewing (“lived space” activities; see Figure 2)—all potentially rich language learning activities in their own right.

As in Trumper-Hecht’s study and in other qualitatively oriented linguistic landscape studies of the past several years (Blommaert, 2013; Curtin, 2014; Lou, 2016; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2010; Waksman & Shohamy, 2015), this assemblage, or juxtaposition, of methods in the service of a single inquiry is designed to answer new sorts of questions. As is illustrated in Figure 3, language teaching tools and techniques belonging to each space call for learners to engage linguistically and subjectively with the people and places of the linguistic landscape in qualitatively different ways: when identifying demographic boundaries in one’s neighborhood or city, for example, one may not have to visit a neighborhood or talk to its residents in order to read maps, census data, or news articles mentioning government-recognized boundaries. Students on a walking tour taking photos and written notes, looking up unknown words in signs, and documenting their observations may check with peers to verify the accuracy of their findings. Yet “lived space” prompts such as this, asking students to attune themselves to their subjective responses to the place—and to those of its workers, residents, and ‘walkers’—prompt them to use language in creative and potentially idiosyncratic ways that may open up new

avenues of knowledge and expression in language classrooms, even as they may prove challenging to assess or test with standardized instruments.

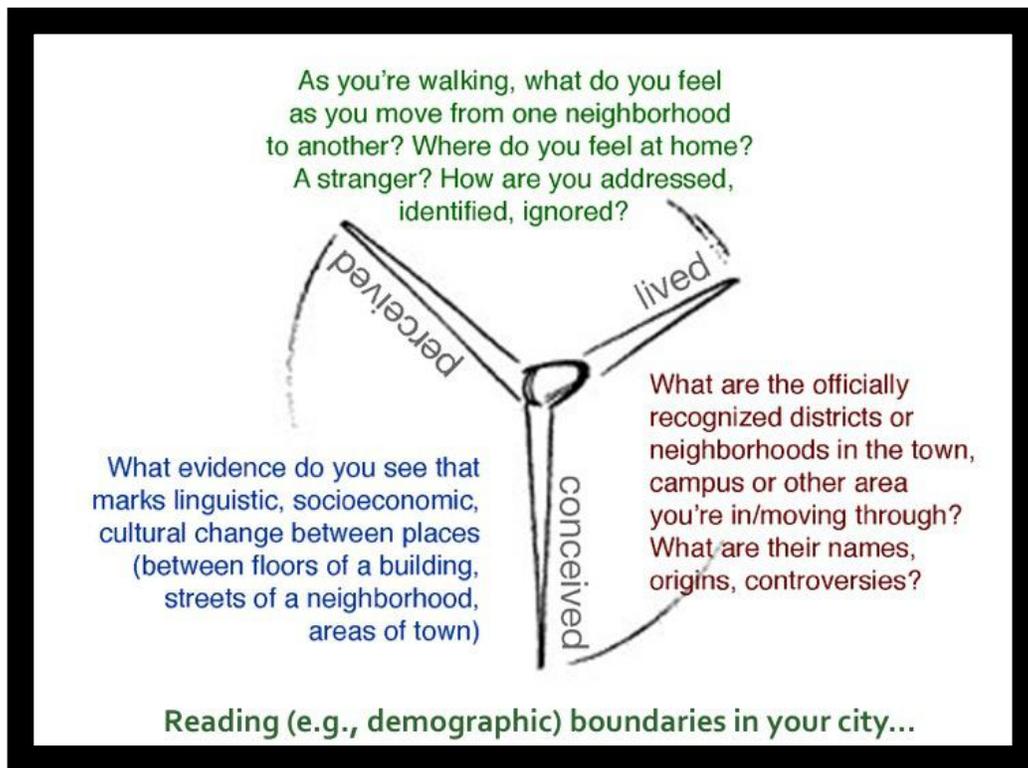


Figure 3: Sample language learning activity (Reading boundaries in one's city) with guiding questions for each of the three knowledge spaces translated from Trumper-Hecht (2010)

Determining the effectiveness and particular applications of this particular translation from linguistic landscape research to L2 pedagogy—and its aptness for the discursive communities in which it finds itself—is of course quite different from conducting the exercise of translation itself. The proposed framework would certainly have to be reevaluated and re-tempered to suit the specific demands of each setting; indeed, in terms of learning outcomes, such a model might well prove to be indistinguishable from other frameworks. Yet these are concerns for another time and place. Here, the *process* of this translation is designed to focus attention beyond the

source and target ‘texts’ (LL methods and L2 teaching, respectively) to the nature of their relationality—how the kinds of world-knowing called for by Trumper-Hecht and language educators setting out to ‘teach the languages of the city’ may speak to each other and give researchers and teachers pause to reflect upon their tasks. In such a calculation, one persistent ‘faultline’ to emerge from processes of translation must be the dispositions, commitments, and actions of translators themselves in (and as) the landscape. In particular, drawing parallels between the (wondering, struggling, mistaken, correcting, reflecting, growing) person of the language learner and the often-invisible LL researcher may be helpful as both do not simply read ‘what’s there’ but actively produce, reproduce, and transform the LL through their own representational practices.

