

Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
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Linguistic Landscape

Welcome to class, today we are going to talk about an emerging subfield in social linguistics called Linguistic Landscape. It is relatively a recent development and started in the 1990s with the works by Landry and Bourhis, Spolsky and Cooper and other people. When we say landscape we are referring to a geographical location, a geographical area and when we say linguistic landscape that means we are talking about the presence of language in its visual form in public places.

Now in a multilingual society we find multiple languages in public places, in terms of public signage, names of the streets, names of shops, buildings. You go to the railway station, you find a lot of text on display, you find a lot of instructions on display, go to any government building, go to any privately owned shop, you find a lot of language and information displayed in public. Now if you pay close attention to it in a multilingual society you find multiple languages at play. Now what determines which language will be represented in public space, what determines the linguistic hierarchy, choice of languages, what triggers these choices, what are the motives, what are the triggering factors, this is what is all about linguistic landscape and it is also a tool to understand a multilingual setting and linguistic hierarchy of a particular given region.

So studies like Landry and Bourhis, Spolsky, Cooper and other people have been publishing a lot of work and this has become another avenue to understand multilingualism and use of language in public. So today we are going to talk about linguistic landscape and subsequent developments in the field and how it is emerging as a popular and significant subfield in social linguistics.

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Linguistic Landscape

- "The language of public road signs, advertising, billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration."
 - Landry and Bourhis (1997)
- An important characteristic of LL is that it is comprised of both 'private' and 'public' signs:
 - signs issued by public authorities (like government, municipalities or public agencies) on the one hand, and
 - signs issued by individuals, associations or firms acting more or less autonomously in the limits authorised by official regulations.

The language is how linguistic landscape is defined and the early definition comes from, structured definition comes from Landry and Bourhis 1997. And what they say I quote from there, the language of public road signs, advertising, billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings combined to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration, Landry and Bourhis 1997.


So all sorts of sites, all sorts of places where we see representation of language, where we see language in use, so it may be a public building, it may be names and signages of the roads, of the buildings, of the coffee shops, other shops, a set of instructions issued in public places, names of the streets, all kinds of billboards and advertisement that you find in public space on roadsides, on highways, other places. So they all together combine and form a linguistic landscape, a site for language use visibly present in public space, this is what Landry and Bourhis 1997 talk about and this is how they define it. So the important characteristic of linguistic landscape is that it comprises both public and private signs, so it is not necessarily government buildings and street names only but also privately owned shops or privately owned any space inside where you see the language used.

So basically the physical presence of language in terms of notations and signs and names be it a public space, be it a privately owned building, shop and other things in the public

space, it is a composite thing, so combines together the whole linguistic landscape. The signs issued by public authorities like government, municipalities, public agencies on one hand and signs used by individuals, associations or firms acting more or less autonomously in the limits authorized by official regulations. So all places where you are able to see, the use of language will come to the Indian experience and Indian examples but everywhere wherever you see the use of language in terms of a billboard, a signage, a road name, a street name, a building name, shop name, so how language is visible in these spaces?

How many languages are visible in such spaces? Do we have a hierarchy of representation of these languages and the presence of multiple languages in these particular notional boundaries? Do they conform to certain social structures? Do they represent the aspirations of the language users and such phenomena they all combine to form the core theme of linguistic landscape?

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- **Linguistic landscape** is the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region".
 - [Landry and Bourhis 1997:23]
- Linguistic landscape has been described as being "somewhere at the junction of sociolinguistics, sociology, social psychology, geography, and media studies".
 - [Sebba, Mark (2010). "Review of *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*". *Writing Systems Research*. **2** (1): 73-76.]

So it is a visibility and salience of language, that is what Landry and Bourhis says. Sebba, Mark, 2010, she says, the linguistic landscape has been described as being somewhere at the junction of socio linguistic sociology, social psychology, geography and media studies. It is a kind of multi-disciplinary theme that cuts across multiple disciplines like

sociolinguistics of course, from where it originated in the multilingual society language in multilingual societies.

