

Mapping Language Vitality

Copp lie Cocq, Humlab, Ume  University, Sweden

Project participants: Eva Lindgren, Lena Granstedt, Johan  hlfeldt (Ume  University)

This poster will present an ongoing project aiming at visualizing urban linguistic landscapes through digital mapping in the purpose of approaching representations and conditions for multilingualism. A linguistic landscape is shaped by the combination of official and less official signs, i.e. "road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings [in a given] territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997:25). Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS, see for instance Blommaert 2013; Shohamy et.al. 2008; Shohamy & Gorter, 2010) give attention to the consequences and impact of visibility and materialization of languages not only in an informative and symbolic dimension, but also by their impact on language vitality (Landry & Bourhis, 1997:45). Also, attitudes toward a language, in relation to visibility and use in public spaces, influence the language's prerequisites and conditions for revitalization (Grenoble & Whaley 2006; Hyltenstam & Stroud 1991).

One of the focuses of the project *Mapping Language Vitality* that will be illustrated and described in the poster is the case of official minority and Indigenous languages in Sweden. The historical hierarchical relationship between these languages and majority languages, and recent changes in minority politics motivate this choice of focus.

In the poster, we present a pilot study conducted in 2015-2016, a prototype (deep map), and the preliminary results upon which we plan to pursue the project. In the pilot study, about 400 linguistic expressions were photographed: fixed signs and signboards, posters, temporary vernacular signs etc. A visualization was created by producing a digital map in order to see where, when and which languages materialized in the city. The photographs were coded and assigned characteristics such as language, position, type of sign, sender, addressee etc. and placed geographically on an interactive map with filterable categories, i.e. that enables the user to navigate through layers based of the data linked to the images.

The pilot study was conducted in Ume  in Northern Sweden, an official administrative area for the Indigenous S mi languages and where more than 34 languages are taught as school as mother tongue. In the next step of the project, we aim at developing this study to include and analyze a larger set of data covering several geographical areas. The digital map is central in order to visualize connections between languages (as they materialize in the landscape) and other layers of information. A This form of digital visualization enables us to explore how and to what extent different languages coexist, and examine how this looks in relation to the majority language Swedish and other socio-cultural and socio-linguistic factors.

The field of LLS has been criticized for being limited to qualitative data (Moriarty, 2014: 458). Also, place has often been interpreted as fixed and static instead of dynamic, fluid and changing (Ben-Rafael & al. 2010). In our project and as we will present in this poster, the use of visualization through an interactive map helps us to counter these shortcomings, to contextualize and capture the dynamism of the linguistic landscapes.

References cited

- Ben-Rafael E.; Shohamy, S.; & Barni, M. (2010). Introduction: An approach to an ‘Ordered Disorder’, In E. Shohamy; E Ben-Rafael & M. Barni (Eds), *Linguistic landscape in the city*. Bristol UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2013. *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes*. *Chronicles of Complexity*. Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Grenoble, LA. & Whaley, L. (2006). *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyltenstam, K. & Stroud, C. (1991). *Språkbyte och språkbevarande: Om samiskan och andra minoritetsspråk*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. 1997. Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1), 23–49.
- Moriarty, M. (2014). Languages in motion: Multilingualism and mobility in the linguistic landscape. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 18(5), 457-463.
- Shohamy, Elana & Gorter, Durk. 2008. *Linguistic Landscape. Expanding the Scenery*. Taylor and Francis.
- Shohamy, E. et al. 2010. *Linguistic Landscape in the city*. Multilingual matters.