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Title: Parents Interpreting their Children's Schoolscapes : Building an Insider's Perspective

Year: 2020

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

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Please cite the original version:

Szabo, T. P., & Troyer, R. A. (2020). Parents Interpreting their Children's Schoolscapes : Building an Insider's Perspective. In D. Malinowski, & S. Tufi (Eds.), *Reterritorializing Linguistic Landscapes : Questioning Boundaries and Opening Spaces* (Article 19). Bloomsbury Academic. *Advances in Sociolinguistics*.

Accepted manuscript published in the following publication: Malinowski, David; Tufi, Stefania (Eds.) *Reterritorializing Linguistic Landscapes: Questioning Boundaries and Opening Spaces*, Advances in Sociolinguistics. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Parents interpreting their children's schoolscape: Building an insider's perspective

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1 Introduction

School premises have been recognized as custom-designed built environments that enhance specific activities and interactional practices in educational contexts. In her study of educational anthropology, Brown was the first to propose the term *schoolscape* to cover “the physical and social setting in which teaching and learning take place” (Brown 2005: 79). Combining material and social aspects of education, Brown has pointed to the role schoolscape play in socializing children to various ways of visual, or more broadly speaking, object-mediated institutional communication. The investigation of schoolscape in turn leads to a better understanding of pedagogical practices that reflect and construct language ideologies (Brown 2012) as well as pedagogical principles and values (cf. Johnson 1980). Utilizing Brown’s (2005, 2012) definitions, we argue for a non-logocentric approach to schoolscape and use the term in reference to “the visual and spatial organization of educational spaces, with special emphasis on inscriptions, images and the arrangement of the furniture” (Szabó 2015: 24). This approach necessitates that we question an emphasis on the ‘linguistic’ in linguistic landscape studies; making the object of study ‘the language on signs’ creates a boundary that separates words from their context and ignores the complex processes of emplacement (Scollon and Scollon 2003).

Currently schoolscape research represents a rapidly growing field, covering diverse geographical, technological and interactional contexts (for comprehensive reviews, see Laihonon and Szabó 2018; Gorter 2018). Schoolscape studies are tightly linked to qualitative and ethnographic linguistic landscape studies (e.g. Lou 2016; Peck and Stroud 2015; Waksman and Shohamy 2016) that argue that spaces as social constructs are sites of object-mediated

negotiations of cultural practices and ideologies that explain, evaluate or challenge certain institutional routines, traditions and processes (cf. Potter and Edwards 2003). Emphasizing such connections, schoolscape studies enhance intervention projects that can be carried out with school communities to further develop their pedagogical strategies through a more conscious negotiation of spatial practices. Such cooperation is much needed because, as previous studies (e.g. Szabó 2015) have shown, although school communities develop sets of practices for creating and adapting spaces to their purposes, they seldom engage in explicit conversations about or systematic consideration of the physical environments they inhabit.

People encounter a complexity of landscapes in which they navigate and carry out action (Clark 2010). Homes, streets, administrative offices, and spaces for commercial, educational, and recreational activities are perhaps the most relevant in one's life. Walking, commuting and interacting, people establish connections between such heterogeneous sites as they enforce and challenge interactional practices and construct and transform spaces (cf. de Certeau 1984). From this perspective, school premises are special since they can be defined as semipublic spaces (Gorter 2013). That is, schools are open to large groups of people, but entry to the premises and access to resources are regulated. In this regard, schoolscape studies reflect another theme of this collection: opening spaces. Access to semipublic places entails a much closer connection between researchers' places of study and the people who imbue these spaces with socio-semiotic meaning. Local community members (i.e., students, teachers, parents, administrative staff, etc.) play a crucial role in creating, interpreting and adjusting schoolsapes, but at the same time schools as institutions operate in line with local, national and global standards of education.

To get a better understanding of the transitory character of schoolsapes as private-yet-public spaces, we focus on parents' experiences within the premises of their children's schools. Parents belong to school communities through their children and through cooperation with teachers and school administration, but typically they do not spend a lot of time on premises during teaching time. Although they receive information from various sources (e.g. from their children's or the teachers' reports) about school life, they typically have only a mediated experience regarding classroom practices. However, we argue, parents are important schoolscape agents especially through the evaluations and expectations that they articulate to teachers and administrators.

Our materials come from the lead author's project that focused on the somewhat discontinuous transition from authoritative pedagogies to egalitarian practices in Hungarian schools. Since Hungarian schools compete for student admissions to secure their funding (either from public or private sources), the school management often designs or controls the schoolscape in ways to meet parents' expectations. Previous studies (e.g. Szabó 2015; Laihonen and Szabó 2017) have analyzed how teachers articulated their presumptions about parents' expectations. In this paper, in turn, we analyze how parents themselves present, interpret and transform the schoolscape in the frame of a fieldwork activity that affords interaction with objects, a researcher, and some of the school community members. Although we use visual data in our analysis, our main goal is to analyze *schoolscape-related interaction*, and more specifically, interpretative conversations about schoolsapes that index identity (the roles that parents

construct in interaction) and agency, which is related to the power status of these roles. These goals also question the boundary that limits linguistic landscape studies to documenting and interpreting the static environment and/or attitudes toward it. With these goals in mind, we apply an applied Conversation Analytical approach (e.g. Antaki 2011) to detect practices of membership categorization and status management. Specifically we address the following questions.

1. How do parents when discussing the schoolscape construct their identity and negotiate the agency of their roles?
2. What educational expectations, traditions, and ideologies do parents convey when talking about the schoolscape?

Thus, we investigate how the participants made connections between the school environment as a socially constructed space and their own roles and impact in the community which uses and shapes such a space.