Also sociology it cuts across the theories in social theories, sociology it also has roots in social psychology, geography, the location and the area and the region, the territory and media studies where we talk about semiotics of advertisement and all signs of billboards and things where you have information included. So this theme cuts across multiple disciplines, sociolinguistics, sociology, psychology, geography, media studies etcetera.

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LL: A Recent Phenomenon

- This concept is relatively new and originated in Sociolinguistics and Language Planning which soon extended its roots in many other disciplines and has now become a prominent theme of studies.
- A special issue of the International Journal of Multilingualism [3.1, 2006] was dedicated to the subject.
- The journal World Englishes published an issue thematically focused on this concept as a "Symposium on World Englishes and Linguistic Landscapes: Five Perspectives" (2012, vol. 31.1).
- The International Journal of the Sociology of Language (2014) was dedicated to the subject.
- In 2015 John Benjamins launched an academic journal devoted to this topic titled Linguistic Landscape: An International Journal.

And this is emerging as a very prominent and significant important discipline area of study. If you look at the emergence of linguistic landscape studies, relatively it is a very recent phenomenon and if you recall we talked about emergence of modern social linguistics post dialectology in 1960s, we can say that linguistic landscape emerged in 1990s by the time social linguistics as a discipline was completely established and it is a subfield of socio linguistics.

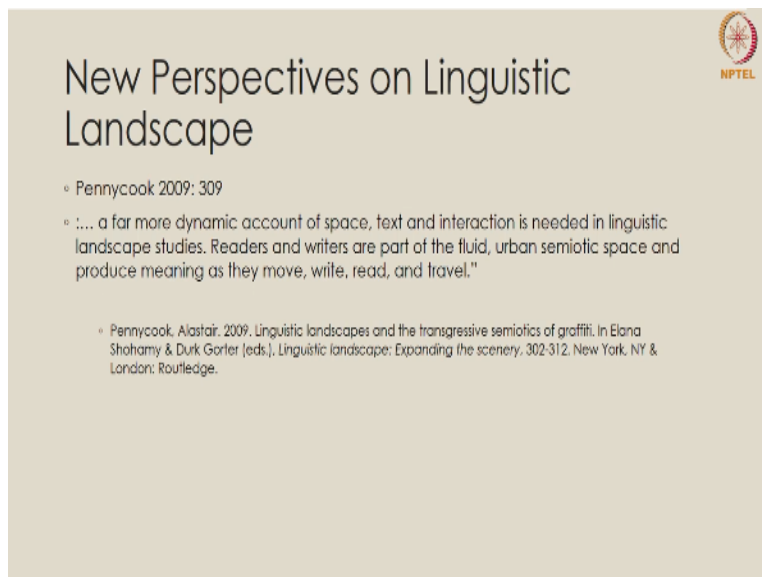
This concept is relatively new and originated in socio linguistics and language planning and which soon was extended to other disciplines and it had roots in many other disciplines and it has become now a very important prominent significant theme of studies. There are subsequent developments post publication of the works by Spolsky,

Cooper, Landry, Bourhis in 90s series of initiatives and the thematized activities led to the emergence of this discipline.

So if you look at some thematized series of activities, a special issue of the international journal of multilingualism was dedicated to the subject and it included all kinds of articles pertaining to linguistic landscape, so it provided an avenue to collect these ideas and put them together. Similarly, the journal World Englishes also published a special thematic issue as a Symposium on World Englishes and Linguistic Landscape, Five Perspectives, it included five important articles and it was published in 2012.

Then the International Journal of Sociology of Language also dedicated a volume in 2014 to the subject and to mark the independent nature of this theme John Benjamins launched in 2015 an academic journal which is named as Linguistic Landscape: An International Journal. So now researchers around the world are working on this theme and these are the places which systematically published and popularized the discipline, the newly emerged theme in socio linguistics.

