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Title: Investigating visual practices in educational settings : Schoolscapes, language ideologies and organizational cultures

Year: 2017

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Investigating visual practices in educational settings: schoolscapes, language ideologies and organizational cultures

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Introduction

In our chapter, we provide an overview of approaches to the study of linguistic landscapes (e.g. Shohamy & Gorter, 2009; Shohamy, 2012; Blommaert, 2013) and semiotic practices in educational settings, taking account of both theory and method. We also illustrate this area of research with reference to schoolscapes in Eastern Europe. The field of linguistic landscape studies has various roots and methodological traditions (see Shohamy, 2012 for a recent summary). In this account we mainly deal with *schoolscapes* (Brown, 2012), and we discuss research that focuses on schools, their classrooms, their foyers and on activities taking place within school walls.

We consider the investigation of schoolscapes to be relevant to research into the visual socialization of children, into the ways in which they are oriented to visual literacy and into the visual literacy practices of both children and adults. That is, we view visual literacy not only as the ability to interpret visual signs, but also as a social practice – one in which teachers and students exercise agency in engaging in visual communication in educational settings. We also focus on language ideologies reflected in schoolscapes. We argue that, like classroom interaction and other educational practices, schoolscapes can also be analyzed as displays or materialization of the 'hidden curriculum' regarding language values (cf. Johnson, 1980; Brown, 2012).

The development of different terms and concepts across research traditions

Cohen (1971: 19) captured an early semiotic perspective on education as follows:

[M]any anthropologists are agreed that in their daily lives people in all societies respond to cultural symbols rather than to objective reality […] the symbolizations of cultural life […] are learned as the result of systematic and consistent experiences to which the individual is exposed in the course of growing up.

Building on Cohen's work, Johnson (1980), took further the idea that children are socialized through regular exposure to cultural visualizations and looked into the ways in which children produce such symbolizations and artifacts themselves. He also drew attention to the ideological component of signs and artifacts in schools. Aronin and O'Laoire (2012) have recently reviewed similar research in multilingual educational settings.

Working in the realm of educational anthropology, Brown was the first to propose the term *schoolscape* to cover school-based material environments where text, sound, images and artifacts "constitute, reproduce, and transform language ideologies" (Brown, 2012: 282).

The notion of *visual literacy* grew out of the New Literacy Studies tradition with its commitment to ethnography of literacy and the uses of texts. This tradition was extended by Kress and van Leeuwen when they introduced the notions of multimodality and multimodal discourse. As the title of their seminal book: *Reading Images* ([1996], 2006) indicates, pictures, artifacts, figures and the like can be interpreted and understood in the same way that texts are "read". Meanings and values are also produced and reproduced through visual communication practices

In two volumes, *Discourses in place* (2003) and *Nexus Analysis* (2004), Scollon and Wong Scollon, employed two terms – *visual semiotics and geosemiotics* – to capture the increasing shift towards visual communication in contemporary social life. Their work built on and extended the tradition of critical discourse analysis. They argued that the study of *visual semiotics* represents a turn "from spoken, face-to-face discourses to the representations of that interaction order in images and signs" (2003: 82). They define *geosemiotics* as "the study of the meaning systems by which language is located in the material world. This includes not just the location of the words on the page you are reading now but also the location of the book in your hand and your location as you stand or sit reading this" (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2003: x).

Finally, work on the linguistic landscapes of schools fits well with the recent critical and ethnographic strand of research on multilingualism and heteroglossia (Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese, 2012) extending it by taking in a broader range of resources for meaning making.

Researching schoolscapes: differing research lenses and methodologies
Research into schoolscapes has been characterised by the same diversity as the broader field of linguistic landscape research and has generated similar methodological debates. Here, we will take a look at different approaches and we weigh up their strengths and limitations. Our account will be illustrated with reference to studies in different types of multilingual school settings.

In a recent study of the schoolscapes of seven schools in the Basque country, Gorter and Cenoz (2014) adopted a quantitative approach, building on the methods associated with the quantitative strand of linguistic landscape research. They focused on schools where teaching took place in Basque and Spanish and in some cases in English, too. Their main finding was that the use of Basque predominated in the signage in the schools, while Spanish predominated in wider public spaces beyond the school. Quantitative methods such as those adopted in this study allow researchers to capture broad patterns of language use across schoolscapes. In this specific context, we see that the minority language schools had succeeded in creating a distinct visual environment within a wider national setting where Spanish – the dominant language – held sway.

