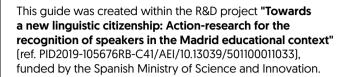


A guide to promote critical sociolinguistic awareness





EquiLing

It is part of the joint project "Critical linguistic awareness and speaker agency: Action-research for sociolinguistic equity", in which researchers from the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and Madrid participate. For more information, see https://www.equiling.eu/en/

In collaboration with MIRCo-UAM: UAM Research Center on Multilingualism, Discourse and Communication. For more information, see https://www.mircouam.com/en/

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Street languages: Collective landscapes of the languages that surround us

A guide to promote critical sociolinguistic awareness

Luisa Martín Rojo Camila Cárdenas Neira Clara Molina

"Education would become a method of transformative action. As political praxis at the service of the permanent liberation of human beings, which does not occur only in their consciences, but in the radical transformation of structures, in the process of which consciences are transformed."

(Paulo Freire, 1974: 47)



Introduction

The EquiLing project	10
Why this guide?	11
How to use this guide?	12
Who is this guide for?	13



What does the "Street Languages" workshop consist of?

The landscapes of the languages
that surround us16
What does the "Linguistic Landscape"
reveal to us?20
Let's make a collective landscape of our
neighborhoods and the languages in them! \dots 26
Summary of the sessions28



The workshop step-by-step

Step 1: What are we going to observe?3	32
Step 2: Out on the street!	4
Step 3: Look again3	55
Step 4: What do the streets tell us?3	8
Step 5: Let's act!	41
Step 6: Let's show what we have learned4	15



Let's go for more: Ideas to implement other workshops

Linguistic landscapes and educational centers	48
Linguistic landscapes and urban protest	56
Final reflection	6.



Toolbox

How did other groups do it?	66
Common notions	70
To learn more	

If you are reading this book on screen, we recommend that you set the PDF for double-page view.

In Adobe Reader, select View > Page Display > Two Page View.















1. Introduction

The EquiLing project

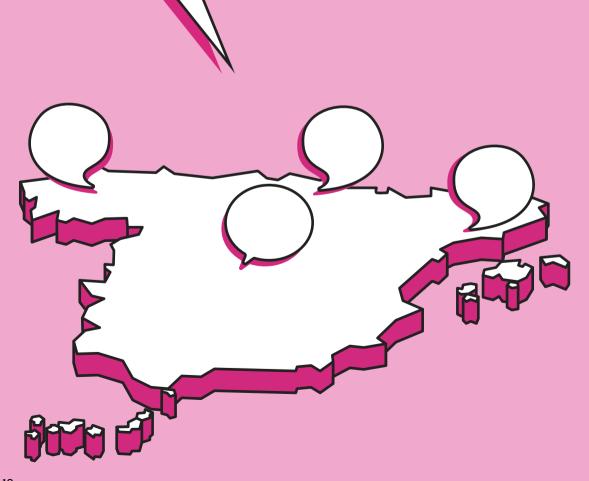
EquiLing

[www.equiling.eu/en/]

investigates the role of language in the construction of contemporary inequalities through participatory ethnographies in different sociolinguistic contexts.

Through action research, we undertake transformative proposals with speakers from the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and Madrid to jointly reverse language-mediated inequalities.

This transformation is much needed in Spain, where the constitutional norm calling for the promotion and protection of linguistic diversity has been insufficiently and unevenly applied. But it is equally relevant in all environments, on any continent, that face the challenge of trying to find solutions to help develop more innovative, inclusive, and responsible societies.



Why this guide?

With this guide, we inaugurate a series of resources generated within the EquiLing action-research project to provide citizens with tools and strategies to understand and reverse situations of inequality in which language plays a key role. By sharing them, we want other individuals and groups in various contexts (formal and informal education, grassroots associations, self-managed groups) to use them and make them their own, to draw attention and awaken reflection on the situations that reproduce inequality daily, and to to build an integrative and open model of linguistic citizenship.

When a hegemonic language is imposed in a nation-state, those who belong to a linguistic minority or a migrant community may be hindered in their access to education (unequal distribution of linguistic resources), will probably not feel socially valued (lack of recognition) and their voice will not be heard, so they will find it difficult to participate fully in society (unequal participation). The same will happen to those who speak with an "accent" sometimes considered "small-town", "vulgar", "only valid for comedy", or typical of people excluded because of racialization, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.

To try and involve citizens, professionals (for instance, in education or sociocultural animation), and all those who wish to be involved in the task of learning about and transforming situations of inequality, we adopt the method developed by the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire, which seeks to **raise awareness** (conscientização in Portuguese) through three stages:

♦

In the first stage, the **magical** one, the aim is to identify and share experiences of inequality.

The second stage, the **naïve** one, reflects on the causes (for example, to what extent the reproduction of prejudices and linguistic norms maintains class differences, or places the migrant population in subordinate conditions).





In the third stage, the **critical** one, a desire for change awakens, and action is taken; that is, the realization of liberating goals starts happening through specific tasks.

This guide is designed to cover these stages through the implementation of a workshop proposed for the study of everyday linguistic landscapes.

How to use this guide?

This guide offers orientations and recommendations for those who decide to implement the workshop in their place of study, work, or volunteering. This workshop was thought of as an **itinerary in which different steps must be taken** to reach a destination, and the guide is presented as **support material**

to travel this path with accompaniment.

So, knowing much about the topic is not a requirement, but respecting the experiences and opinions of those who participate is, as well as acting with empathy, without trying to indoctrinate or making personal judgments.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed for anyone who considers linguistic inequality to be unjust and would like to participate in the workshop in order to acquire knowledge and tools with which to critically position themselves and face this reality. People can get involved by assuming two roles:

In the coordination of the workshop: Secondary school and university teachers can conduct this workshop; also, members of student, neighborhood, sociocultural, or political associations; leaders of linguistic volunteering groups or social activists in any collective where there is a need to encourage awareness of linguistic diversity and its acceptance. On the reception of the workshop: This workshop is an awareness-raising exercise that can involve anyone, even those who have never noticed which languages appear in public space, how or for what purposes they are used, and what this shows about how society, cities, and neighborhoods are changing.

The workshop aims at collaborative work, so we suggest working in small teams, three to six people, and no more than five parallel teams, to be able to serve each participant well. If more people are present, it would be better to have more than one person to facilitate the session. In all cases, depending on the features of the groups involved, the guide can be adapted to better meet their needs.















2. What does the "Street Languages" workshop consist of?

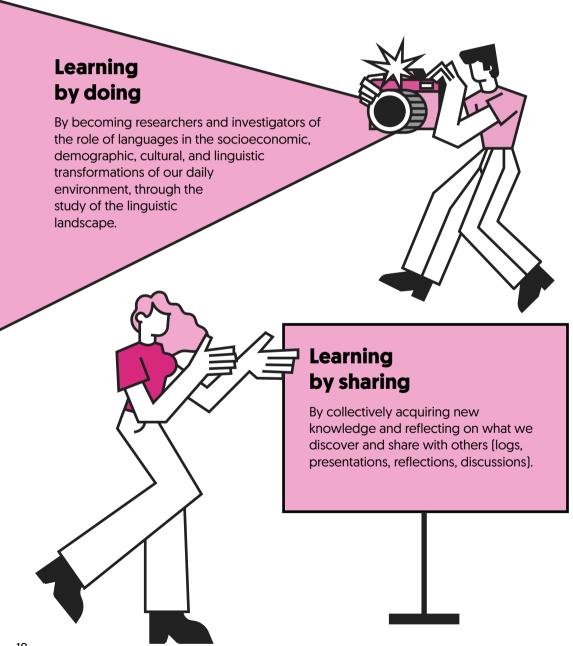




The result of the workshop is a team presentation in which participants share what they have learned while analyzing the neighborhoods. Other formats (videos, posters, infographics, or posts) are also good for sharing learning outcomes. Participants can even go a step further and imagine what they

could change in the environment to improve living conditions and coexistence. The further we can go, the better!