By emphasizing movement through and commenting upon the linguistic landscape of the schools, this paper foregrounds the dynamic nature of these semiotic spaces. Educational institutions are physical places, but as environments that mediate and facilitate human interaction on multiple scales, their significant import rests in how they are interpreted by their inhabitants. As Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 6) state in summarizing contemporary scholarship on spatialization, “space is not only physically but also socially constructed, which necessarily shifts absolutist notions of space towards more communicative or discursive conceptualizations.” One way to question the boundaries of linguistic landscape studies is to challenge a logocentric phenomenological ontology by collecting data that is concomitant with the social construction of space and that privileges the perspectives of actors and agents rather than observation and documentation. Thus, in this paper we demonstrate that lived environment can be studied as a living landscape that exists when people, language, and place interact. To understand a schoolscape at this level, this chapter presents an ethnographic methodology and detailed analysis of visual data and verbal interaction between the local agents, the researcher, and the schoolscape. Before our analyses, we provide a review of agency and identity studies and describe the data generation methods and the corpus.

2 Agency and identity in schoolscape-related discourses

In her review, Ahearn (2001) defined *agency* as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (112). To refer to power relations, she adopted Karp’s distinction between *actors* and *agents*, the former meaning people with rule-governed behavior, and the latter referring to people who are “engaged in the exercise of power in the sense of the ability to bring about effects and to (re)constitute the world” (Ahearn 2001: 112; cf. Karp 1986). Subsequent studies have gone beyond such a dualism, and built on interaction analysis that emphasizes the relational, emergent

and context-dependent nature of agency. For example, Hunter and Cooke (2007: 72) stated that “[b]eing able to act implies the ability to act differently and we take agency to be the ability to act with initiative and effect in a socially constructed world.” For Hunter and Cooke, differing from pre-set agendas (“to act differently”) is a sign of increasing autonomy that is crucial to promoting learner agency.

To enhance the analysis of agency as a relational concept, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2015) have proposed the terms reactive and proactive agency. *Reactive agency* refers to responses to the (perceived) agency of those who seem to be influential; that is, who can (or seem to be able to) control circumstances directly or indirectly. Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2015) provide “meeting expectations of others, retiring and expecting others to deliver” (p. 54) as examples of this type of agency. On the contrary, *proactive agency* “suggests a knowing and active individual, whose activity is oriented towards one’s own goals instead of being driven from the outside” (p. 55). Corresponding actions in Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate’s corpus were “delivering, connecting, finding own goals, entering a new space and taking a stance” (p. 55). We find these two terms useful since human interaction with schoolscapes is also built on both reactivity and proactivity.

People routinely interpret schoolscapes as agentive in at least two ways. (1) Signs and spatial relations among artefacts are the results of previous human actions and thus people react to other people’s previous actions (cf. Coupland 2012; Stroud and Jegels 2014); and (2) signs and spatial relations influence and somewhat restrict the action potential of people in the schoolscape, as the following examples explain. Figures 1, 2 are visually modified (anonymized) captures from a video recorded lesson observation from the lead author’s Hungarian corpus.



Figure 1. Video capture of the panopticon classroom



Figure 2. Video capture of the classroom rearranged for group work

At the beginning of the observed lesson (Figure 1), the setting can be described as a *panopticon classroom* – a term coined by the 18th Century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham to describe institutions, especially prisons, in which many individuals can be observed from one vantage point. Foucault (1979) argued that such spatial arrangements exist to enforce disciplinary power structures, and Scollon and Scollon (2004) apply the term to classrooms in which the teacher controls the interaction order by selecting and deselecting speakers, evaluating and repairing their performance as well as supervising all students in the room. At some point, the teacher instructed the students to move the furniture and form work stations for small groups of 3-4 persons. After this transformation (Figure 2), students were expected to interact only within their peer group, and the teacher supervised only one group at a time by walking from work station to work station. Close to the end of the class, the teacher initiated the transformation of the classroom back to the panopticon setting (cf. Figure 1). By rearranging the furniture, the teacher communicated a change in the presumptions on the interaction order. However, such presumptions were challenged during the observed lessons since there were students who talked to each other during the teacher's speech in the panopticon setting, and others who did not contribute to group discussions in the group work setting. This paragraph is an academic account of an observed event, referring to pre-existing results and the researcher's own (fieldwork) experiences. As will be shown in the data that follows, through images and texts, an interpretive account can be constructed to analyze processes of sense- and place-making.

An individual's agency is closely related to their identity; as Titman (1994) has noted, competence and control of the physical world is an important aspect of self-identity. As shown in our data and discussion sections, the parent participants constructed their situational identities in several ways that demonstrated competence in relation to the schoolscape. In this chapter we seek to emphasize connections between our analysis of discursively co-constructed agency and recent LL scholarship that highlights the role of identity. In doing so our point of departure is the volume edited by Blackwood, Lanza, and Woldemariam (2016) which was thematically organized according to aspects of identity addressed by the contributors. Having pointed readers to the extensive coverage of and resources for language, the LL, and identity in the aforementioned volume, here we will merely highlight a few key considerations. In contrast to

approaches to identity that posit an internalized, static construct, we follow current conceptions that view identity as performed and dynamic (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005; Benwell and Stokoe 2006), and closely linked to dimensions of power (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). In this chapter's discussion section, we will rely on the framework presented by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) that consists of the following five principles: identity (1) is emergent; (2) includes macro, local, and temporary categories; (3) requires several indexical processes; (4) relies on complementary relations that individuals align with, and (5) is constantly shifting. Examples of these principles which were present in the data from this schoolscape study are presented in the discussion section. By emphasizing the agency and identity of inhabitants of the LL, this chapter addresses the crucial role that these constructs play in formulations of semiotic spaces. In the remaining parts of the paper, we focus on how parents create their accounts with the use of various semiotic resources (i.e., referring to visuals, reconstructing discourses, building arguments, etc.). Further, we show how interaction with other persons influences parents' verbal accounts.