However, in order to gain deeper insights into the local meanings associated with particular kinds of signs and into the concerns of particular sign producers, we need to narrow our research lenses. Gorter and Cenoz (2014) sought to do this by assigning all the signs within the schoolscapes of the seven schools into one of nine categories, e.g. the category "decoration". The categories were devised by the researchers themselves, rather than on the basis of interviews with teachers and students, that is with the producers and readers of the signs. Despite the systematic and insightful nature of this study, the researchers missed an opportunity to gain insights into the meaning and significance of different kinds of signs for those participating in their study. As Pennycook (2009: 304) has noted, in research of this kind, "analysis remains predominantly between the text and the analyst". The use of quantitative methodology has also been questioned (e.g. Blommaert, 2013) since it reinforces

popular thinking about languages being separate, countable entities with neat borders. In many linguistic landscapes (especially those on-line), languages are often intertwined or juxtaposed in meaningful ways.

Some researchers have combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to the linguistic landscape (e.g. Hult, 2009). Other researchers have chosen to prioritise qualitative work. As we indicated earlier, there is now a well-established tradition of ethnographic research on the organisation of visual and material culture in local schoolscapes. This research involves extended observation in particular school settings and work with different data sources. It also involves the identification of patterns of signing across different school spaces (e.g. school foyers, classrooms, staff rooms, school canteens etc.). Thus, for example, Johnson (1980) was able to show the role of nation state discourses in the organization of material culture in public school classrooms in the United States. He kept a detailed record of the material items in classrooms, their placement, their material qualities and the techniques employed in producing them, as well as the "aesthetics and style" of the items (1980: 178). He also identified particular themes that resonated across schools. Thus, for example, he encountered frequent displays of images relating to Thanksgiving. His interpretation of his findings was that: "material culture is an index of the relative degree of symbolic integration between local school communities and national society and culture" (1980: 173). In fact, in all the schools he visited, there was a high degree of symbolic integration and there were few signs relating to local social or cultural traditions.

More recent schoolscape research involves dialogue with research participants (teachers, students, school administrators, parents and so on) about the meanings associated with different signs. Ethnographic research of this kind seeks to build an understanding of the emic perspectives of research participants and to uncover the language ideologies and discourses underpinning sign use and production. Since ethnographic research involves extended observation over time, sometimes involving several return visits to the field, this enables the researcher to capture changes taking place over time, too. Consider, for example, changes triggered by the introduction of a new national or regional language policy, by new patterns of transnational migration or by a major change in the wider social or political context. Take, for example, the research carried out by Brown (2012) into a schoolscape in Estonia. This study was designed as an "intensive school-based ethnography". It included interviews with teachers and extended observation of school life, as well as still photography.

Brown took account of the range of signs and artifacts in different spaces in the school, including the school foyer, the classrooms and the school museum. Her study was carried out in a region of Estonia where a local language – Võro – was widely spoken. The wider social and political context for the study was that of the revitalization of Estonian as a national language in a context where Russian had long been dominant. Working across different spaces in the school, Brown noted that the school foyer was dedicated to the use of Estonian and prestigious European languages. Since the foyer was the public face of the school, Brown concluded that the choice of languages for this space served "to elevate the ideological importance of Europe and the Estonian nation-state" (Brown, 2012: 287-288). The school museum gave particular prominence to the Estonian language and, according to Brown (2012: 293), this functioned as a "school-based linguistic chronicle". There was no reference to the Võro language variety in either of these spaces. However, in the classrooms, Võro occasionally "came out of hiding" in fleeting ways. Classroom practice sometimes involved use of Võro texts, but these texts were mostly provisional in nature. For example, they were handwritten on a blackboard and then erased after class. Mass produced, printed texts of a more enduring nature were only in Estonian or in English. Brown (2012: 296) emphasised the role of teachers as key social actors in making occasional use of Võro in these classroom contexts and in transforming "the physical environment into one more connected with the immediate community".