In sum, the learning objectives we aim to achieve are:



Learning by empowering ourselvess

By acquiring simple tools, but oriented to a transformative end: to observe, locate, photograph, and critically analyze the signs written in the urban space around us.



What does the "linguistic landscape" reveal?

As we walk through the streets, we tend not to notice the myriad of advertisements, posters, or graffiti with which other people call out to us. However, the collective landscape that these signs configure, that is, the **linguistic landscape** of any city, reveals important processes:

The diversity of languages used in commerce, in places of leisure, in transport, in services, and in the daily life of our streets and squares. The prestige or value of some languages over others explains their

distribution, so the linguistic landscape reveals whether monolingualism or multilingualism predominates, and what the existing language hierarchies are.



For instance, it may happen that, in a given neighborhood, only some languages appear in the most exclusive stores (English in all types of businesses, especially touristy stores; French in perfume shops; Japanese in restaurants...], while other languages used daily by the inhabitants of that neighborhood (such as Arabic, Romanian, or any other language spoken by migrants) are not equally represented, except in small stores for the locals. In these cases, the linguistic landscape exhibits the status that languages bear with respect to one another hierarchically.



The norms of what language(s) to use and when. These rules happen because of the hierarchies and values assigned to languages and their speakers, so the linguistic landscape shows which services or domains are accessible to segments of the population and which are not.

For instance, when the majority of the population in a neighborhood is migrant and public services (such as health or education) do not include any language other than the hegemonic one, these citizens may have problems using these services and understanding how they work.

Coexistence will only be possible as long as all citizens are an integral part of the neighborhood and measures against segregation or marginalization are in place. In these cases, the linguistic landscape can also account for norms and policies, as well as efforts to challenge or improve them.

The linguistic landscape reveals how our cities are constantly evolving, and the sociocultural and urban processes that transform neighborhoods: the changes that impact the urban landscape, the population, and how languages get mixed (the local languages, those of tourism, and newly arrived neighbors).

For instance, when a neighborhood becomes gentrified and its inhabitants (either of local or migrant origin) are expelled to other areas of the city due to rising housing prices, their languages will also be displaced by others with greater prestige or economic value. In these cases, the linguistic landscape becomes more international and less diverse.

Summary of urban, sociocultural, and linguistic processes identifiable in the linguistic landscape

The following table lists the linguistic, sociocultural, and urban processes that we can detect in the linguistic landscape of our neighborhoods, and relates them to the guiding questions in the workshop, providing clues to elaborate the answers:

Linguistic processes

Guiding questions

Which languages are visible and where?

Which languages have the strongest public presence in the neighborhood, and to what extent do they reflect the diversity of the population?

Clues to observe and respond

What is predominant?

- Presence of a single language: **monolingualism.**
- Coexistence of several languages: multilingualism.
- Different prestige or value assigned to different languages according to their location or area of use: hierarchy of languages.

Sociocultural processes

Guiding questions





What kind of intercultural relations are there between the different ethnic groups and social collectives that inhabit the neighborhood?

Maybe, by including some languages and excluding others, there is a situation of exclusion and (mis) recognition of people and communities.

Clues to observe and respond





What is predominant?

- A situation of monolingualism in which only the local language is visible: assimilation.
- A situation of monolingualism in which only the language of a migrant or other minority/ minoritized community is visible: segregation.
- A situation of multilingualism in which the local language coexists and integrates with other languages frequently represented in different fields: interculturality.
- A situation of multilingualism in which the languages of a migrant community or other minority/minoritized groups are marginally visible or appear only in undervalued areas: marginalization.

Are several of the above possibilities combined?

Urban processes

Guiding questions



What urban transformations do the languages in the surroundings reflect and how are these languages distributed?

Clues to observe and respond



What is predominant?

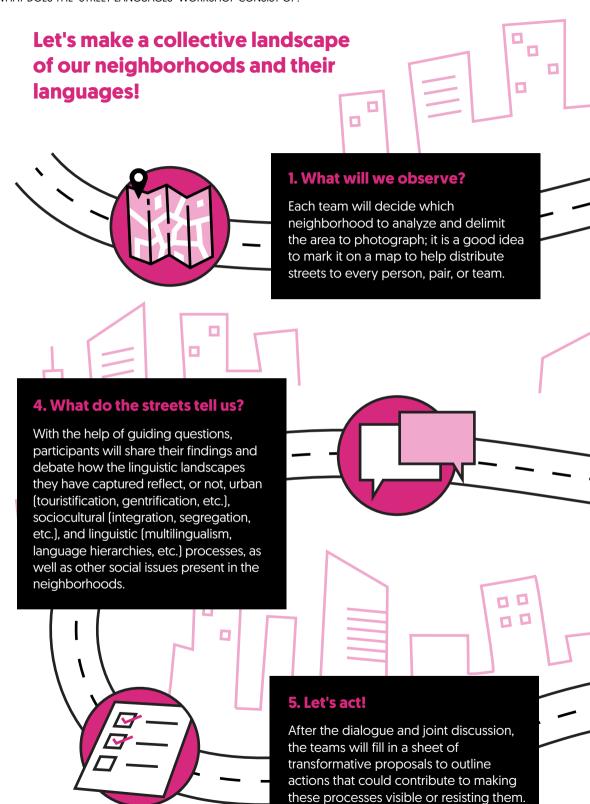
- A significant increase in the use of English and other languages associated with prestigious brands and lifestyles (such as French, Italian, or Japanese) to create luxury shopping areas or sites marked as having high cultural value: branding.
- A majority presence of languages associated with the global tourism industry, while the languages spoken by the local community are relegated: touristification.
- A displacement of the population and languages of the neighborhood to the periphery due to rising prices in housing and surrounding consumer stores: gentrification.
- A social group or class is segregated and isolated in an area, so their language is majoritarian there but not in the rest of the environment: ghettoization.
- A part of the population tries to reappropriate its neighborhood to recover its identity or autonomy using posters, murals, or graffiti: reterritorialization.

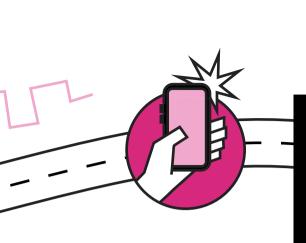
Are several of the above possibilities combined?



For a more detailed definition and a deeper understanding of the urban, sociocultural, and linguistic processes that we want to help unveil and understand, we recommend that the workshop facilitator consult Chapter 5: Toolbox, which includes a glossary of key concepts [Common notions], a list of bibliographical references [To learn more] and application examples [How did other groups do it?].

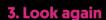






2. Out on the street!

First, you should familiarize yourself with the neighborhood and its people, to see what grabs your attention. As you walk around the area and take pictures, do not forget to write down, in a notebook or on your cell phone, where the pictures were taken (place, name, and street number).

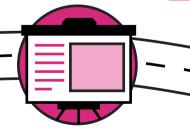


A contextualization sheet will help you better systematize the information from the picture collection. Each team can return to this information to identify features that help them reflect on the recorded linguistic landscape and discuss insights with others.