3 Data and method

To study different organizational cultures and pedagogical practices as situated in the linguistic landscape of educational institutions, the lead author visited four schools in Hungary. To secure confidentiality, we mention the schools and the participants by pseudonyms. Two state-run schools (River School: grades 1–8, students aged 6–15, and Garden School: grades 9–13, students aged 15–19), a church-run school for students from families experiencing economic challenges (Forest School, grades 1–13) and a private foundation-run school (Hill School, grades 1–13) participated in the study. Four one-week visits took place in spring 2015. Following the principles of inclusive research (e.g. Nind 2014; Szabó and Troyer 2017), the fieldwork activities were carefully negotiated with the school administration that then recruited the research participants on a voluntary basis. The data set includes video recorded classroom observations, sedentary and walking interviews as well as field notes. In this paper we focus on walking interview data.

Walking interviews were conducted with the *tourist guide technique* (henceforth TGT; Szabó and Troyer 2017), a walking-based method that enhances interaction with the material environment and stresses the role of research participants in the exploration, interpretation and transformation of linguistic landscapes. At the beginning of the tour, the researcher asks the research participant to guide her/him through the school premises, commenting on the design of the foyers, classrooms and other community spaces, in relation to daily activities that take place there. The research participant introduces the schoolscape, holding the voice recorder which implicates that she/he is in control of the verbal interaction, and the researcher is equipped with a photo and/or a video camera like a tourist familiarizing herself/himself with a new environment. The setting defines research participants as the experts of the given school community, and it encourages them to initiate actions, open new topics in conversation and decide on the route (for

a detailed analysis, see Szabó and Troyer 2017). However, as our examples will show, the guide negotiates the implementation of the tour with the researcher and potentially with other persons as well. Mobile interaction in the LL creates a frame in which talk on the material environment emerges easily. As Garvin (2010: 255) has observed: “the LL in the current study functioned as both text and tool in that it embodied the phenomenon under investigation as well as stimulated and focused the interviews that were constructed onsite during the ‘walking tours.’”

The generated data includes videos, photographs, verbal interaction and written text. In 2015, a robust corpus was created from work in the four participating schools. The lead author participated in 25 tours that resulted in nearly 1600 photographs, 16.25 hours of audio, 1.25 hours of video, and a detailed, 262-page field journal. In this article we use the sub-corpus of parent-led tours which consists of 5 tours, 240 photographs, nearly 4 hours of audio recording, more than half an hour video recording and field notes. All tours were voice recorded and photographed, and one tour was video recorded by a voluntary assistant. To maintain confidentiality, we apply a special effect on images that feature individuals.

We need to note that only mothers volunteered to participate in the study, and that two of the tours we analyze here were a combination of parent- and student-led tours. Since the parents routinely arrived in the afternoon to the school, their children were in the afternoon club and they preferred to be with their mothers. It was a non-planned, natural development. In the Forest School tour, the children seldom contributed to the conversation verbally, but they helped their mother with practical tasks. In the River School tour, the guide’s daughter contributed many details about school life and acted as a co-leader of the tour as in the following excerpt (Dóra: mother, Lilla: her daughter, Tamás: researcher; “eighth Bee” is the identifier of an eighth grade class):

(1)

- 1 Dóra: erre van még terem?
are there more rooms this way?
- 2 Lilla: igen, a nyolcadik bé
yes, eighth Bee
- 3 D: ja! (- -) de szépek ezek a rajzok is, hihetetlen
yep (- -) oh how nice these drawings are, unbelievable!
- 4 Tamás: ühm
uh huh

Dóra’s conversations with her daughter are examples of inter-generational dialogue. The student led her mother to rooms her mother was not familiar with, and the mother shared her own school life memories as a former student of River School. Further, it happened several times during the tours that other people joined the conversation for a while, for example students or teachers who walked in the corridor or were already in the classroom to be explored. This characteristic of the tours means that although only one participant was asked to lead the tours, it happened quite easily that eventually seven people contributed to the conversation (for example in Forest

School: the researcher, the mother with her three children, a teacher in the school yard and a teacher in a classroom).

As mentioned in Section 1, we apply a Conversational Analytic approach to the data to analyze interactional practices in co-constructing agency and identity in various schoolscape settings. The examples will show that through referring to and transforming the schoolscape, participants exercised their agency to construct and deconstruct various traditional agendas and ideologies about school interaction. We apply Jefferson's (2004) notation in the transcripts (summarized in Appendix 1).

4 Analysis

4.1 Classrooms for learning

Our first example comes from River School where Dóra, a mother of two and a former student of River School guided the tour. Dóra arrives, and we spend the first minutes in the main lobby with her talking about the history of the school and its achievements that have recently enjoyed media coverage. At some point Dóra asks the researcher (Tamás) for ideas about the continuation of the tour ("Miről beszéljünk még?" "What else should we talk about?"). Tamás suggests going to classrooms; that is, the route is negotiated verbally. Arriving to the classroom, Dóra talks about the evolution of technology in relation to the interactive whiteboard which, as she notes, is even bigger than the black board. Then she points to the coat of arms of Hungary and the text of the Hungarian anthem on display, commenting on their importance in patriotic education (cf. Szabó 2015). After a long pause, she initiates a turn and continues the evaluation of the schoolscape. Figure 3 shows the setting she is talking about in excerpt (2a). There are History, Chemistry, Biology and Grammar posters on the wall, as well as the administrative map of Hungary and a portrait series of canonic 19–20th century literary authors.



Figure 3. Photograph of posters representing a variety of academic subjects

(2a)