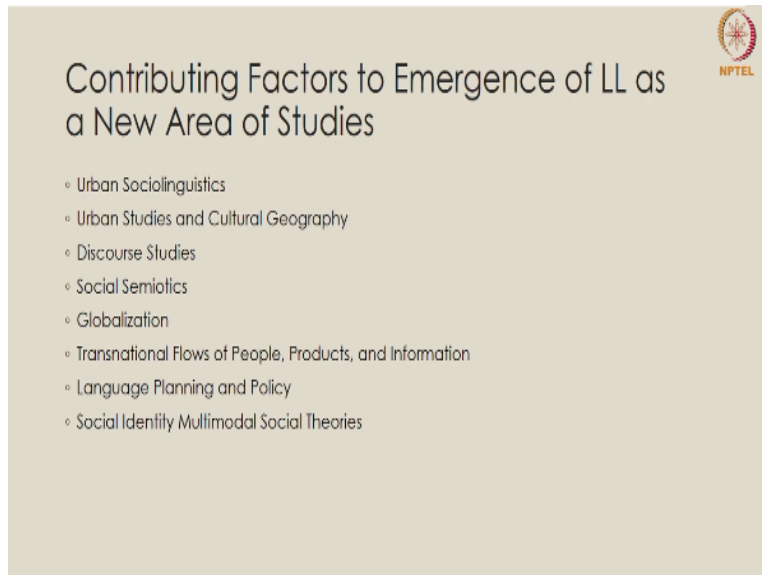
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Pennycook 2009 gives a fresh perspective, so unlike Spolsky, Cooper, Landry and Bourhis he gives a fresh perspective in understanding linguistic landscape and says I quote from Pennycook 2009 page 309 he says, a far more dynamic account of space, text

and interaction is needed in linguistic landscape studies. Readers and writers are part of the fluid urban semiotic space and produce meaning as they move, write, read and travel. So he uses a fresh perspective to understanding the linguistic landscape theme


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Now what are the contributing factors and disciplines in the emergence of the linguistic landscape as the new area of studies. So disciplines like urban socio linguistics and use of language, discipline of concepts like urban studies and cultural geography, discourse studies, social semiotics, globalization for that matter and a rapid movement of transnational flow of people, product and resources and information.

Of course, language planning and policy also contributed to the development of this phenomenon, social identities, multimodal social theories, multilingualism, language and use, so all these factors and all these areas contributed to the development of the linguistic landscape.

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Significance of LL

- As an independent variable, it contributes to a group's ethnolinguistic vitality [Landry & Bourhis]
- It signals what languages are prominent and valued in public and private spaces and indexes the social positioning of people who identify with particular languages. [Dagenais et al 2009: 254]
- It represents
 - Culture
 - History
 - Politics of Language
 - Linguistic Hierarchy
 - Prestige Value assigned to languages in use
 - Aspirations of people and their Political Goals
 - Linguistic inclusion and exclusion
 - Collective Identities

And if you look at the significance of this, if you look at the significance of this theme and discipline. As an independent variable, it contributes to a group's ethno-linguistic vitality, said Landry and Bourhis, it signals what languages are prominent and valued in public and private spaces and indexes the social positioning of people who identify with particular languages. So if you look at the presence of language in this public space it symbolizes, it represents a number of issues and factors, it talks about the cultural harmony, history of the place, it also unravels the layers of politics of language, it also represents linguistic hierarchy, which language is preferred over which language. It talks about the prestige value assigned to language in use in public space, so language A gets prominence over language B in writing and in orthographic representation in public space, it also represents aspiration of people and their political goals. So the social hierarchy is represented in the linguistic hierarchy in terms of the presence of language in the public space, it talks about linguistic inclusion and exclusion.

What languages are included to be represented in public space and what languages are excluded even if you have speakers in the same territory, the language may not be represented in public sciences, and this is not a coincidence but it has got a linguistic hierarchy, prestige value and a whole set of language politics. He talks about collective identities of people and speakers who use this language in that particular territory, so

linguistic landscape not simply is the study of billboards and signboards and the representation of language in public spaces but it has got a wide range of issues and in a very subtle way, it represents a lot of socio linguistic factors used, implied in this language use in public space.