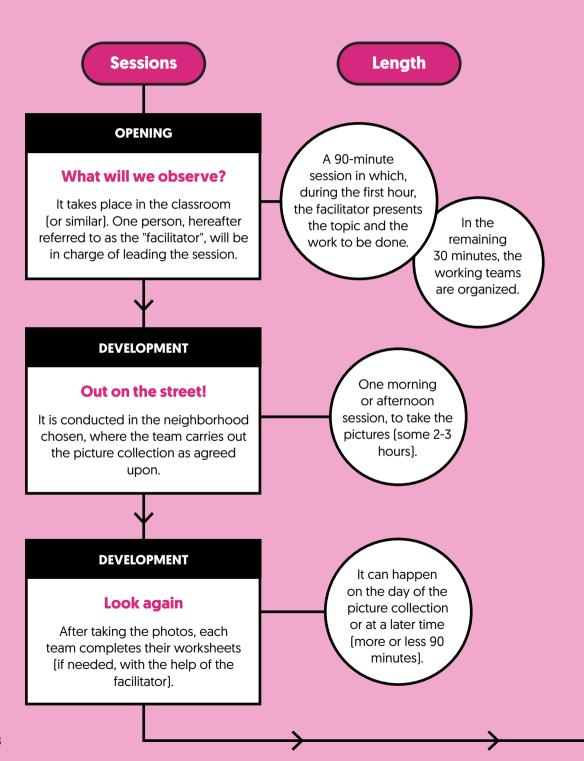
6. Let's show what we have learned

The teams will be able to choose a format to share their findings with others who want to get involved in transformative actions.



Summary of the sessions

The work is conducted in 3 stages (opening, development, closing) that happen over 3 sessions (45 to 90 minutes each), plus 3 days of independent work.



DEVELOPMENT

What do the streets tell us (1)?

It takes place inside or outside the classroom. Each team decides how and where to meet to organize the presentation of their work.

One session of collaborative work of 60 to 90 minutes, to organize the presentation.

DEVELOPMENT

What do the streets tell us (II)?

It is conducted in the classroom, where the facilitator stimulates debate and the systematization of conclusions.

A 90-minute session, with an hour for discussion and 30 minutes to reach conclusions.

CLOSURE

Let's act!

It is conducted in the classroom, where the facilitator encourages the systematization of transformative proposals.

More or less 45 minutes to discuss proposals in teams and complete the worksheet.

CLOSURE

Let's show what we have learned

It is conducted outside the classroom, as agreed upon by each team.

Depending on the mode chosen for the diffusion of findings, it may take a very short time or a couple of hours.













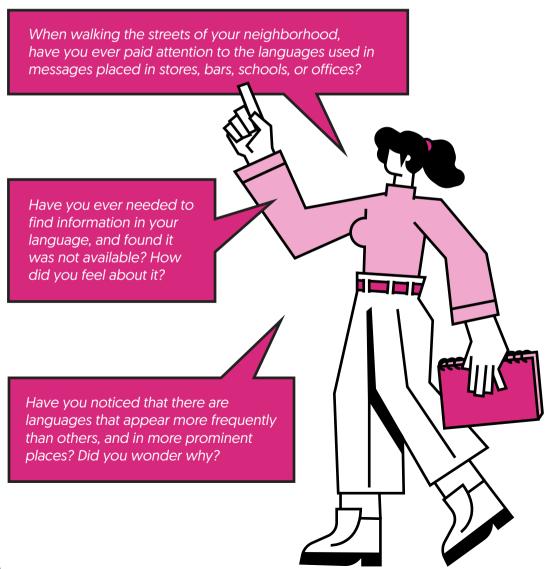




3. The workshop step-by-step

Step 1: What are we going to observe?

Before the workshop, the facilitator must make an introduction to present the topic. The materials available in Chapter 5: Toolbox, can be of help. This introduction aims to **imbue the work** with an experiential and situated sense from a critical perspective. To this end, we recommend the following prompts:



When explaining the task, the workshop facilitator should keep the following in mind:

- **Each team must** select a district of interest to the team members and ascertain its demographic and linguistic characteristics to better interpret the presence (or absence) of written signs. To do this, they can consult statistical information about the districts and their population (by nationality, place of birth, or sex) on the website of the municipality.
- You can photograph graffiti, posters, stickers, signs, advertisements or bulletin boards, brochures, shop windows, advertising, or artifacts (mailboxes, padlocks). Messages can be institutional or private, printed, or handwritten.
- The images must reflect the management of the linguistic diversity of the neighborhood, that is, which languages have a greater presence, or which ones you would expect to find but do not appear; if one or more languages have been erased or crossed out; which speakers they represent and for what purpose, etc. The aim is to reflect on what the distribution of languages shows us about what is happening in the neighborhoods: Who lives in them, how they relate to each other, or what changes the population is undergoing.
- The number of pictures can be as high as desired, but when moving on to the next step the team will have to choose a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty images, selecting the most compelling ones.

Step 2: Out on the street!

At the time of walking the streets to record the linguistic landscape, there are some practical issues to bear in mind:



Planning: You need to determine when and at what time the tours will take place.

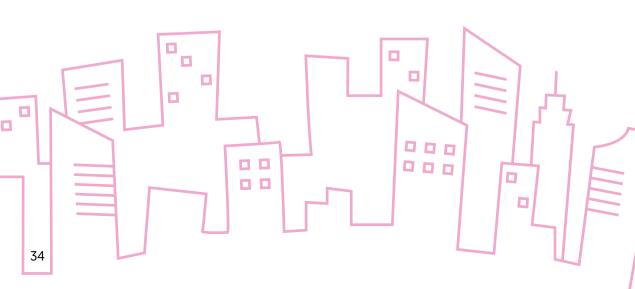


Mapping: Having a map to select the perimeter, and what streets to analyze, is helpful.

Distribution: Having the map in sight, each person, pair, or team must decide what streets to visit.

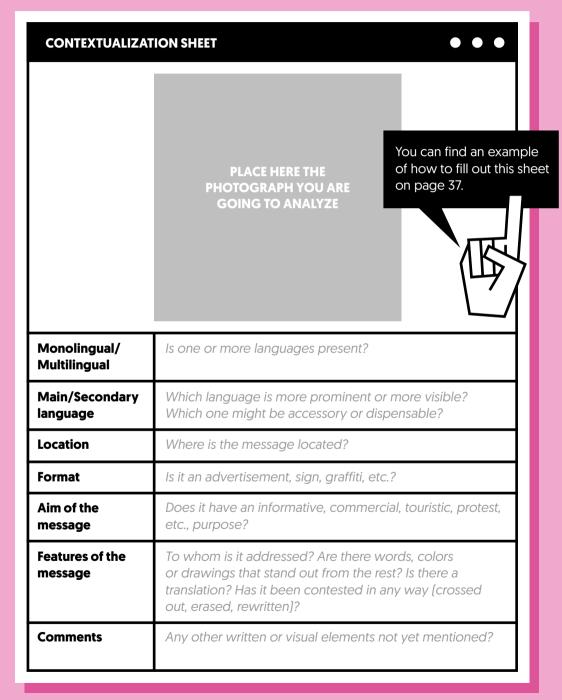


Recording: It is desirable that, while taking pictures, participants take notes (in a notebook or on the cell phone) about where the images were found (street name and number) and the site they correspond to (residential building, store, restaurant, school, etc.).



Step 3: Look again

Once the photographs have been selected, it is important to delve deeper into what they reveal through a more detailed analysis. To do this, the teams can **complete this sample contextualization sheet** to describe each of the images:













This is an example:



Step 4: What do the streets tell us (I)?

After completing the sheets about every picture, each team should review the data and look for shared or differentiating features, as well as for connections between all the images. This exercise comes with a reflection based on crosscutting questions:

By observing the linguistic landscape, can we tell which languages have the greatest public presence in the neighborhood and to what extent they reflect the diversity of the population?