- 1 Dóra: meg ezt is jó dolognak tartom egyébként, hogy ö (.) és
and actually I find it a very good thing that er (.) and
2 ez a mi időnkben, még amikor én ide jártam iskolába,
in our times, when I came here to school,
3 akkor is ugyanígy volt, hogy hogy ö nem egy nem egy
then it was also like the same that that not one not one
4 séma, hanem minden ö témakörből
scheme, but all er subjects
- 5 Tamás: ühm
uh huh
- 6 D: ö (.) vannak fölírva olyan alaptolgok, amiket szerintem
er (.) basic things are put on there that I think
7 tudni kell egy gyereknek, tehát aki
a child should know, so one who
- 8 T: [ühm]
uh huh
- 9 D: [álta]llános iskolát végzett, és most tényleg n- nemcsak
finished elementary school, and now really n- not only
10 a történelem meg nemcsak a nemcsak a
History and not only not only the
11 (.4)
12 nemzeti identitástudat, hanem ige[nis]
national identity, but indeed,
- 13 T: [ühm]
uh huh
- 14 D: a földrajz, a nyelvtan, tehát ezek mind olyan
Geography, Grammar, so these are all so
15 alaptolgok, amiket
basic things that
- 16 T: ühm
uh huh
- 17 D: azt szokták mondani, hogy az ismétlés a tudás édesanyja,
they say that repetition is the mother of knowledge,
18 és ha csak unatkozik és bámészkodik, akkor is legalább
and if s/he's just bored and stares, then still at least
19 ilyeneket, (.) jó dol- jó dolgokat láthat, tehát olyat, amit
like this, (.) s/he can see good things like this, so things
- 20 T: ühm
uh huh
- 21 D: amit neki meg kell tanulni meg amit tudniuk kell
that s/he needs to learn and they need to know.
22 (1.1)

23 úgyhogy én úgy gondolom, és és minden osztályterem
 so I think, and and all classrooms are
 24 ilyen egyébként.
 like this, actually.

Though her earlier technology-related comments about the interactive boards are not included in the excerpt, they concerned displaying content on the wall. As this example demonstrates, we argue that Dóra’s account interprets the classroom as a historically situated learning space that is mediated by technology and visual displays. The historical line becomes multi-faceted as she contextualizes it with her own life narrative (“in our times”; line 2) then refers to History as a school subject and as a formative factor of national identity (lines 10–12). Following from her comments about technology, she emphasizes the continuity of hanging posters as learning aids (“it was ... the same”; line 3) and the practice of distinguishing between separate school subjects (“all subjects”; line 4). That is, she interprets the classroom walls as surfaces with potentially useful visual-textual information for learning. She makes connections between the curriculum and the content displayed on the wall, arguing that they remind students of those manifest “basic things” that “a child should know” (lines 6–7).

Dóra’s references to the physical space and its relationship to curriculum function as indexes to her educational ideologies. We find that here she defines knowledge transmission and identity building as the basic tasks of a school, so her argument is in line with the findings of Johnson’s (1980: 187) school ethnography that concluded that “classroom material culture functionally reinforces the integration [...] of heterogeneous local communities into national networks of society and culture.” The extract suggests that it is exactly the fulfilment of this task that Dóra expects from the school. Emphasizing that classrooms are for learning, Dóra presupposes that students repeatedly read the content of the posters and it facilitates learning and meeting school requirements (lines 17–21). She evaluates hanging posters positively (“I find it a very good thing”; line 1), claiming that this practice is typical in this school (“all classrooms are like this”; lines 23–24). Later (not included in the excerpt) Dóra talks about a regulative poster that described group work, defining and describing roles within a group. Dóra then asked Tamás to take a picture on the poster, explicitly highlighting the poster and its role in the organization of classroom interaction. She sees the function of such a poster as similar to the ones mentioned above in which content learning is disseminated through the process of repetitive reading:

(2b)

1 D: így rögzül bennük, hogy
 it’s like getting fixed in them
 2 T: ühm
 uh huh
 3 D: milyen (.) csoportmunkás foglalkozásnál mi a feladatuk.
 what (.) what their role is in group work activities.

In summary, we claim that in excerpts (2a–b) Dóra reinforced the continuity of educational traditions in the schoolscape. Further, she referred to expectations that students should meet, so she emphasized their reactive agency in the learning process. To do this she primarily used verbal tools, especially self-initiated monologue, while the researcher repeatedly uttered *uh huh* which we identify as a continuer encouraging the other interactant to carry on (e.g. Schegloff 2000: 5). These interactions demonstrate the facilitative role that researchers play in identity creation as the interviewees are afforded agentive roles in their exploration of a schoolscape or other semiotic landscape.

4.2 The order of a ‘proper’ classroom

The next tour we analyze here was led by Réka, a mother of three students from Forest School. When she arrives, she immediately leads Tamás, the researcher, to the classroom of her elder daughter, a second grader. Réka prefers to start with a seated interview during which she presents her family situation and her strong commitment towards the school. Soon after beginning her son (Gábor) and her younger daughter enter the room so sometimes Réka also involves them in the conversation, asking them questions. Réka does not speak directly about the classroom in the first 35 minutes, and she is about to leave the room but Tamás proposes an alternative agenda including photography and talking about the schoolscape:

(3)

- 1 Réka: hát akkor Tamás, átvezetnélek a hatodik osztályba,
well, then, Tamás, I'd lead you to the sixth class
- 2 Tamás: jó
okay
- 3 R: oda jár a (- -)
there goes my (- -)
- 4 T: hát csinálnék egy néhány fényképet ho-
well I'd take a couple of photos th-
- 5 azért erről a teremről
rather about this classroom
- 6 R: jó
okay
- 7 T: hogyha már ilyen sok időt töltenek ott. és
if they spend so much time here. and
- 8 (.6)
- 9 hogy mit ö milyen benyomásaid vannak erről a teremről,
that what er what impressions you have about this room,
- 10 hogy milyen, hogy tetszik,
what is it like, how do you like it,
- 11 [mit gondolsz róla?]
what do you think about it?

- 12 R: [nekem nagyon.] kis otthonos.
very much. it's cosy.
- 13 T: aha.
ah hah.
- 14 R: elfogadnám. betennék ide magamnak egy s á-
I'd accept it, I'd bring here to me a b-
- 15 egy kis ágyat, egy egyszemélyes ágyat,
a small bed, a single bed,
- 16 T: ((chuckles))
- 17 R: s én bizony ellennék itt.
and I'd say I'd stay here.
- 18 T: ühm, ühm.
uh huh, uh huh.
- 19 R: nagyon jó.
it's very good.
- 20 T: igen.
yes.
- 21 R: ez a legjobb terem.
it's the best room.
- 22 T: ((chuckles))
- 23 R: hát nem is a tied, fiam, tiszta kosz a termetek.
well certainly not yours, my son, your room's so dirty.
- 24 Gábor: ez is ez a mi- mi ide jártunk.
this is also o- we came here as well.