You might have traveled in Indian railway and you might have seen at least three languages on railway stations, name of the railway stations for that matter, the signages, instructions placed on platforms and also inside the train you might have seen, some instructions, some notices, some set of rules published and pasted on the walls of the train and you have noticed it is not in just one language, it is in many languages. And if you look at the railway station and if you pay attention to the name of the station, usually it has three languages present there. Now recall the language policy, official language policy, now recall the three language formula, you might have seen a busy bazaar in Indian societies, Indian markets, look at the signages and boards in market in the area around you, go to your own market and see.

Overwhelmingly you will find English signages and names of the shops English signage names, even if a script is different you will find English sign names, majority of the shops will have English component, will have English language present in the signage, even on government buildings will find names in English in Hindi which is official language of India and a local original language which is also official language. And this is not coincidence, this is a pattern, it represents. If you look at the government buildings it represents the language policy of the government of India. You might find some signages and boards in your own local area where you will find a dominant regional language present along with English and Hindi.

So in Chennai you will have Tamil, Hindi and English, in Maharashtra you will have Marathi, Hindi and English, in Kolkata or Bengal you will have Bangla, Hindi in English, in Punjab you will have Punjabi, Hindi and English, in UP Uttar Pradesh you will find because Urdu is also official language of UP, you will Urdu, Hindi and English for that matter, in Bihar also similar case.

So even if these scripts are different, there are three languages in Delhi for that matter you find four languages in public signages and government buildings, government streets and roads, you will have Gurmukhi script, Punjabi, you will have Urdu, you will have Hindi and English and it is very significant.

In privately owned shops also you will find an overwhelming presence of English and this overwhelming presence of English also denotes the aspiration of the Indian society which looks at English as a language of social upward mobility, a marker of it is a postmodern phenomenon, a marker of identity. So, even the small hairdressing salon will have English name and English Roman script in its signage, in its name of the shop even if the regular visitors and customers are not able to read it, mostly if even in several urban areas you will find English signages. So what I am trying to say is that presence of such languages in public space not only denotes the linguistic hierarchy, prestige value, aspirations of the speakers but also represents a pattern, parallel to the social structure of that territory and region and that is what we have to understand when we talk about linguistic landscape. So it represents culture, it represents the history of that area and territory, it represents politics that goes on in terms of linguistic politics, it also represents linguistic hierarchy and prestige value assigned to a particular language in the area, in that territory. It represents the aspirations of people and their political motives and goals, it also signifies linguistic inclusion and underlines linguistic exclusion, what language is to be displayed in public and what has to be laid down and it also represents collective identity of the people in that territory and area. So that is a very significant theme to be studied in socio linguistics and it has emerged as a very significant thematic subfield of study in socio linguistics today.

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Indian Experience



- Apart from administration and education, English is significantly controlling technology, trade and commerce.
- The creative imaginations and popular culture are no exceptions as English captures a sizeable space encoding socio-cultural expressions. The texts in English are rooted in Indian socio-cultural space where the characters and events represent multilingual and multicultural background of the environment.
- The Indian sub-urban sites are dominated by the overwhelming presence of English for a range of reasons such as Cultural, Social, Political, and certainly Marketing Economy.

If you look at the Indian experience I was talking about, apart from administration and education, English is significantly controlling the linguistic landscape of India in terms of technology, trade and commerce. The creative imaginations and popular culture are no exceptions as English captures a sizable space encoding socio-cultural expressions. Because as we all know India is a multilingual country, a society and hundreds of languages are spoken. English is not the language of the land, but because of our colonial history English has occupied a very prominent place in Indian society and today we talk about Indian English as a variety of English, it is no more foreign, it is no more alien, it is no more other tongue.