By observing the management of the linguistic diversity that we see reflected in urban space, can we tell which intercultural relations exist between the different languages, ethnic groups, and social collectives that populate the neighborhood?

By observing the types of messages present in the linguistic landscape, can we detect any transformation of urban space such as touristification, gentrification, etc.?

Upon completion of this analytic exercise, **each team creates a presentation** to share (in-person or with pre-recorded audio) with the rest of the team before the group discussion; if recorded, it can be e-mailed or posted online. This presentation aims

to let others know of findings about the neighborhood, as well as to jointly observe differences and similarities with other neighborhoods. Therefore, all teams must become familiar with each other's conclusions. After having seen the presentations of every team, the facilitator opens a discussion to address these questions:

What linguistic (monolingualism, multilingualism, etc.), sociocultural (assimilation, marginalization, etc.), and urban (commodification, branding, etc.) processes do the landscapes captured by these images reflect?

Are there hierarchies of languages (greater visibility or use of some languages over others)?

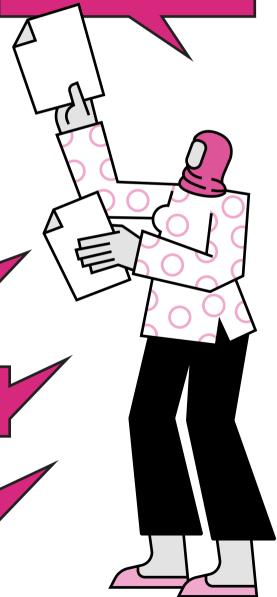
Does the distribution of languages in the neighborhoods reveal power relations? Of what kind?

Is there a contrast between the landscape generated by the administration or institutions (health centers, schools, etc.) and the landscape created by the people who live in the neighborhoods?

Do these linguistic landscapes reflect the linguistic diversity of those who live there?

Is there a situation of exclusion or unequal recognition of people and communities by means of including some languages and excluding others? Does multilingualism or monolingualism prevail? In which cases?

In what places and for what purposes is there a greater presence of several languages? What sociocultural and urban processes is this related to?



Step 4: What do the streets tell us (II)?

After the presentations and the discussion, conclude this activity by sharing the answers of every team. To do this, the facilitator can consider the following prompts:

About the workshop:

What have you learned?

What has surprised you about what you saw and/or learned?

What could be the causes of the situations of inequality that you detected?

Did you detect any need to change anything about linguistic, sociocultural, or urban processes?

About the contents that other teams shared:

Are the pictures of other neighborhoods similar or different to the one you analyzed?

How is linguistic diversity managed in each neighborhood?

To what extent do people construct their Linguistic landscapes?



Step 5: Let's act!

At the end of the workshop, it is good for the participants to take some steps to further advance in their awareness process. To do this, the facilitator may use the following questions to **encourage the mobilization of collective agency:**



The following sheet can help systematize the answers:

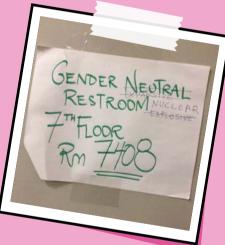
Statement of the proposal	What collective action proposal could we put in place to give more visibility and use to the less present languages and thus contribute to the integration of all people in the neighborhood?		
What does the proposal address?	What specific problem do we believe this action helps to solve?		
How?	How can we carry out this action step by step? (It is important not to state ideals, but rather to create a realistic plan).		
When and where?	At what specific time and place can we do this?		
Who?	What people, organizations, or institutions can we involve in putting the plan into practice?		

There is an example of how to fill in this sheet on page 44.

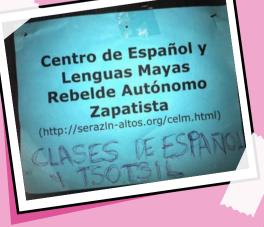










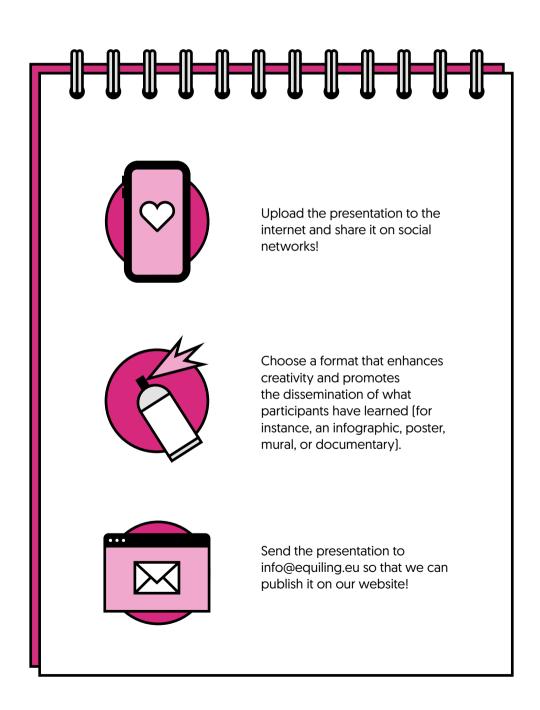


Look at the following example:

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROPOSALS SHEET				
Statement of the proposal	Members of the Usera neighborhood could try to place their advertisements (e.g., job offers and descriptions of stores and services) in both Spanish and Chinese to avoid segregating the population.			
What does the proposal address?	We believe that monolingualism in Spanish does not promote coexistence, so we propose more translations.			
How?	By developing posters that provide the same information in Spanish and Chinese, making sure that both languages are of the same size or equally visible.			
When and where?	The posters can be hung periodically or permanently on the walls and access doors of commercial premises, restaurants, bars, etc.			
Who?	Their owners or managers, whatever their nationality. The people responsible for institutional buildings, such as health centers or schools, could also be approached to implement this measure.			

Step 6: Let's show what we have learned!

To encourage other people or groups to become aware and act, it is particularly important to make the results of the workshop publicly known. To do this, teams can:



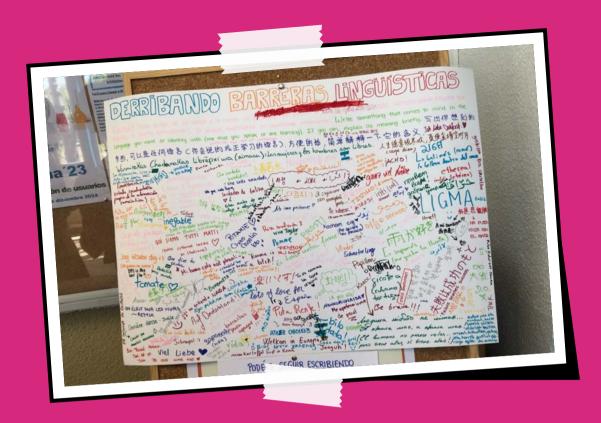












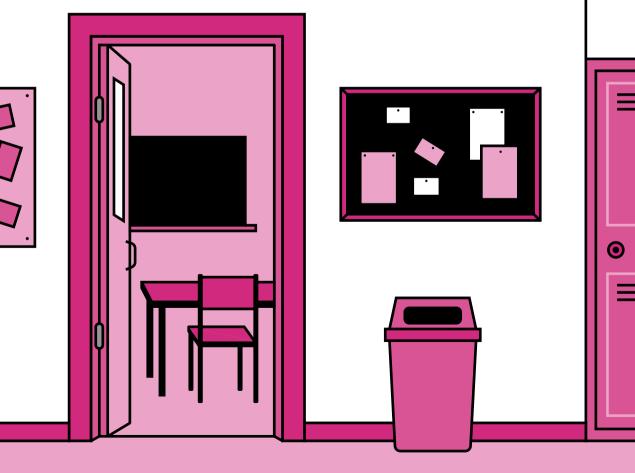
4.
Let's go for more: Ideas to implement other workshops

Now that we are familiar with linguistic landscapes and the dynamics of the workshop, we can apply the approach to other contexts, such as educational centers, protest movements, or any other institution or situation we consider relevant. Here are some suggestions.