Tamás's request, his negotiation with Réka, and the questions in lines 4–11 direct the attention to the physical environment and launch the walking tour phase of this combined encounter. Réka starts to answer the questions in overlap with the end of Tamás's utterance (line 11–12), so the beginning of her turn (“very much”) answers the question in line 11 (“how do you like it?”). Réka later elaborates on her positive evaluation in different ways. First she calls the classroom “cosy” (line 12). A general observation of the whole corpus of parent-led tours shows that all five mothers involved in the study often evaluated the school premises from the point of view of their children's physical and emotional comfort. Among others, a mother from River School emphasized the friendly colors of the curtain; a mother from Hill School mentioned that the tea equipment in the classroom creates an impression of being at home; and finally, the well-functioning heating system was highlighted in Garden School. All these examples and several others show that the mothers often compared the school to their home or an idealized image of a home, thus connecting different types of spaces or “landscapes of being” (Clark 2010: 6). In contrast, the majority of teachers and students rather highlighted the viewpoints of working efficiency (e.g. ergonomic chairs; Hill School) or networking in the institution (e.g. finding friends easily in the lobby; Garden School), thus focusing on the schoolscape itself, not in relation to other kinds of social spaces. In this regard, Réka's mention of ‘coziness’ fits the line of mother-led tours. However, as we see in extract (3), Réka develops this motif further,

claiming that the classroom is so good that she would even transform it to a private accommodation (lines 14–17). She builds a fictitious narrative about a potential rearrangement in which she is the protagonist (“I’d accept it, I’d bring here...”; line 14). Later she makes similar comments in another classroom as well where she points to spots along which walls would be erected to separate the classroom into two rooms with different functions.

In summary, Réka takes the opportunity to construct her proactive agency through her narration of imagined actions. Further, she positions herself as an expert on the whole school, claiming that the classroom they are in is “the best” (line 21). Such a claim suggests that she is familiar with all the classrooms and thus she can evaluate them along a scale. At the same time, by calling this classroom the best, she constructs a contrast with another classroom, that of her sixth grader son Gábor (line 23). Since she already announced that the next stop of the tour would be the room of the sixth graders (line 1), we evaluate this contrast as a tool in structuring the tour verbally and anticipating evaluations emerging from co-exploration. To understand her son’s reaction (line 24) better, we note that in the original Hungarian Réka uses singular case (“tied” Hung. ‘SG.2 yours’; line 23) first and then plural case (“termetek” Hung. ‘PL.2 your classroom’; line 23) when referring to the ownership of the sixth graders’ classroom. Doing so, her utterance might be interpreted in a way that her son and his class as the owner of the classroom are responsible for its bad condition (“so dirty”; line 23). In line 24, Gábor refuses this ownership categorization by claiming that the current classroom also belongs to his class, at least on a historical scale. He launches a turn with *ez is a miénk* (‘this is ours’) but drops ‘ours’ (*mi-‘o-’*) and with self-initiated self-repair he says that previously this was the room of his class. That is, the ownership of Gábor and his class is becoming distributed as Gábor creates ownership and belonging to the ‘cosy’ classroom as well.

When arriving to Gábor’s current classroom, Réka continues to contrast that room to the previous one, claiming her dislike several times. After some minutes of criticizing the condition of the classroom, she again organizes the tour with verbal tools, anticipating that the next classroom she has in her agenda is almost as good as the previously visited one. Since Réka articulates her concerns with the current classroom so often, Tamás asks her to present an alternative classroom setting.

(4a)

- 1 Tamás: és mondjuk mit változtatnál rajta?
and let’s say, what would you change on it?
- 2 Réka: én változtatni?
me changing?
- 3 (.6)
- 4 hát például az, hogy ne ennyi,
well, for example that not that many,
- 5 ne össze-vissza legyenek a padok.
the desks shouldn’t be so messily.
- 6 T: aha.
ah hah.

Tamás's question ("what would you change on it?"; line 1) invites an account on an imagined transformation (e.g. the verb is in conditional tense). Réka echoes the question ("me changing?"; line 2) which might be interpreted as a preparation for the extension of her role as a transformative (proactive) agent in the schoolscape. This time she does not talk about the classroom in relation to private accommodation, but follows another line concerning the organization of work. First she describes her preferences verbally (lines 4–5), criticizing the current "messy" arrangement. Later she negotiates it with Tamás (not in the extract) that one major problem is that a student's desk is too close to the teacher's and it is not in line with some principles she does not explicate ("nem illő" 'it's not proper'; not in the extract). Tamás again invites her to articulate an alternative arrangement ("és hogyan rendeznéd a padokat?" 'and how would you arrange the desks?'; not in the extract), and at this point Réka goes beyond verbal evaluations and fictitious narratives, and turns into physical action: pulls and pushes desks and chairs. She also instructs her children to assist her and they work on the rearrangement for several minutes. When Réka pulls back a desk which is directly next to the teacher's desk, she comments on the result of her own action as follows:

(4b)

- 1 R: ((moving a student's desk)) és akkor
and then
- 2 a tanári asztaltól ezt el.
get away with this from the teacher's table.
- 3 T: aha, aha.
ah hah, ah hah.
- 4 R: mert a gyerekeknek így kell lenni.
cause the child should be like this.

We argue that by stressing "the child should be like this" (line 4), Réka concludes her view about a normative order of the classroom she prefers. Later Réka adds that according to her, a classroom "would be normal like this" (Hung. "normális szerintem így lenne"; not in the extract).

Figures 4–6 below show some stages of the episode: the initial condition of the classroom (Figure 4); Réka and her children moving desks and chairs (Figure 5); and finally, the rows of desks and the increased space between the teacher's and the student's desk that Réka found appropriate (Figure 6).