Probal Dasgupta says Auntie tongue syndrome, so it is no more foreign that way and it captures the popular imagination it is seen as a tool for social upward mobility. So when you look at the Indian linguistic landscape, you can see the linguistic hierarchy and how it represents the aspiration of people. The texts in English are rooted in Indian social cultural spaces where the characters and events represent multilingual and multicultural background of the environment and we use English so creatively that the native speakers of English will have difficult time interpreting and understanding because we have customized it and we have assimilated it in our linguistic ecology in such a way that it is no more a foreign language. And if you look at the Indian suburban sites of language use

it is completely dominated by English and then of course, the regional language, so it is a very interesting linguistic landscape when we look at the Indian scenario, Indian case.

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And for you I just bring a few examples, look at this is GS road Guwahati, Shillong highway and there is a resort on the way and very interesting signage I noticed there which gave direction to toilets, look at the signage it says washrooms he and she, and it indicates the arrow but it does not stop here. Look at the sentence written there, 'he' to the left, so without saying even the arrow indicates that it is towards the left, and 'she' to the right. But look at the expression used he to the left because she is always right, it is not simply a direction, giving direction to go to a female toilet or a male toilet, toilet meant for men, toilet means for women, it is not simply giving the location and direction but also incorporating a very important popular cultural belief and talks about position of women in our imagination. And then it may be anecdotal but it does have that Indianess to this expression, look at this so, he to the left because she is always right. Apparently it looks like a simple signage in English that gives you location and direction but there is more to it.

Similarly, at Guwahati airport there was one billboard look at this billboard, so you have a combination of Roman and Devanagari script here, the word is a Hindi word written in Roman script with an inserted Devanagari script alphabet and it says 'Hastakshar',

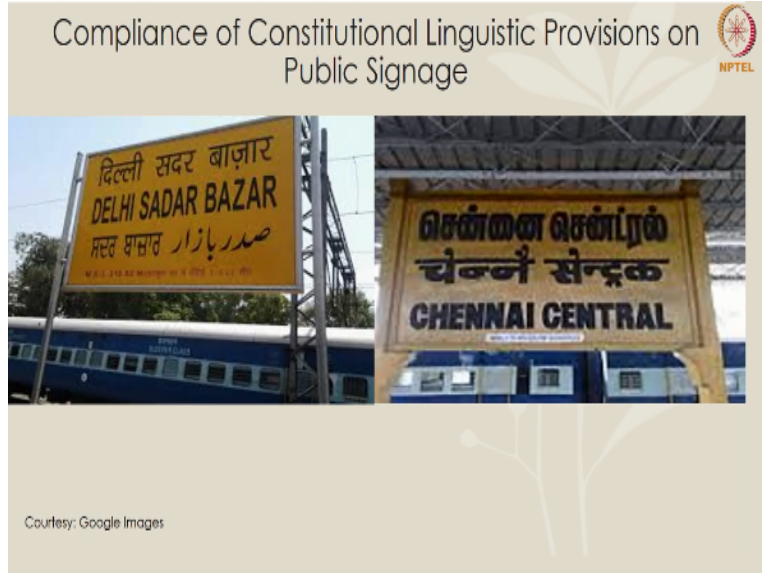
‘Hastakshar’ means signature in English. So ‘Hastakshar’ phonic sound h-a-s-t-a and then this Devanagri alphabet and then a-r ‘Hastakshar’.

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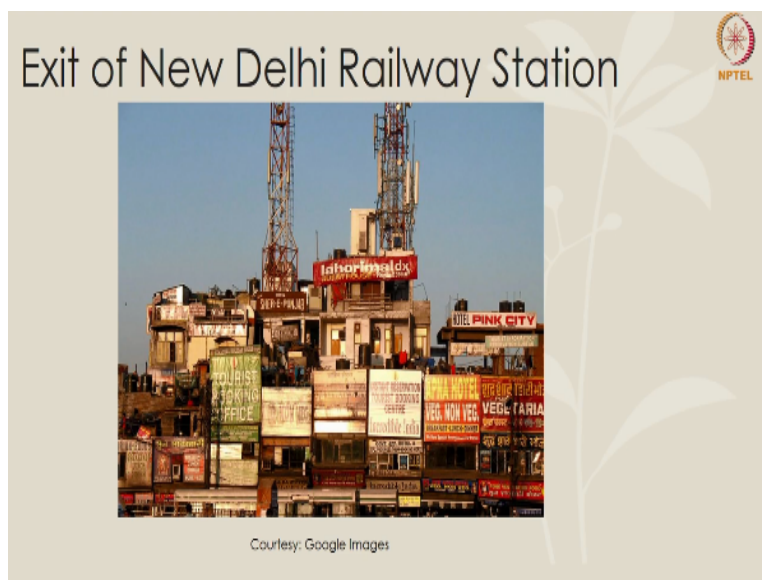
Look at these signage, we can talk about problem of translation, we can talk about spelling errors, ‘Sarkari thandi beer ki dukar’ and the translation is Child Bear, it is funny, it may be interesting but what it says, it talks about, look at the shop and look at the signage and look at the location, locality you can imagine how many English speakers visit this shop but it captures the aspiration of the people in the area.