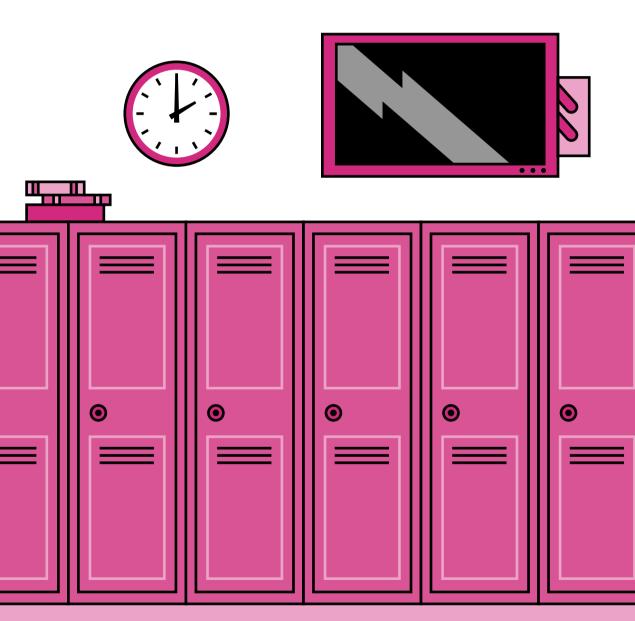
Linguistic landscapes and educational centers

The first proposal is to adapt this workshop to record the linguistic landscapes of schools, colleges, and universities. Or two schools can conduct the workshop in parallel and compare their work from an intercultural perspective (for example, a classroom in Madrid with one in New York, Chiapas, etc., or a monolingual and bilingual school).

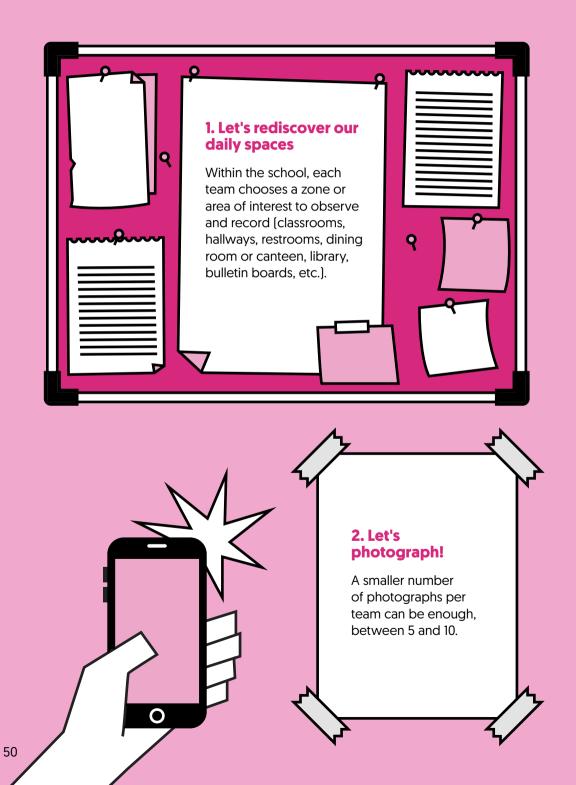


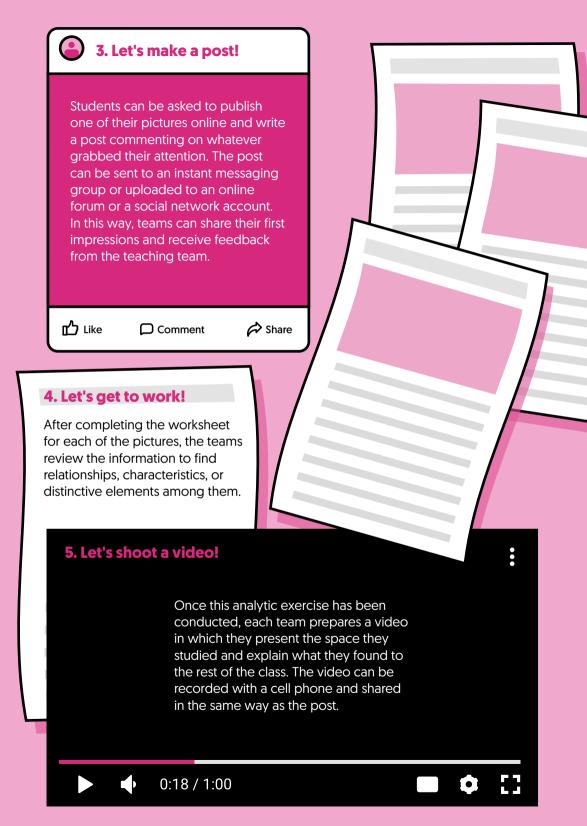
By applying the workshop to educational centers, we can find out how linguistic diversity is managed in classrooms and the common spaces where the school communicates with students and parents, and check whether this management is inclusive and integrative or whether it reproduces linguistic inequality. We can discover a hierarchy of languages (for example, if priority is

given only to one or two languages or if the languages of the various places of origin of the students and their families are also included). We can also try to find out whether there are clues that point to hierarchies of speakers. For instance, is being bilingual in two international languages considered the same as being bilingual in two regional languages?



In this case, the workshop can keep the same structure and introduce the adaptations that follow.

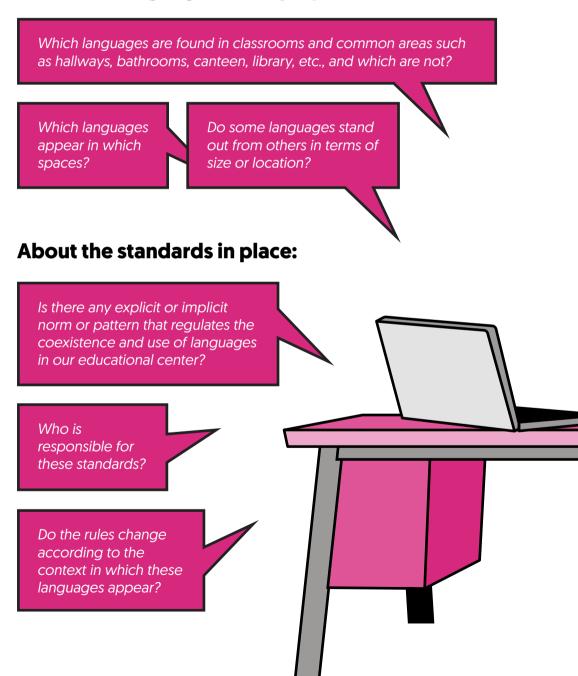




What did we learn?