Multi-sited ethnography, involving comparison of schoolscapes across different schools has also proved to be a fruitful approach, albeit more demanding in terms of time. Khan (2012) carried out a study of schoolscapes, in different kinds of schools in different regions of Pakistan. The schoolscapes of two private schools offering some instruction through the medium of English were, for example, compared and contrasted with that in a public school offering instruction through the medium of Urdu (the national language). Khan found that, in the private schools where English was one of the languages of instruction, the use of English-only noticeboards was commonplace in public spaces such as school foyers. Since English is a highly prized commodity on the private educational market in urban Pakistan, Khan concluded that this was a marketing strategy that was aimed at the parents of prospective students. The predominance of English in the visual landscape of the schools contrasted with the multilingual practice in some of the classrooms. Khan also noted that the students he worked with in this study had little understanding of the content of the notices pinned up on the noticeboards in English.

Visual practices in research in multilingual settings

As the scope of research in multilingual schools and classrooms has been broadened to incorporate schoolscapes and different visual and semiotic practice, researchers have also begun to build a visual dimension into their own research practice. Visual methods such as photography or the use of drawings have been employed in research in multilingual settings, at the stage of data gathering and also at the stages of data interpretation and analysis. In this section of our chapter, we illustrate the visual turn in research on multilingualism with reference to four studies: two that focused on out-of-school contexts and two that were linked to language teaching and learning in school and to the raising of language awareness among students. The first study conducted in out-of-school contexts was that conducted by Pietikäinen (2012). In a study carried out with Sámi children from Northern Finland, Pietikäinen focused on the ways in which the children represented their Sámi language experiences by means of photography and drawings. She argued that, by drawing on multimodal and visual resources in research in revitalization contexts, we can minimise the impact that researchers have in shaping the data. Moreover, participants' voices and agency are foregrounded in the final research narrative.

The second study is described by Martin-Jones (2011) in a volume on the *Ethnography of language policy.* This was an ethnographic project that was conducted in Wales with young bilinguals aged 16 – 19. The focus of the research was on the bilingual literacy practices, in Welsh and in English, of the young people, during the time they spent at college and during out-of-college hours. The young people in the study were asked to keep diary notes about their out-of-college literacy practices over two days. They were also asked to take photographs of particular literacy events in their out-of-college lives. Martin-Jones and her colleagues then conducted diary-based interviews and photo-based interviews with the young people, in the language of their choice. Each of the interviews were audio-recorded. The data-gathering was organised in this way so as to facilitate dialogue between the researchers and the young people participating in the study, and to gain insights into the young people's emic perspectives and understandings of their own practices. As in the study by Pietikäinen (2012), the voices of the participants were incorporated into the research narrative about bilingual literacy practices in this context.

In addition to ethnographic projects such as those discussed above, there have been a number of practically-oriented research projects that have been linked to language teaching and learning or to the raising of critical language awareness. They have provided revealing insights into .students' perceptions of linguistic and cultural diversity. We give two examples here: the first is a study by Dagenais et al. (2009) which was carried out in Vancouver and Montreal. Dagenais and her colleagues designed their research so as to capture the ways in which children in a local school perceived the linguistic landscape of their neighbourhood. The research was part of a wider pedagogic initiative that aimed at fostering critical language awareness. The second study was conducted by Nikula and Pitkänen-Huhta (2008). This study focused on Finnish adolescents learning English. The adolescents were asked to take photographs of themselves in situations where they were learning or using English. The researchers found that the students linked the notion of 'learning' to formal situations (e.g. classes at school). They did not take account of their informal learning activities (e.g. skate-boarding with friends or using English terminology when speaking Finnish in local life worlds of this kind).

Researching schoolscapes: case studies in Hungary and in Hungarian minority settings
In this part of our chapter we present and discuss the methodology and selected findings from our own work in two contrasting research sites: (1) state and private schools in Budapest, Hungary (Szabó, 2015); and (2) a school in a region of Romania where there is a large Hungarian-speaking population (Laihonen & Tódor, forthcoming). We will also demonstrate how we developed our approach to interviewing so as to build an account of research participants' own *emic* understandings of their local schoolscapes.