5. Translation as public action and activation

“Visibility” and “invisibility” are the terms used by the American scholar in Translation Studies, Lawrence Venuti, in his 1995 book *The Translator’s Invisibility*, to describe the place of the translator in the translated text. The overwhelming pressure in the U.S. translation market and professional practice, according to Venuti, is to “domesticate” foreign texts, to make them read “fluently” in translation, without “linguistic or stylistic peculiarities” and reflecting the dominant socio-discursive conventions of the target reader. In opposition to this expectation that the foreignness of the text and the translator her/himself should disappear, Venuti argues for an ethical and cultural imperative to *foreignize*: to engage in dialogue and dialogical self-transformation by not submitting to normative modes of expression and linguistic life, and to

oppose normative economic and political pressures. As he writes, "A translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other" (Venuti, 1995: 306).

Venuti regards the languaging activity of translation as moving in (at least) two directions at once. First, it seeks to foreignize or defamiliarize translations in the face of normative social, economic and political pressures, in light of the contention that translation is itself a site of discursive struggle and even conflict between vastly unequal powers. At the same time, Venuti asserts that the translator's resistance to normativity through tactics of "foreignization" works by making his or her own subjectivity part of the text, by exposing the site of struggle, that is, the mechanics of the text—the choice to insert a 'non-fluent' grammatical construction, use 'unconventional' punctuation, typographic or stylistic conventions, etc.—and that this is a process of subjectivation, of social and linguistic becoming that is enacted by taking a stance.

In linguistic landscape research, we see great curiosity and analytical focus on what could be termed the translational 'disfluencies' of signage in public spaces—languages that appear to be out of place where they are posted, or missing where they should be; bilingual signs in which messages in one language diverge from or even contradict those of the other; word choice or spelling that seems to some observers to be mistaken. As Koskinen (2012: 74) asserts, careful attention to such "translational effects" in publicly visible signage helps to illuminate "issues of authorship, audiences, and community and their connections with 'elsewhere'". The contention of the previous section of this paper is that such 'disfluencies' can and should be approached from a pedagogical standpoint not only as valuable sources of information about differences between language and worldview, but as rich learning opportunities unto themselves. In fact, in the field of L2 teaching and learning, translation is regaining attention precisely for this reason,

as it “illuminates the nature of language per se as well as pointing to specific contrasts between the students’ L1 [native language] and the target L2” (Godwin-Jones, 2015: 14). Growingly, it is seen as a vital activity with numerous approaches and uncertain outcomes, as Cook (2010: xix) writes:

Translation, of its nature, spills over into a host of neighbouring activities and uses of language. This is not surprising. Translation is a living, moving activity, not a dead one to be pinned down in a museum. It is this dynamism which can make it so interesting and so stimulating, not only to linguists and translators, but to teachers and students too.

As an experiment in linguistic landscape translation as pedagogy, the author has recently begun a collaboration with a small group of language teachers and community stakeholders in the small northeastern U.S. city where the author’s institution is located. Provisionally titled “Translate New Haven,” the project seeks to create public resources to visualize a linguistic cityscape that reflects some of the 60 or more languages actually spoken in the city, while serving as a canvas for language students to develop translingual, transcultural competences (MLA, 2007) for positioning themselves with respect to these languages as community languages.

At the classroom level, teams of students are told that they are commissioned by the city government to enrich the town’s multilingual identity and visible identity through translation of existing English signage, and creation of new Spanish, Italian, Arabic and other signs. Students must take into account the demographics, community histories, and local identities in the area, while debating the linguistic, demographic, and cultural significance of various translations for the specific places where they wish to install new signs. At all stages, maximal participation is designed with and solicited from community members; in addition to small face-to-face focus

group meetings, this involves public posting of translation options and proposals for public comments and voting in an online forum. Final translations are to be prepared for submission to the city and produced as actual material signs (as of the writing of this chapter, city offices have expressed interest in prototyping, producing and installing a limited number of bilingual signs). All signs and translation options are also included for public display in a virtual map exhibit.