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This is what I was talking about in terms of compliance of the language policy and planning in India, look at the signages all over railway stations and you will find this trilingual or four languages signages all over in whatever part of the country you get, you travel, Delhi's Sadar Bazar for that matter, railway station, so Hindi at the top then you have English then you have Gurmukhi script Punjabi and Urdu, these are four official languages of Delhi. Look at Chennai Central, Tamil, Hindi and English.

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This is the exit of New Delhi railway station and if you look at the signages and boards you find overwhelmingly presence of English and if you look at the locality and the place and the potential visitors of the place, majority of the visitors of such places will not be able to read what is there on the board, but it captures the aspiration of the people, the popular imagination and aspiration. So English symbolizes that and you will find the presence of English all over you go to your own local market and you will find such a phenomenal present there.

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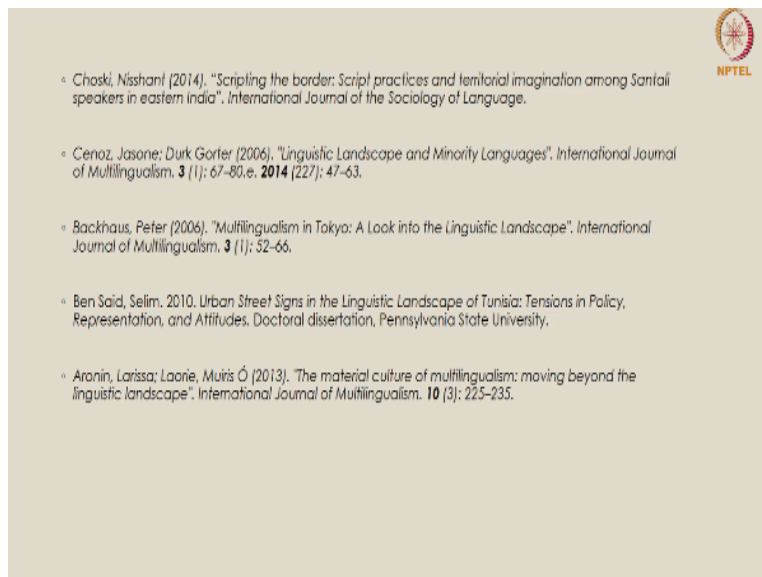


And this is very important, it looks simple but it implies a lot of social, geographical and other cultural aspects to it. If you look, this phenomena is a very recent phenomena and hardly started in the 1990s but it has been established as a very productive and important sub field in sociolinguistics. Some significant publications in this area, it is not an exhaustive list but there are some publications in the area and that I have tried to incorporate here and this is not an exhaustive list but we cannot ignore these studies and it starts with Landry and Bourhis 1997 Linguistic Landscape and Ethno-Linguistic Vitality An Empirical Study published in Journal of Language and Social Psychology in 1997. Then, another important work that we cannot miss is Spolsky, Bernard and Robert cooper 1991, The Languages of Jerusalem, published by Oxford University Press.

Shohamy, Elana Shohamy and Durk Garter 2009 *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the scenery*, New York and London, published by Routledge.