State and private schools in Hungary
Szabó (2015) investigated differences between two types of organizational culture in a comparative study of schoolscapes in two state schools and two private schools in Budapest. His study was carried out in 2013. The research corpus includes five extended interviews and almost 900 photographs. With a view to incorporating the emic perspectives of those participating in the research, Szabó adapted the *walking tour* methodology (Garvin, 2010: 255–256) to fit the specific characteristics of educational institutions, calling this the *tourist guide technique*. As he was photographing signs in the school building, he interviewed the person who was guiding him through the corridors, classrooms and other spaces in each particular school. This was generally a person with some authority, such as a teacher. First,

Szabó asked this person to make comments on the choice of language, texts, and other symbols on display. The conversation proceeded as if the teacher was a tourist guide and Szabó was a tourist. Then, responding to the utterances of the 'institutional guide', Szabó occasionally asked for further details. These conversations were audio-recorded as they occurred. In effect, Szabó and each 'guide' co-constructed a narrative (cf. Laihonen, 2008) as they surveyed the material environment together. This was a kind of joint exploration, in which Szabó was able to gain new insights by incorporating an insider angle into his schoolscape study.

As mentioned above, Johnson (1980) highlighted the impact of nation state discourses on schoolscapes in an early study in the United States. In the two state schools in this study in Budapest, nation state discourses were also clearly manifested in the general schoolscapes and were quite similar to those identified by Johnson. To begin with, the two state schools were named after national figures, such as the composer of the Hungarian national anthem. In some classrooms, portraits of 18–20th century artists and statesmen hung on the walls. Furthermore, when the schools were commemorating the 1848 revolution, the portraits of the protagonists who figure in the national narrative about this historical event were thumbtacked or taped on the walls, along with student artwork relating to some aspect of the revolution. 19th century Hungary was a multiethnic and multilingual state and many of the revolutionaries had an ethnic background other than the dominant Hungarian one. In spite of this, the history of 1848 was visually retold, in the Hungarian language, as a story about Hungarians. For example, only the copies of the Hungarian version of the multilingual revolutionary leaflets were on display. Szabó interpreted this as a practice of *erasure* (Irvine & Gal 2000) within state school practices (for details, see Szabó, 2015).

Top-down homogenization in the schoolscape was also stronger in the case of the state schools, while the educational practitioners in the private schools engaged in some negotiation with students over visual communication practices. One of the most salient differences related to the classrooms – the space designated for teacher-student interaction. In the state schools, the arrangement of the classroom furniture anticipated a mode of classroom interaction that was predominantly teacher-centered. This is the type of classroom described by Scollon & Wong Scollon (2004: 39) as the "panopticon classroom" According to Scollon & Wong Scollon (2004: 39), this arrangement is typical for "lectures, musical and dramatic performances, political speeches, and so forth", where the attention is focused on one person

who dominates and regulates communication. Figure 1 below shows an example of a classroom layout of this kind. In contrast, in the private schools in this study, desks were usually arranged in (semi)circles, anticipating small group discussions or individual work. Teacher-fronted arrangements of the classroom furniture were rare. As Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004: 39) put it, this significant difference can be interpreted as a manifestation of another culture of communication in which "a group of people conduct a line of discussion with relatively equal status in their rights to take the floor and speak". Figure 2 below provides an example of this kind of arrangement.

Fig. 1. Panopticon classroom (designed for teaching music)
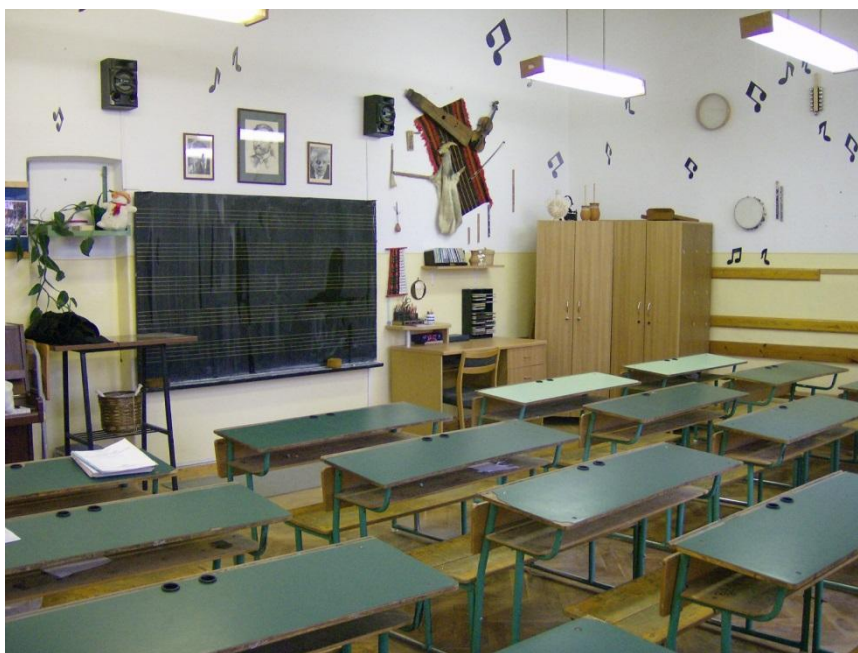
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Fig. 2. Classroom for group and individual work (designed for teaching arts)