The teaching team invites the students to watch all the videos, keeping the following questions in mind to open the discussion:

About the languages on display:



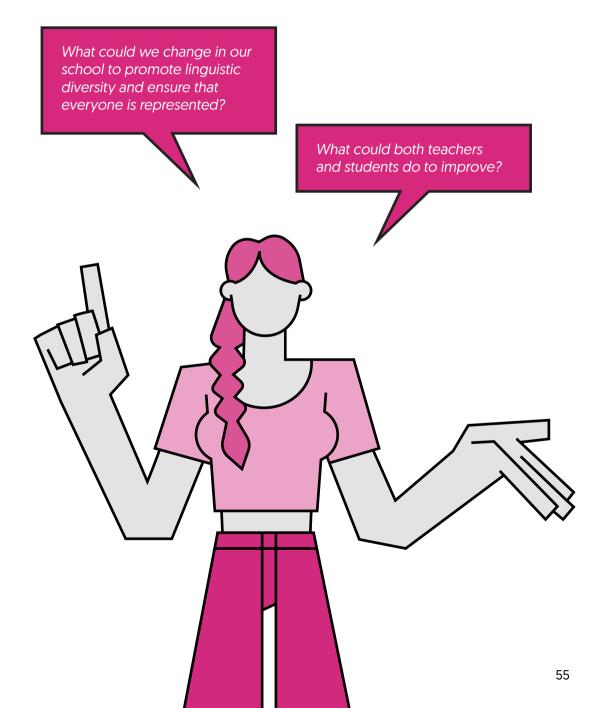


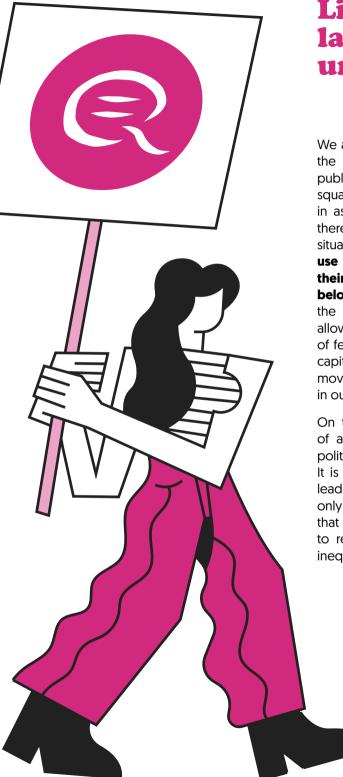


Why don't we go a step further?

Finally, the teams can propose transformative actions that involve the rest of the class or bring them to the attention of school authorities. This last step is voluntary and those who

decide to get involved must do so spontaneously. To help think about these proposals, the teaching team can invite students to reflect on the following:





Linguistic landscapes and urban protest

We also propose to record and analyze the linguistic landscapes of protest in public space, whether in neighborhoods. squares, or streets. Claims also emerge in assemblies, rallies, and marches. So, there is a wide range of places and situations where activists and protesters use language to express or symbolize their demands, identities, senses of belonging, or ideals of change. Studying the linguistic landscapes of protest allows us to understand the demands of feminist, student, environmental, anticapitalist, anti-racist, and other social movements with a prominent presence in our societies.

On this occasion, anyone who is part of an organization involved in current political struggles can be a facilitator. It is not necessary to have any special leadership, militancy, or membership, only to feel committed to the changes that social movements are promoting to resist or eliminate diverse types of inequality and structural violence.

As in the previous proposal, the workshop can keep the same structure, with the adaptations that follow.

On the move!

The collection of pictures need not be limited to a specific space but may expand to events or activities in which the members of each group participate (assemblies, marches, etc.).

In these scenarios, photos can be not only of written texts (such as posters or graffiti) but also of banners, clothing, accessories, or performances used to protest that usually stand out for their visual imprint (colors, shapes, symbols, and so on).

Thus, both the urban space and social networks are ideal places to locate and amplify initiatives of this nature, deploying the creativity and resistance efforts that characterize social struggles.

Let's look slowly to look further

In completing the photo files, the focus is on how the protest linguistic landscape that was captured reveals the social struggles that seek to position themselves in today's society. Therefore, it is important to pay special attention to the purpose of the message: What kind of activism is visualized? [feminism, anti-racism, anti-capitalism, language activism... are some options]

What do they fight for?

(redistribution of resources,
recognition of a minority, and
political participation often come
up). After completing each of the
worksheets, the working groups
review the information to find
common and differentiating
trends or features among
them.

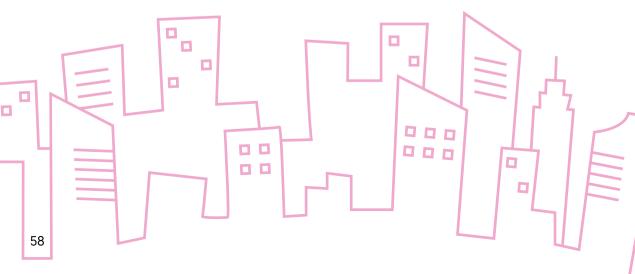
What the streets do not silence

Upon completion of the analysis, each group prepares a presentation to present their space, event, or activity and share their findings with others. Then, the facilitator invites all groups to review all the presentations, and poses the following questions to encourage discussion:

How do these landscapes help us to raise awareness or mobilize the people who transit, participate, or inhabit the spaces we studied? How are the linguistic landscapes of protest that we recorded similar or different?

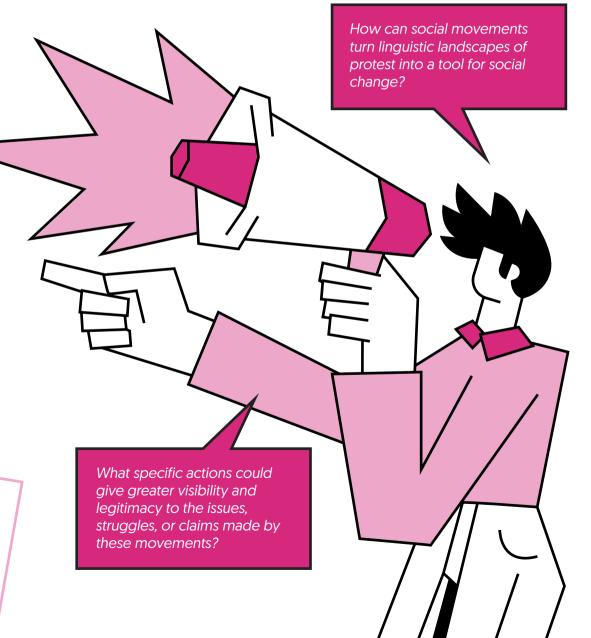
How do these landscapes seek to transform reality through their protest messages?

What possible worlds are created in the spaces occupied and reappropriated by activists or protesters?



Let's be realistic, let's demand the impossible!

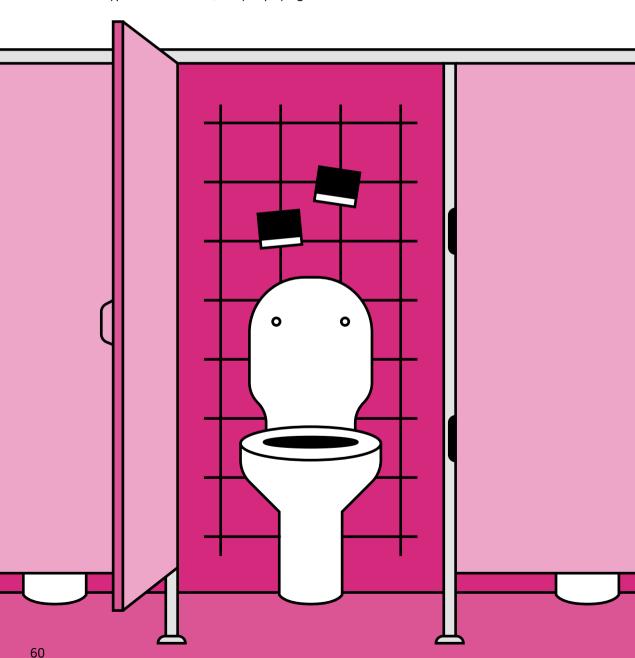
Finally, a significant step remains to be taken: to encourage the groups to disseminate their work and to generate collective proposals for transformation. It is a matter of setting in motion actions in their organizations or their immediate environment to address the problems that the study of the linguistic landscape has brought to light. In this way, the groups can contribute, based on their reflection, to promoting initiatives for change by asking themselves:

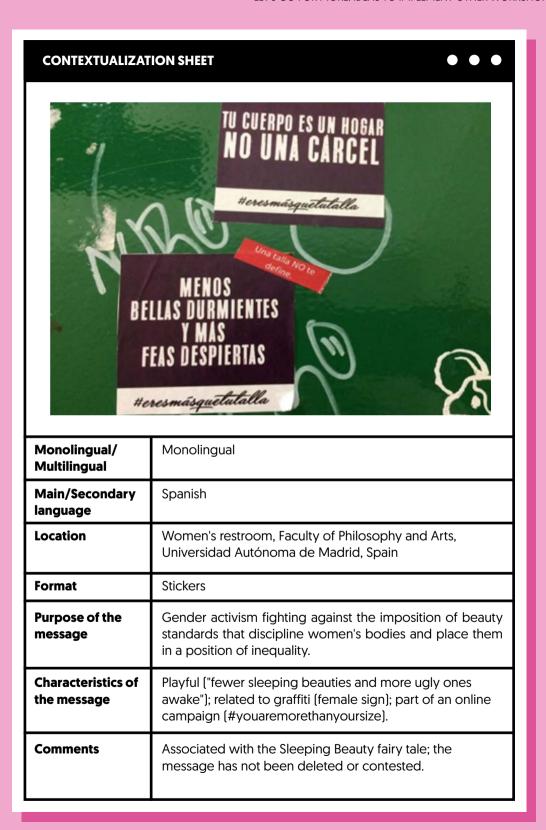


An example of both proposals

As you can see in the following example, a picture showing a protest message placed in the women's restroom of a state university is, at the same time, part of a viral campaign to combat beauty stereotypes. Therefore, by paying

attention to the spaces we walk through every day we realize that it is possible not only to apply but also to integrate the different workshop proposals we made to capture the linguistic landscapes around us:







Final reflection

We hope this guide has been a useful accompaniment in the awareness-raising process that Paulo Freire called **conscientization.** We hope it has contributed to identifying and understanding the problems associated with the lack of linguistic justice, to reflect on its causes and, finally, to awaken a desire for change in search of liberating objectives.

With this guide, we have tried to pave the way for other individuals and groups to have **resources with which to share their experiences with language.** All too often, people have traumatic experiences related to the way they speak and may feel excluded, judged, or unappreciated. They may also feel limited in their ability to participate on an equal footing.

In the light of the political, social, and pedagogical conditions of the moment, and incorporating the role of language in the production of inequality, we have followed the work of Paulo Freire, drawing on the relevance of his work to present a guide with which (given the political, social, and pedagogical conditions of the moment) we seek to continue his task of raising critical awareness. In general, the role of language in the construction of social inequality is not usually part of social debates, nor is it recognized in the same way as other sources of discrimination. However, if these issues were part of the social debate and there were critical views on how language is used to marginalize and make people inferior, we would be closer to achieving a greater degree of sociolinguistic justice. To foster this change, we believe that it is necessary to co-construct knowledge without hierarchies, orienting ourselves towards the common good with solidarity. With this guide, we have tried to take a step in that direction.















5. Toolbox

How did other groups do it?

The 2nd year students of the Modern Languages, Culture, and Communication undergraduate degree at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid got involved in this task and went around the campus and the streets of the city to identify, locate, photograph, and analyze signs that caught their attention in the public space. These two videos give an account of their work:



Linguistic landscapes at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Use your cell phone to scan this QR and watch the video.







Linguistic landscapes in the Usera neighborhood

Madrid



Use your cell phone to scan this QR and watch the video.



At the same university, the 3rd year students of the English Studies undergraduate degree analyzed the linguistic landscapes they found when they walked along a subway line in Madrid. This video is a sample of what one of the working teams found out:



Language variation and change final project

Madrid



Use your cell phone to scan this QR and watch the video.



Finally, an example of comparative work conducted by students from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and the City University of New York on the linguistic landscapes found in the neighborhoods of both cities can be read in Alonso and Martín Rojo [2023].



Madrid/New York: The transformation of two cities through the linguistic landscape



Use your cell phone to scan this QR and download the PDF.

CAPITULO 6

Madrid/Nueva York: la transformación de dos ciudades a través del palsaje lingüístico Una herramienta de acción educativa

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As for the proposals for transformation, the Modern Languages, Culture and Communication team who studied the Lavapiés neighborhood created this poster to disseminate the actions for change they would like to implement to incorporate the languages of migration in public services, promote and implement multicultural activities, and encourage campaigns that value multilingualism, among others.

Proposals for transformation based on the linguistic landscapes work: The Lavapiés area

Lavapiés team:

Aida Cajaraville, Elena González, Raquel Oviedo, Jasmín Soto

Public services:

to include other languages of migration

In places such as hospitals, medical centers, and public buildings such as libraries, theaters, and entertainment venues. When studying the area, we realized that the secondary languages, that is, those belonging to the 'minorities', are present in their respective streets and places of transit: stores, bars, and restaurants. But they are not present in the rest of the neighborhood's institutions [where Spanish was undoubtedly predominant over any other language].

Gentrification: diminish and control it

Gentrification reduces opportunities for the people who live there and makes the area much more touristy and commercial, raising housing prices and marginalizing certain groups.

Multicultural activities:

launch and promote them

Although the area clearly represents the linguistic identity of each group, indeed, they live apart from one another. Each cultural and linguistic group is close to its people only, so we would propose more cultural activities to unite them and even attract people from other communities.

Higher valuation:

their inhabitants and their cultures

Often the inhabitants of this area are discriminated against or marginalized. They are not treated in the same way as, for example, a French or an English person. Respect and equality must be encouraged, and multilingualism must be seen as an advantage and a gift, not as something negative.

Campaigns:

to promote them

To promote campaigns that foster essential values such as empathy and respect, not only for other people's languages [which we should understand as a legacy and a huge token of culture rather than an obstacle] but also for the people and groups we find.

Common notions

Below is a glossary that systematizes the concepts and types of processes mentioned in the workshop. It is intended to be of help to both the facilitator and the working groups while doing the activities.

Key concepts:

Linguistic landscape:

This is a sociolinguistic approach that makes it possible to investigate, by observing how language is used in urban space (on graffiti, stickers, signs, advertising, etc.), what is happening around us: who lives in the cities and how they relate to one another, which languages are used, which are valued, and which are not, and why. It also helps us discover how this distribution of languages is related to the changes taking place in cities: who governs them and how, what are the processes of urban transformation that impact the neighborhoods, what are their main economic activities, etc.

Conscientization:

Is a pedagogical approach that helps to: i) increase the capacity to reflect on language in general, and the languages of individuals and communities; ii) understand the causes that explain one's own linguistic experiences; and iii) foster the will to transform how languages are valued and organized in a community, to strengthen intercultural relations among diverse communities, reinforce linguistic diversity and affirm the right to occupy public space (as a space for living, coexistence, protest, etc.).