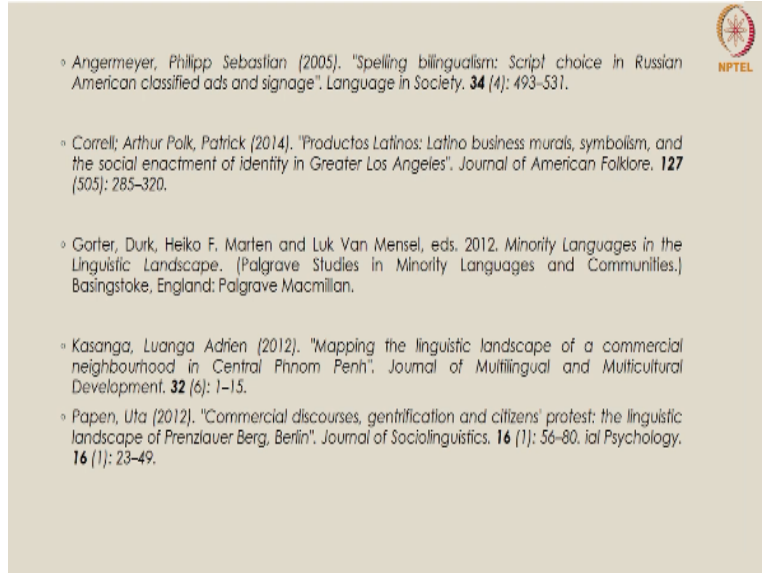
Jennifer Leeman and Gabriella Modan in 2009, *Commodified language in Chinatown: A contextualized approach to linguistic landscape*, published in the *Journal of Socio Linguistics* in 2009. Then Samira Hassa, *Regulating and Negotiating linguistic diversity: top down and bottom-up language planning in Moroccan city*, published in *Current Issues in Language Planning* in 2012 a important publication in that way.

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Then Nisshant Choski, published in 2014, *Scripting the border: Script practices and territorial imagination among Santali speakers in eastern India*, published in *International Journal of Sociology of Language*. Then, Jasone Cenoz and Durk Garter 2006, *Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages*, published in *International Journal of Multilingualism*, then Peter Backhaus, *Multilingualism in Tokyo: A Look into Linguistic Landscape*, *International Journal of Multilingualism* published in 2006. Then, Selim Ben, Said 2010, *Urban Street Signs in the Linguistic Landscape of Tunisia: Tensions in Policy, Representation and Attitudes*. It was a doctoral dissertation in Pennsylvania State University. Then, *The material culture of multilingualism, moving beyond the linguistic landscape* by Larissa Aronin and Laorie, Muiris published in *International Journal of Multilingualism* in 2013.

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And a number of other important publications like *Spelling Bilingualism: Script choices in Russian-American classified ads and signage*. Correll; Arthur Polk and Patrick, *Productos Latinos: Latino business murals, symbolism and the social enactment of identity in Greater Los Angeles*, *Journal of American Folklore*. And so on I mean the list is very, very long.

So finally we can conclude that linguistic landscape is a combination of all kinds of signages, billboards, names and sites which represent language which has language expressions, physically present in the public space and it represents a lot of us, a wide range of themes like history of that area, social structure, cultural practices, aspirations of people, collective identities, prestige value assigned to languages and so on. So linguistic landscape is a newly emerged subfield in social linguistics and it is gaining popularity and a lot of work is being done around the world and published and this is emerging as a very important significant discipline, it cuts across multiple disciplines like sociology, social psychology, media studies, geography, semiotics and so on.

As an observer you can look around your physical space, go to the market, go to the building of offices and you can find the presence of language and in a multilingual setting like India you will find more than one language in that. So these are important significant publications in the field and the work is in progress, people in multiple locations all

around the world are working on characters, properties and patterns of representation of language in public space and how it encodes the linguistic attitude, linguistic hierarchy, prestige value assigned to it and representation of language and local culture in public space.

So this is it for now, we will talk about other relevant themes in our next class, thank you very much.