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There were also differences between state and private schools in the policy on counter-culture and the use of graffiti. In one state and one private school, the discussion during the interview with the school 'guide' turned to graffiti on the wall and on the desks. While transgressive signs such as graffiti were prohibited by the principal in the state school, in the private schools, a decision was taken, during the school assembly, to assign the wall of a side corridor for the purpose of graffiti. The involvement of students in the decision-making process and in the implementation of school policies of this kind indexed a different organizational culture and different ideologies about transgressive signs.

Languages were also represented in different ways in the state and private schools. Szabó's analysis focused on both the representation of the forms of the languages and on the ways in which they were linked to nation-states. We focus here on the latter form of representation. Foreign languages were taught in the state schools in classrooms designed for the special purpose of foreign language teaching, and reference to languages other than Hungarian was very rare outside those rooms. In the private schools, English appeared more often and in a wider range of spaces, e.g. as inscriptions on the students' artwork.

Languages were clearly portrayed as being tied to nation states and a standard variety was promoted. For instance, in one of the state schools, English was explicitly linked to the United Kingdom. National symbols such as the 'Union Jack' flag were used, along with other stereotypical visualizations of the country (e.g. London scenes). Figure 3 below depicts the door at the entrance to the English classroom.

Fig. 3. The dominance of 'British English'

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The visual impression of the dominance of 'British English' in foreign language education in this school was reinforced in the account of the teacher who guided Szabó round the school. Relevant aspects of the school policy were explained in the following terms [23]:

> (1)
> **Tamás:** […] and as I see, British English is preferred
> **Éva:** Definitely, yes. […] well, obviously for us it's the basis, so [the students] should learn British English first and after that, maybe, American English.

In the other state school, Szabó came across visual references to other English-speaking countries. In this secondary school, the classroom designed for teaching English, had maps of the United Kingdom and the USA on the wall. These were accompanied by various information boards about Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland. Figure 4 shows one of these boards. During Szabó's 'tour' of this school, the teacher guide was a teacher of English. Szabó initiated discussion with her on policy regarding the teaching of varieties of English. As a prompt, he made brief reference to the standardist ideology that there should be a central, prioritized variety in language teaching:

Fig 4. Beyond 'British English'

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(2)
Tamás: What is the central variety? So is it BBC English or rather something else?
Zsuzsa: You mean in the school?
Tamás: Yes.
Zsuzsa: Well, yes, we teach British English because you see Oxford University Press gained ground maximally, I think, in the majority of schools, and, well, it is that what they distribute

This English teacher positioned herself as a representative of the whole school community ("We teach"), and then she legitimized the current practice with reference to the consequences of marketing by a British publisher. Later on, Szabó mentioned that students might encounter other varieties such as American English in their spare time, and indicated that these varieties might appear in their actual usage as well:

(3)
Tamás: And if somebody writes such a form in a test, then
Zsuzsa: In principle, if I follow how matriculation examinations should be marked, I shouldn't accept that.
Tamás: Uh huh, I see.
Zsuzsa: I underline [the word] in the test, I accept that and I make a note [such as] 'but you know that in an exam situation it wouldn't carry any marks, don't you?'

The teacher then turned to her own practice. She described a typical situation where she would have to make a pragmatic decision. She alluded to the expectations of the school authorities and the regulation of matriculation examinations, while legitimizing her own more liberal practices.