One hoped-for outcome of linguistic landscape translations through this project is the instigation of public discussion about the significance of a visibly multilingual (or noticeably monolingual) cityscape, and the larger issue of the role of languages in public life. Indeed, seeing one's city in a different language may well be an extreme example of the *foreignizing* effect that Venuti advocates for in translated texts (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Citizen's Bank on Church Street, New Haven, Connecticut, rendered in Chinese as “市民銀行” with a left-right slider tool allowing the viewer to seamlessly show the scene in English and/or Chinese

However, just as the simplicity of the two-word proper (business) name translation depicted in Figure 4 conceals the several-person, multi-stage trial-and-error process that produced it, the deeper intent of the Translate New Haven project is to expose, develop, and reflect upon translation as a multitude of processes laden with deep personal, political, and communal significance. One of the first trainings that student participants in the project undergo is the documentation and analysis of the multilingual linguistic landscape as it currently exists in their city; a schematic representation of a sample text and discussion prompts appears as Figure 5:

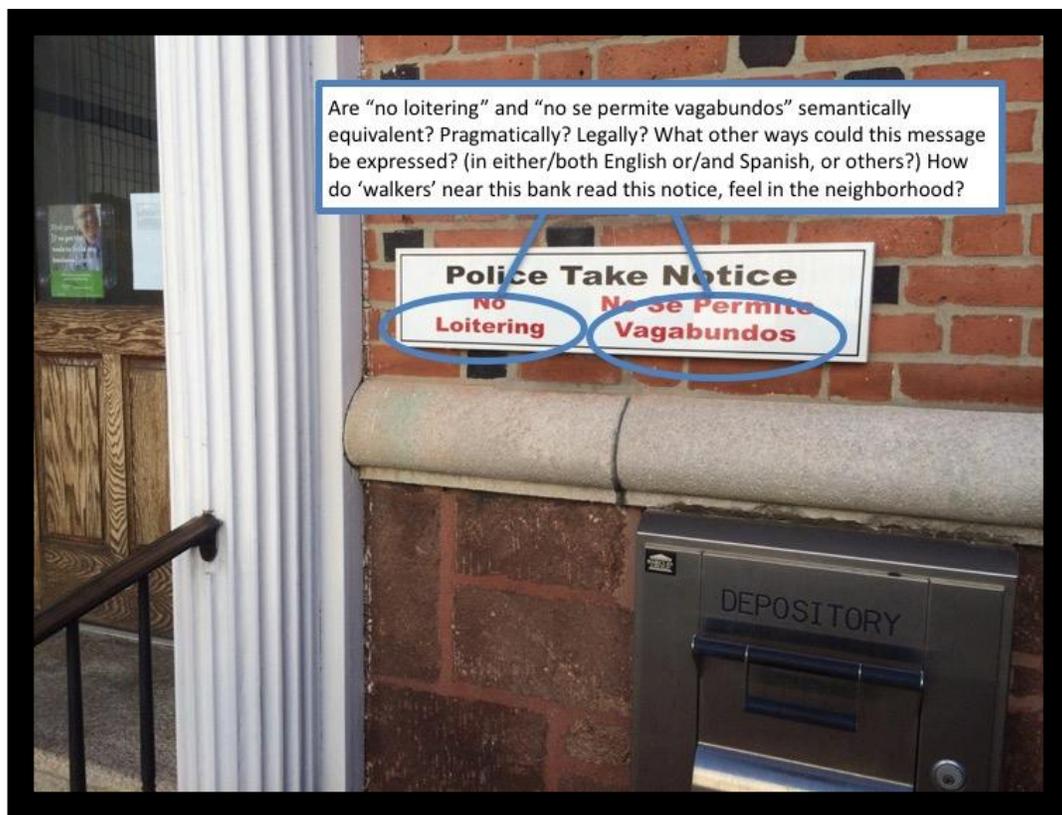


Figure 5: “Police Take Notice” sign near automated teller machine at a bank in New Haven, Connecticut.

Of course, students tasked with translating “No Loitering” from English to Spanish might be tempted to turn to dictionaries or online translation tools. The most common of these, Google Translate (queried in November, 2016), gives “Sin Merodear” as the translation, however. What are students to make of the difference between the dictionary translation and the translation as it exists in front of them on the street? How should they, and other emerging speakers of Spanish, feel that, in English, the sign prohibits an activity (“loitering”), while in Spanish it prohibits a class of people (“vagabundos”)? These are but a few of the questions that may have few ready answers but that, it is hoped, the very asking of which may contribute to learners’ *visibility* as translators and self-reflexive development as language users. A full report on outcomes and future potential for learning-through-translation in the linguistic landscape to act in public consciousness and space is forthcoming after the project runs its course in Spring, 2017.

6. Conclusion

As an experiment in thinking between research and pedagogical design, this study argues that translation holds particular promise, both as an approach for language learning and teaching in the linguistic landscape and, more broadly, as a figure or metaphor through which linguistic landscape researchers-as-practitioners understand and position ourselves, and our own work, in the field. In this sense, translation is seen not as an “endpoint” or one-way traversal as a target-language text is produced from an original, but as an “*andpoint*”, eliciting new interpretations of

the original text and new understandings of sign readers, sign writers, and the world they inhabit. As such, the chapter makes the case that representations of the linguistic landscape cannot be avoided—nor should they. Rather, by more intentional engagement in active processes of deconstruction, comparison, debate, imagination, and—crucially—purposive re-making of signs, the contingency and along-the-way-ness of representations may come to the fore, allowing linguistic landscapers to better contextualize our data and mobilize our analyses.

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