Figure 4. Photograph of the classroom as the teacher had left it



Figure 5. Photograph of the mother and children rearranging the furniture



Figure 6. Photograph of the classroom arranged to the mother's preferences

Considering the emergence of interaction during the walk (cf. Szabó and Troyer 2017), we emphasize that the transcript of the audio material and the inclusion of still photographs give only fragmented pieces of information about the co-exploration of the classroom. On the verbal level, evaluations are often implicit since co-conducted action provided a context in which lengthy elaboration or precise identification of objects were not considered necessary (e.g. “get away with this”; line 2 in excerpt 4b).

We argue that the final result Réka preferred (Figure 6) is close to what we described above as the panopticon setting (Figure 1). That is, Réka reconstructed an environment in which the teacher controls interaction and supervises the tasks of all the students. Although the initial arrangement (Figure 4) was also close to the panopticon setting, Réka increased the visual impression of ‘order’ by forming regular rows of desks. Further, Réka’s emphasis on the distance between the student’s and the teacher’s desks is in parallel with Scollon and Scollon’s (2004: 40) claim that teachers in panopticon settings often occupy as much as one third of the classroom space in front, and the distance between them and the students contributes to their primary ownership of the space.

We find that through a series of verbal and physical transformations of the schoolscape, Réka has strengthened her proactive agency and constructed an expert role. As our next excerpt shows, later Réka’s expert role gets somewhat challenged by a teacher.

Leaving the sixth graders’ classroom, we traverse the school yard to approach a building that houses the last classroom of the tour. It is the time of the afternoon club so we find there the class and their teacher (Ida) upon arrival. Kata, mentioned in the excerpt, is Réka’s younger daughter. The excerpt begins at the point when Réka narrates the tour-so-far to Ida.

(5)

- 1 Réka: úgyhogy megmutattam a hatodik osztályt is, elrendeztem
so I showed the sixth class, I arranged
- 2 a hatodik osztályt, hogy hogyan képzeltem el, mert
the sixth class that how I imagined it, cause
- 3 zsúfolva van ott a pad,
the desks are crowded,
- 4 (1.2)
- 5 igaz?
right?
- 6 (.8)
- 7 és (.) nem az a nem is nem is azzal van baj,
and (.) it's not the it's not it's not the problem that
- 8 hogy zsúfolt, hanem viszont azzal, hogy szanaszét.
it's crowded but it's that it's messy.
- 9 (1.2)
- 10 és nem úgy, mint ahogy itt.
and not like, not like here.
- 11 (.9)

12 ebbe az osztályba is meg mint a
 in this class and like in the class of

13 Katáékéba is a padok nincsenek a tanári asztalnál,
 Kata's as well, the desks are not at the teacher's table,

14 (.7)

15 ott a hatba úgy volt, úgy húztam el.
 there in the sixth that was like that, I pulled them back.
 ((lines omitted))

16 R: ez a praktika,
 this practice,

17 (.6)

18 Tamás: igen?
 yes?

19 R: hogy (.) itt a második eltérő osztályban
 that (.) here in the second alternative class

20 T: aha
 ah hah

21 R: ahova az én lányom jár, itt is, ugyanúgy, mint a hatba,
 where my daughter goes, here, too, just like in the sixth,

22 a tanári asztalnál nincs a pad.
 there's no desk at the teacher's table.

23 T: aha
 ah hah

24 (1.1)

25 igen, tehát van egy ilyen
 yes, so there's one like

26 R: itt is a tanár (.) szereti a diákokat, de viszont
 here, too, the teacher (.) loves the students but

27 meg- megtartsa azt a távolságot, hogy igenis
 ke- keeps the distance that indeed

28 T: ühm
 uh huh

29 R: hogy így lesz a padotok
 that your desk will be like this

30 Ida: hát a távolság azért van, hogy ugye itt vannak a
 well the distance is there because, so here's the

31 személyes cuccok, hogy ne nyúljanak hozzá, tudják.
 personal stuff, so that they don't touch it, so they know.

32 de én a gyerekek között ülök
 but I sit among the children

33 R: de azt mond- én-
 but I sa- I-

34 T: [aha aha aha]
 ah hah ah hah ah hah

- 35 I: [ahányszor jössz,] látod, hogy nem itt
whenever you come, you see that not here,
- 36 R: [én é-]
I u-
- 37 I: így tanítok,=
I don't teach like this,
- 38 R: =igen,]
yes
- 39 I: így nem lehet tanítani
that's not possible to teach so
- 40 R: mindig [ott vagy]
you're always there
- 41 I: [hanem] köztük] vagyok,
but I'm among them,
- 42 R: igen, meg itt [hátra is]
yes, and here at the back as well
- 43 I: [ez azért], hogy ami nekem itt van,
so it's cause that what I have here,
- 44 hogy tudják, hogy ez nem nekik, mert
so they know that it's not for them, cause
- 45 [(azért kell, hogy ezt megtanulják)]
it's needed that they learn it
- 46 R: [de a hatodikba Idike] úgy volt, hogy a pad
but in the sixth, Idike, it was so that the desk
- 47 teljesen itt a tanári asztalnál.
was completely here at the teacher's table.
- 48 Gábor: nekem is [úgy van.]
it's like that for me, too
- 49 R: [ami] nem szép.
which is not nice
- 50 T: aha, aha
ah hah, ah hah