Hungarian medium minority schools

A detailed study in one Hungarian minority school in Romania

From 2012 to 2013, Laihonen and Tódor (forthcoming) carried out a detailed study of changes in the schoolscape in a Hungarian minority school in Szeklerland, Romania. Their research involved the gathering of photographic data, ethnographic observation and the taking of field notes and interviews with school staff and current and former students. The history of the village was evident in the different kinds of signs that made up the schoolscape. Laihonen and Tódor focused on the changes that had been generated by the far-reaching political change ushered in by the fall of the Ceauşescu regime in 1989, by the transformation of Romania from a centralized dictatorship to a liberal economy and democratic culture where local initiatives could gain more space and by the 'rehungarization' process in the region. They also investigated the problems related to the learning and use of the Romanian language. In particular, they were interested in identifying the ways in which the political transition and the processes involved in the reassertion of a Hungarian identity and the revival of public displays of religiosity had changed the ways in which languages were conceptualized and actually employed in this local schoolscape.

Their approach was ethnographic and multi-method in nature. They designed the research so as to take account of the emic interpretations of the schoolscape by local villagers, parents, current and previous students, as well as their own etic interpretations. They carried out fieldwork in the village and its school over the course of a year. In July 2012, Laihonen conducted 20 interviews in Hungarian, with people such as the present and former school director, parents, and local villagers. He also took 61 photographs inside and outside the school (in addition to approximately 300 photographs in the village itself). Tódor lives near the village and she speaks both Hungarian and Romanian. She visited the school 3 times in the autumn of 2012 and in the spring of 2013, interviewing staff (13 interviews in all). She also observed Romanian classes, along with history and geography classes. The history and geography classes were chosen because the language of instruction had officially changed from Romanian to Hungarian in 2012. During the same field work visit, she took 205 photographs in different spaces within the school.

In addition, Tódor undertook a small-scale survey of students. She had prepared a questionnaire that was filled in by 66 pupils (girls and boys between the ages 11 and 15). The

focus was on language use and language learning. The survey was undertaken for three reasons: to widen the picture being built up through the ethnographic work, the classroom observations, the photography and the interviews; to include the perspectives, preferences and experiences of a range of young people regarding the Hungarian and Romanian language, and to prepare the ground for an audio-recorded discussion with a sub-sample of students, based on the themes emerging from the survey. The discussion took place during a class organised by Tódor.

At the interpretation and analysis stage of this study, Laihonen and Tódor began with the photographic data. Their analysis focused on the differentiation of signs along functional and symbolic lines. They found that Romanian was being used for official state administrative purposes and that Hungarian indexed local heritage, along with local cultural and religious practices and everyday life at school. They also found that most texts were produced monolingually. For example, basic texts on the homepages of the school were only in Hungarian, but certain administrative materials such as the subject curricula were only in Romanian. Materials that were judged to be of interest to students and parents (e.g. notices about special events) were all in Hungarian but, on occasion, the title of the text (but not its content) appeared in Romanian as well. Due to the salience of the differentiation between state and minority language, other symbols, languages and language varieties occupied less space.

From their interviews, Laihonen and Tódor learned that there had been a distinct trend towards greater use of Hungarian in the schoolscape, and there had been a conscious replacement of Romanian and bilingual signs from the dictatorship period (i.e. before 1990). Hungarian-only signs predominated during the period when the study was carried out (for details, see Laihonen and Tódor, forthcoming). The students attending the school regularly encountered cultural symbols and visual texts depicting Hungarian-ness. The signs depicting images of modernization and citizenship of the Romanian nation state had been changed into signs indexing local identity and a broader transnational sense of Hungarian-ness. From the perspective of language education, few displays of bilingual signage and specially tailored Romanian signs had been developed by the local teachers, which indicated that Romanian was taught so that the pupils language background (Hungarian first language and a beginner level Romanian) was taken into account.

Comparative research in different emerging nation-states in Eastern Europe

Schools with Hungarian as the (dominant) language of instruction can be found in other countries around Hungary, especially in areas where Hungarians form the regional majority. In addition to Szeklerland in Romania, these include areas in Subcarpathia in Ukraine and rural areas of Southern Slovakia. Laihonen did multi-site fieldwork in all three regions from 2011 to 2013. These regions form linguistic and cultural peripheries and are rarely given a mention in the national narratives of these young states. Attempts at integration of these Hungarian speaking regions to the nation states, in which they are located, through public education have given rise to various tensions. The choice, display and placement of national symbols in Hungarian medium minority schools has been a topic of constant debate since the end of Cold War in 1990.

