



Book Review: Backhaus, Peter (2007): Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; 158 Pages ISBN 9781853599460

Omar Alomoush

English Department, Tafila Technical University, Jordan
Email: alomoushomar@yahoo.com

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Backhaus examines urban multilingualism in the linguistic landscape of Tokyo, the capital city of Japan. In this monograph, the linguistic landscape is seen as a sub-discipline of sociolinguistics. The significance of this monograph to linguistic landscape research is that it represents the first comprehensive approach tackling multilingualism in the linguistic landscape and overcoming a range of methodological problems facing former studies. In this sense, Backhaus's approach in data collection and analysis may help linguistic landscapers and researchers to undertake research in multilingualism in the linguistic landscape. The current work comprises acknowledgements, a foreword by Bernard Spolsky, six chapters, an appendix, references, and an index. While the first three chapters represent an introduction and theoretical background, the fourth chapter in turn paves the way for the application of an empirical study in Tokyo's linguistic landscape, applied in chapter five.

That chapter one discusses the examination of written language in the public space of metropolises is the bulk of Backhaus's work. In this respect, the author (p.1) refers to previous studies such as Halliday (1972), who considers the city not only a place of talk, but also a place of writing and reading. At the same time, this work focuses on 'urban language contact in the written medium: the languages of the signs'. Backhaus (p.1) holds:

Every urban environment is a myriad of written messages on public display: office and shop signs, billboards, and neon advertisements, traffic signs, topographic information and area maps, emergency guidance and political poster campaigns, stone inscriptions, and enigmatic graffiti discourse.

The author maintains that these messages contribute to the making of the linguistic landscape of any given place.

In chapter two, *Semiotic Background and Terminology*, Backhaus gives an introduction to the main features of language use on signs, arguing that the examination of multilingualism on signs in the public space differs from other modes of communication in written and spoken contexts. In addition, the writer discusses different definitions and interpretations of the term linguistic landscape and senses and types of the term 'sign'. After Itagi and Singh (2002), the author (p.10) draws a distinction between the noun 'linguistic landscape' and the gerund 'linguistic landscaping'. While the former refers to 'the planning and implementation of actions pertaining to language on signs', the latter relates to 'the result of these actions'. Throughout his monograph, Backhaus maintains a distinction between these two terms as cited above. As maintained by Backhaus (p.12), only the paper introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) established this field of study as a coherent discipline, even though several previous studies employed linguistic landscape research. This is mainly apparent in Backhaus's expansion upon the definition of survey items suggested by Landry and Bourhis (1997). In chapter three, *Previous Approaches to the Linguistic Landscape: An Overview*, Backhaus gives a comprehensive overview of previous linguistic landscape studies conducted in different urban settings, including Brussels (Tulp, 1978), Montreal (Monnier, 1989), Paris and Dakar (Calvet, 1990,1994), and Lira, a town in Uganda (Reh, 2004). In light of these studies, the author notices that the language policy of the state does not indicate which code(s) prevail(s) in the public space, whose language(s) is /are mainly manifested in language practices on nonofficial signs.. The author also discusses the methodological issues followed in the above studies to arrive at a congruent methodological framework aiming at examining multilingualism from a sociolinguistic point of view.

In the light of the methodology followed in the abovementioned studies, Chapter four outlines the main concerns that envelope the sociolinguistics of the linguistic landscape. Interestingly, the chapter aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by introducing three research questions aiming at directing the current work. These research parameters include linguistic landscape by whom, for whom, and the general language situation. To accomplish this study, the writer applies both qualitative and quantitative procedures while gathering and analysing data. According to the writer, this chapter attempts to find a coding scheme suitable for carrying out a sociolinguistic study in the linguistic landscape and devoid of methodological problems.

In chapter five, the author (p.64) introduces a frame for studying the linguistic landscape and applies a fine-grained coding scheme to a corpus of signs. According to Backhaus, a sound data collection procedure requires two conditions: the determination of the geographical limits of the survey area and the unit of analysis. Backhaus investigated the

linguistic landscape of 29 survey areas of the Yamanote Line, a circular railway line connecting a number of major city centres in Tokyo. These stations represent a multi-layered picture of the city centre in the sense that they include very busy and less crowded districts. The boundaries of each survey area were specified as consisting of an area located between the traffic lights of two consecutive intersections, wherein the poles of traffic lights represent the end of any given survey area. The survey items were also thoroughly defined (p.66):

A sign was considered to be any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame. The underlining definition is physical, not semantic. It is rather broad, including anything from the small handwritten sticker attached to a lamp-post to huge commercial billboards outside a department store. Items such as push and pull stickers at entrance doors, lettered foot mats, or botanic explanation plates on trees were considered signs, too.

In analysing data collected, the first step is to categorise countable items into monolingual and multilingual signs. Backhaus has excluded monolingual Japanese signs from data collected because he wants to examine urban multilingualism in Tokyo. A sign will be considered multilingual if it contains two languages or more, say Japanese and English (p.67). Backhaus presents a congruent methodology to study the linguistic landscape by introducing research parameters and analytical categories. These research questions include 'linguistic landscaping by whom?', 'linguistic landscaping for whom?', and 'linguistic landscape quo vadis?'. These guiding questions are analysed according to nine criteria: languages contained, combinations, top-down and bottom-up forces, geographic distribution, code preference, part writing, visibility, idiosyncrasies, and layering (p.65).

In chapter six, the writer closes his book by summarising the findings of the Tokyo sample, which are guided by the questions cited above. It reveals that nonofficial agencies are almost the main responsible for the majority of multilingual signs in the linguistic landscape of Tokyo, whereas official forces participate in the construction of multilingualism on signs by less than 30 per cent. The presence of complete and partial translations and transliterations on signs is very useful for the readers from the foreign and Japanese populations. It was noticed that English is generally confined to slogans, titles, and business names, while Japanese relates to more specific information. The general linguistic situation reveals the impact of language interference from Japanese into English, which is apparent in the number of linguistic idiosyncrasies noticed in the linguistic landscape. In comparing the older and newer versions of signs, there is a noticeable preference toward the use of foreign languages at the expense of Japanese, which shows signs of multilingualism in Tokyo's linguistic landscape. However, Japanese will be the predominant language at least in the near future.

As pointed out throughout, Backhaus presents a congruent methodological approach, which has added new dimensions to the existing field of linguistic landscape. More specifically, Backhaus identifies three guiding research questions: Linguistic Landscape by whom? Linguistic landscape for whom? Linguistic landscape quo vadis?. At the same time, his definition of the unit of analysis as described above contributed greatly to linguistic landscape research. Although Backhaus relies on former studies, Backhaus has created analytical categories neglected by previous studies, especially linguistic idiosyncrasies, and uses his own terminology, particularly 'part writing' with its main types adopted from the field of musicology: homophonic, mixed, polyphonic, monophonic signs. The same notions with the exception of monophonic signs have been implemented by Reh (2004), but the terminological designations are different. I wonder why Backhaus uses the term 'polyphonic signs', which might be replaced by code mixing or switching in that it may be mainly subdivided into intra-sentential code-switches and inter-sentential code-switches. This work also counts on the observations made by Scollon and Scollon (2003), especially those on code prominence and layering. For example, code preference as an analytical category in Backhaus' quantitative study relies on placement and size in case that there is a conflict, font size outweighs order. As far as my current project is concerned, the relevance of this work comes from the methodological considerations provided, which will help to expand upon Backhaus' paradigm to apply in the linguistic landscape of urban Jordan. In other words, we will adapt and build upon this methodological framework to devise a coding scheme suitable for the linguistic landscape of Jordanian cities.

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