We interpret Réka's narrative (lines 1–8) as a summary of her principles and her claim for an expert position vis-à-vis the teacher. She emphasizes her own proactive agency in presenting and transforming the schoolscape (e.g. “I showed”, “I arranged”, “I pulled them back”; lines 1–2, 15), she evaluates and compares settings (e.g. “not like here”, line 10), and identifies problems (e.g. “it's messy”; line 8). As a summary, she presents her view that the big physical distance between teachers and students is not in conflict with a loving atmosphere (lines 26–29). Réka also voices a teacher in an imagined dialogue to support her argument (“indeed ... your desk will be like this”; lines 27, 29; “your desk...” is uttered as if the teacher would talk to the students). According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998: 226), such active voicing “can be used in a number of ways to warrant the factual status of claims and undermine the possibility of skeptical responses” (p. 226). That is, Réka takes teacher authority and strengthens her argument by voicing the

teacher who is present in the classroom. At this point Ida challenges Réka and articulates her own view on the classroom arrangement, presenting that the distance creates a private zone rather than an authority position for the teacher (lines 30–33, 43–45). Ida narrates that she always sits among the students so it is rather the distance of personal objects than the distance of persons that is created by the arrangement of the furniture. Further, Ida argues that it is not possible to teach when sitting at the teacher’s desk (line 39), and invites Réka to recall her previous experiences to prove that Ida routinely doesn’t sit at her desk (e.g. “whenever you come...”; lines 35–42). Although Réka, partly in overlapping speech, accepts the validity of the situation as presented by Ida (lines 36–42), she maintains her criticism of the physical closeness of student and teacher desks, and concludes it in an evaluative statement (“not nice”; lines 46–49). We interpret this last evaluation as an attempt to restore Réka’s authority in the evaluation of schoolscape settings.

5 Discussion

In the examples above, we analyzed how parents co-constructed ideologies about normativity in schoolscape design with regards to interaction order. These examples also display how the research setting provided an opportunity for the participants to describe and demonstrate their alternative or contesting perspectives on the schoolscape. Our data showed that parents constructed their situational identity via showing competence in relation to the schoolscape. In one case we found that a parent exercised control over the schoolscape and transformed the classroom setting. As briefly outlined above in Section 2, Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) framework for identity analysis consists of five principles, all of which can be seen at work in the examples above.

First, identity is an “emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 588). Our detailed analysis of researcher-participant interaction and the methodological perspective afforded by TGT demonstrate how situationally created identity influences an informant’s interaction with and evaluations of the schoolscape. For example, in excerpt (4a), Tamás’s question “what would you change on it?” (line 1) was the impetus for Réka’s subsequent comments and rearranging of the classroom. Second, identities include “(a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and internationally specific stances and participant roles” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 592). Dóra’s and Réka’s positions as mothers, their culturally influenced educational ideologies, and their performative roles as tour guides are all relevant to their movement through and commentary about their children’s schools.

Bucholtz and Hall outline several indexical processes that are at work as a third element of identity construction. For example, Dóra’s references to history index the social function of schools as they enculturate students into a national identity, and her comment regarding the classroom displays that students can observe daily (“repetition is the mother of knowledge”, line 17 in excerpt 2a) presupposes a knowledge-transfer model of education. Likewise, Réka’s

actions and evaluations index an authoritarian teacher-student relationship, but one in which “the teacher loves the students but / ke- keeps the distance” (lines 26–27 in excerpt 5). A fourth principle of Bucholtz and Hall, that of the complementary relations or dualities that individuals align themselves with, for example similarity/difference, is exemplified by Dóra’s observation that “in our times, when I came here to school, / then it was also like the same” (lines 2–3 in excerpt 2a). This evocation of the similar curricular structure that she experienced solidifies her identification with both the school’s history and the setting of her children’s education.

The final principle that Bucholtz and Hall discuss emphasizes that identity is “constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts” (2005: 606). This is evident in the evolution of Réka’s role from guide to classroom authority as she arranges the room to parent as the teacher, Ida, assumes more control over the discourse. For scholars who seek to apply ethnographic methods to understand the dynamic interaction of people and space, considerations of agency and identity are a crucial lens. Likewise, distinguishing between reactive and proactive agency has helped us to understand the complexities of established and emerging schoolscape practices and their significance to institutional semiotics.

While agency and identity are our focal concepts in this chapter, we need to note that in our study of Hungarian schoolscape, the investigation of agency-in-interaction has helped us understand other aspects of educational practices as well. For example, teachers’ talk highlighted the role signs play in agency negotiations of classroom norms with regards to somewhat challenging interactional practices (e.g. disciplinary vs. youth language [Szabó 2015]; British English vs. American and outer circle Englishes [Szabó 2016, 2018]; compartmentalized languages vs. hybrid solutions [Szabó 2016]; etc.). With reference to research methodology, we discussed participants’ agency in embodiment, more specifically, in negotiating the trajectory of walking tours as well as manipulating objects and shaping discussion (Szabó & Troyer 2017).

6 Suggested applications

Recent educational development projects (e.g. Kury et al. 2014; Mikkonen et al. 2015) and our results presented in this chapter indicate that conversations with school community members provide relevant insights into the co-construction of institutional agency and identities, and further, it fosters cooperation among school community members with different organizational statuses. We argue that adapting research-based methods such as TGT to educational development purposes helps school community members to explicate and discuss their practices in and interpretations of the schoolscape with regards to their special interests. Further, such encounters give space for peer and inter-generational learning situations. Students guiding their peers, their teachers or their parents, and all possible combinations of taking roles and linking people with different organizational statuses enhance dialogue about the actual and the potential use of various school spaces, and can also be used for detecting problematic issues or challenges that should be addressed. During the tours, school community members can also recall their personal stories that link them to the premises, potentially including references to previous

school premises that have been meaningful to them (e.g. their previous school, or the school's previous building when appropriate), or establishing links between schools and other private or public spaces they encounter (perhaps similarly to Réka's account on the parallels between a home and the school). Currently the lead author contributes to an organizational development project for students and teachers of so-called co-located schools in Finland. In co-located schools, administratively independent schools with different languages of instruction (i.e., Finnish and Swedish) share premises, and the increased use of both languages changes previous language practices. This situation can be considered an opportunity for renewing educational practices, or a threat to established traditions, depending on school community members' language ideologies that can be studied through walking through the premises and talking about changes in the schoolscape (e.g. Szabó et al. 2018). Recently, students of co-located schools have recorded joint walking tours, that is, students from both institutions are present, and they interpret the schoolscape together, merging or challenging competing institutional and personal perspectives. Their recordings are then used in popularized videos to present the phenomenon of co-located schools (e.g. From and Szabó 2017). Likewise, the second author is working with a local school district to examine the presence (and absence) of a minority language (the home language of about a quarter of the district's students) in the district's schools. The interaction between the researcher, teachers, and administrators has led to increased awareness of the symbolic importance of language choice and the potential for initiatives that increase visibility of the minority language.