During his fieldwork, Laihonen compared the ways in which local tensions were played out in different national settings and the ways in which the imposition of national symbols was negotiated, and occasionally subverted. Local practices ranged from the parallel display of nation state symbols and Hungarian symbols to the predominant use of local Hungarian symbols or a complete ban on the use of certain Hungarian symbols in the public spaces of a school. In all three national contexts, nation state symbols had to be displayed in certain spaces. For instance, in Slovakia, all schools were required to display the coat of arms, the first passages of the Constitution and the national anthem of Slovakia (in Slovak). In one Hungarian minority school that Laihonen visited in Slovakia, he found that these symbols were barely visible in one classroom. Figure 5 shows a corner of the classroom where the national symbols were almost hidden behind large artifacts used for teaching and learning.

Fig. 5. Hidden Slovak national symbols in a Hungarian minority school

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In schools where the display of Hungarian national symbols was restricted, new ways to display them had been invented. For example, in another Hungarian medium school in Slovakia that was visited by Laihonen, the students were learning the Hungarian alphabet with the help of illustrated alphabet cards, as shown in Figure 6 below. *Z* stood for *Zászló* ('flag') and the visual image associated with this letter was the Hungarian flag with the Hungarian coat of arms.

Fig. 6. Hungarian national symbols displayed through alphabet cards in Slovakia.

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Concluding comments

Our aims in this chapter were as follows: (1.) To draw attention to the growing body of research on the visual dimension of meaning-making in multilingual educational settings; (2.) to provide glimpses into the range of research that has been undertaken, in different cultural and historical contexts, along with examples of the kinds of research questions that have been posed; (3.) to give some insights into the ways in which research projects have been designed and the range of research approaches and research methods that have been employed.

The growing research interest in this field of multilingualism and education is partly due to the changes ushered in by globalization: by political changes taking place on a global scale which are having an impact on schools, by the advent of the internet and mobile technology and by the rapidity of the shift towards the use of visual and semiotic resources in communication in contemporary social life. The theoretical ground for this new strand of empirical work was first laid over a decade ago by a number of scholars. Those who broke particularly important new ground were Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003, 2004), who focused our attention on language in the material world and on the internet, and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) who first characterised discourse as including a visual and increasingly multimodal nature. And, as we have shown, empirical work on the characteristics of contemporary schoolscapes has its roots in the wider field of linguistic landscapes (e.g. Gorter, 2006; Shohamy and Gorter, 2009). It also has roots in the long tradition of research in anthropology and education (e.g. Cohen, 1971; Johnson, 1980; Brown, 2012).

Earlier in this chapter, we mentioned that there has been a strand of work that is largely applied in nature. This has been linked to pedagogical initiatives with different aims, such as raising students' critical awareness of the social significance of different forms of communication, verbal and visual, on page and on screen (e.g. Clemente, et al. 2012; Lotherington and Ronda, 2014), or generating discussion about ways of engaging with the linguistic and cultural diversity of contemporary social life (e.g. Dagenais, 2009; Hancock 2012) or enabling a wider range of voices to be heard in classrooms (Pietikäinen and Pitkänen-Huhta, 2013).

However, despite the current lively research interest in schoolscapes and in wider visual practices in local linguistic landscapes, it would be premature to say that there has been a

parallel visual turn in education – in schools or in higher education. There clearly needs to be more dialogue between researchers and educators and there needs to be movement towards the fostering of critical awareness of visual literacy and the development of students' capacity to engage in multimodal ways of reading the material world (Clemente et al., 2012). Of all the research approaches we have discussed here, ethnography is best suited to the creation of opportunities for dialogue between researchers and practitioners, because of its commitment to extended engagement with research participants.

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[1] We are grateful for Marilyn Martin-Jones for encouraging us to submit a chapter and for her insightful mentoring of earlier drafts.

[2] The names of the teachers represented in the extracts from the interviews presented here are fictitious names. They have been adopted to preserve confidentiality and to avoid revealing the identities of the research participants.

[3] The original tour-guide conversations took place in Hungarian. This extract and those that follow have been translated into English by Szabó.