Beyond walking tours, participants can also prepare visual-textual diaries in connection with the school premises, organizing the content around various topics relevant to them, e.g. colors, materials, sounds, smells, action potentials (what, where, when, with whom and how to do in the school building), etc. Walking, talking, thinking, documenting and planning together, school community members can set agendas for further development, and can re-define their roles in the community. For example, when preparing the above mentioned videos on co-located schools, school community members have emphasized that plans of implementation of any task in the project need to come from the school itself, so they should not be imposed on them by external agents. That is, they have stressed their aspiration towards constructing proactive agency in terms of interaction and potential intervention in their schoolscape. Linguistic landscape research that engages closely with the inhabitants and stakeholders of a place not only changes the kind of data that is collected, the methods of analysis, and theoretical orientation but, moreover, it engenders transformative processes by raising awareness and providing local agency. These are the results of opening new spaces for research; to gain entry to semipublic environments, researchers must step out from behind the lens of the camera and make responsible social commitments to their participants. These interactions, in turn, lead us to question the boundaries entailed by the research methods of much previous research, and in adopting new perspectives, to understand a schoolscape not only as object, but as the experience of linguistic landscaping.

Acknowledgements

Szabó's research was supported by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

Appendix 1. Transcript conventions used in this chapter (based on Jefferson 2004)

[the point of overlap onset
]	the point at which two overlapping utterances end
=	no break between the two lines
(.)	a brief interval (shorter than 0.2 seconds)
(1.2)	elapsed time by tenth of seconds
:	prolongation of the immediately prior sound
-	cut-off
<u>word</u>	stress via pitch and/or amplitude
(())	transcriber's description
(- -)	the transcriber could not get what was said

Further reading

1. Gorter, D. (in press). – This review paper gives a comprehensive overview of linguistic landscape oriented research on educational spaces and their interpretations by school communities. It devotes special attention to contributions published in the Special Issue for *Linguistics and Education* “Studying the visual and material dimensions of education and learning” (ed. by P. Laihonen and T. P. Szabó) which covers a great variety of geographical contexts, theoretical approaches and methodologies applied.
2. Troyer, R. A. and T. P. Szabó (2017) and Szabó, T. P. and R. A. Troyer (2017). – The first of these two articles discusses a theory of visual representation then draws on recent work in the related fields of anthropology and cultural geography to introduce videographic documentation and analysis of the Linguistic Landscape. It provides a framework for videographic methodologies and an example of non-participatory video documentation. The second article provides a detailed analysis of walking-based methodologies in ethnographic and linguistic landscape research which provide insight into the organization of interaction between researchers and research participants. It also elaborates on the *tourist guide technique* method that we used in this study.
3. Kraftl, P. (2015). – This monograph of comparative education develops a Cultural Geography-based framework for the study of educational spaces. It operates with notions such as connection vs. disconnection, mess vs. order, movement and embodiment as well as ‘good life’. Insights from this book complement linguistic landscape studies, and are thought-provoking for linguistic landscape researchers, especially because they discuss

central phenomena of linguistic landscape research from the viewpoint of another academic tradition, i.e., Cultural Geography.

4. For readers interested in language and identity, there is a wealth of literature. Good chapter-length starting points are Bucholtz and Hall (2004), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), and Schecter (2015). Longer treatments of the connection between language, culture, discourse, and identity include Benwell and Stokoe (2006), Joseph (2004), and Coupland (2007). For specific application of identity theories to studies of the Linguistic Landscape, the volume edited by Blackwood, Lanza, & Woldemariam (2016) contains an overview and many detailed discussions from a variety of approaches.

Essay questions

1. What makes an ideal physical learning space to you? Describe what you consider ideal for your studies and illustrate it with a photo you took, an image you downloaded from the internet, a drawing, or any other visual material. After writing your description, self-reflectively analyze what personal expectations and presuppositions you found in your text and visuals. Finally add if you got new insights or questions that influence your further studies in the topic.
2. Consider the educational ideologies implied by Dóra (transcript 2a) in reference to classroom signage and Réka's opinions about classroom arrangement (transcript 5) relative to the comments of the teacher (Ida). Based on your experience, describe additional kinds of materials that are often posted in and around K-12 classrooms, and explain the educational beliefs that these imply. Discuss how these elements of the schoolscape may be interpreted differently by students, teachers, parents, and school administrators.

Ideas for project work

1. Explore the difference between a researcher's etic (outsider) perspective and the emic (insider) perspective of an inhabitant of an LL. First, choose a local LL research site that you are unfamiliar with. Make a preliminary exploration on foot and audio record or write notes focusing on the salient features of the LL followed by a more detailed journal entry immediately afterward. If this is part of a larger project, you should return to gather an extensive photographic and/or video record for documentation. Next recruit a volunteer who is very familiar with the research site to be your 'tour guide'. Briefly explain to them the idea of linguistic landscape research then ask them to give you a walking tour which you video tape while trying as little as possible to direct their attention. Analyze the recording to find similarities and differences between what was salient to you as an outsider and what was important to your participant.

2. Applying *tourist guide technique* described in this chapter and in Szabó and Troyer (2017; see under Further reading), co-explore a school building with a group of people which is as diverse as possible. For example, you can ask pupils, teachers, parents, education administration staff, janitors, security guards, firefighters, etc. to guide you and share their specific interpretation of the space with you. Record the walking tours by taking photos, video recording, voice recording, etc. To get more focused, you can choose a wing or a classroom for scrutiny. After the walking tours, analyze comparatively the material you generated with a special regard to the different viewpoints your guides represented and reconstructed vis-à-vis their role in the design, use, maintenance, etc. of the schoolscape. Pay particular attention to how participants' involvement with the schoolscape changes depending on their role.

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Key Terms for Volume Index

Schoolscape, agency, walking interview, conversation analysis, inhabitant, interaction, parent, identity, normativity, ideology.

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