Linguistic repertoire:

All the languages and linguistic varieties (dialects, styles, accents) used by speakers in different situations and for different purposes. This repertoire of linguistic resources changes throughout our lives: the languages we learn and those we can recognize, the accents we know or stick to depending on who we are with, and the way we address others depending on whether it is someone in our family, a stranger, an elderly person, or a colleague. The wider our repertoire, the better we will be able to adapt to communicative situations with speakers from different social classes, educational levels, geographical origins, or age groups.

Linguistic diversity:

Is the result of the coexistence of different languages in the same territory or community. The notion considers this situation as extraordinarily rich, culturally, linguistically, and socially, and advocates respect for all languages, promoting the preservation of those that are at risk due to lack of speakers.

Linguistic ideologies:

These are a set of beliefs, which are part of the common sense of a community, about language, languages, speech, and/or communication, and that are linked to specific political and sociocultural realities. They have, therefore, repercussions on the status quo, naturalizing and normalizing it. These ideologies, moreover, explain how we use language daily, which is why they persist over time.

Linguistic processes:

Monolingualism:

This term describes the fact that an individual has only one language in their linguistic repertoire, or that the use of a single language is imposed on a community.

Multilingualism:

This term describes the fact that a person can communicate in several languages, or that several languages coexist in a community.

Hierarchy of languages:

The prestige or value assigned to some languages in relation to others explains how they are distributed in public space, whether in commerce, places of leisure, transportation, educational, or health services. This differentiated use of languages in some places (such as English in luxury stores) or others (such as Romanian in local product stores) accounts for the privileged location and status that some achieve over others, which are relegated or confined to less visible and less recognized areas or places.

Sociocultural processes:

To delve deeper into the type of intercultural relations that are manifested in policies, ideologies, and daily practices, we can ask ourselves the following two questions, concerning what we observe in the linguistic landscape (the languages that appear, and how they relate to the population of the neighborhood). The possible answers open up four possibilities:

The languages that appear in the neighborhoods reflect whether		Is the maintenance of minority cultural and linguistic identity and characteristics facilitated?	
		YES	NO
Are intergroup relations promoted?	YES	INTEGRATION	ASSIMILATION
	NO	SEGREGATION	MARGINALIZATION

Integration:

Occurs if the identity and the preservation of cultural and linguistic features of minority groups are promoted, while intergroup relations with the host society are facilitated. This would be the case in multilingual neighborhoods, where intercultural competencies are developed and the linguistic diversity of the population is accepted, especially in medical services, libraries, schools, etc., but also in commerce, leisure spaces, etc. In other words, where there is intercultural coexistence and people are not required to renounce their language or customs, which can be expressed in posters, shop windows, specialized stores, advertisements for religious services in several languages, etc.

Assimilation:

Occurs if the preservation of the identity and cultural and linguistic characteristics of minority groups is not facilitated, but intergroup relations with the host society are promoted. In this case, for coexistence to happen, differences must be eliminated and monolingualism in the dominant language is imposed. This happens in many European cities, where public services, such as schools or the health system, impose the dominant language, without translation or interpretation services, or where in daily life the private use of other languages in public transport, in the streets, etc. is even rejected.

Segregation:

Occurs if the maintenance of the identity and cultural and linguistic characteristics of minority groups is facilitated, but intergroup relations with the host society are not promoted. In this case, there would be no coexistence, but rather spaces reserved for separate groups: schools, differentiated medical or justice services, separate commercial and leisure areas, etc. This would be the difference between interculturalism [coexistence] and multiculturalism [separate groups]. On the linguistic level, it would not give rise to a situation of multilingualism, but compartmentalized monolingualism since people would maintain the use of their languages of origin without making frequent use of the dominant language or other languages. This is what happens in cities where ghettos are formed or where "small cities within the city" are established, where diversity is allowed, but there is no coexistence.

Marginalization:

Occurs if the maintenance of the identity and cultural and linguistic characteristics of minority groups is not facilitated, nor are intergroup relations with the host society promoted. In this case, there is no coexistence in the different sectors, and some are excluded. This would be the example of areas of illegal settlements or shantytowns or favelas, where different migrant populations and minorities coexist in situations of extreme poverty and lack of public services.

Urban processes:

Commodification:

Within the framework of capitalism, the (economic) exchange value is imposed on the (social) use value of cities and their neighborhoods. As a consequence, urban space becomes a commodity: private and public spaces are bought and sold, reducing their communal use. The process of commodification of linguistic diversity can show it as an element that gives "personality" to a given neighborhood.

Branding:

This is a process that turns cities into commercial brands, which entails their renovation, the improvement of urban landscaping, and the creation of luxury commercial areas or places of great cultural value. The aim is to increase the city's economic value and make it attractive to encourage the flow of tourists and increase consumption. Branding involves a significant increase in the use of English and other languages associated with prestigious brands and lifestyles, such as French, Italian, or Japanese.

Touristification:

Occurs when cities compete to increase the number of tourists and to enter the world's tourist circuits, allocating urban centers to tourist-oriented economic activities to the detriment of others that benefit citizens. This has an impact on the daily life of neighborhoods, raising housing costs, causing neighbors to flee, etc. Touristification entails a change in the value of languages: preference is given to English, while local and migrant languages are devalued unless they become a "claim to authenticity" for those who want to "consume" cultural realities as part of their tourist or simply bourgeois experience.

Gentrification:

Similar to touristification, this process involves the return of the wealthy classes to the city centers, as well as the displacement of those who inhabited them when they were degraded areas unaffected by real estate speculation. Gentrification can also lead to the invisibility of the languages spoken by the local population and the dilution of the linguistic diversity of neighborhoods.

Ghettoization:

As a result of the commodification of urban space, minority communities (lower socioeconomic status, migrants) are pushed to the peripheries and forced to cluster and seclude themselves in spaces that lack commercial value. In these spaces, communities display their cultural and linguistic differences vis-àvis the dominant culture, which fosters prejudices about poverty and marginality. An example would be Chinatown in many cities around the world.

Reterritorialization:

Occurs when the population reacts to the commodification and/or deprivation of public space and creates alternative spaces for political protest, artistic creation, peer-to-peer encounters, and collective exchange without an economic purpose. Thus, people can occupy, self-manage, re-appropriate, or impregnate spaces with elements that give them identity and autonomy: posters, graffiti, murals, etc.

Are the described processes independent or simultaneous?

In the pictures that capture the linguistic landscape of the neighborhoods, we can often identify more than one of these phenomena. It is a complex task since linguistic diversity is affected, in turn, by the language market: some languages are seen more than others, depending on the speakers, their economic power, and the prestige they possess socially (e.g. English versus Romanian), so often these processes will occur simultaneously.

To learn more

The following readings and resources (videos and links) may be useful to deepen the common notions and also to learn how to apply this tool in different study contexts:

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Alonso, L., & Martín Rojo, L. (2023). Madrid/Nueva York: la transformación de dos ciudades a través del paisaje lingüístico. Una herramienta de acción educativa. En G. Prego y L. Zas Varela (eds.), Superdiversidad lingüística en los nuevos contextos multilingües. Una mirada etnográfica y multidisciplinar (pp. 124-144). Iberoamericana Vervuert. https://www.academia.edu/98995480/Alonso_L_y_Mart%C3%ADn_Rojo_L_2022_MadridNueva_York_La_transformaci%-C3%B3n_de_dos_ciudades_red

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Moustaoui, A. (2019). Dos décadas de estudios del paisaje lingüístico: enfoques teórico-metodológicos y nuevos desafíos en la investigación. *Signo y Seña, 35*, 7-26. http://revistascientificas.filo.uba.ar/index.php/sys/article/view/6935

Prego, G., & Zas, L. (2018). Paisaje lingüístico: un recurso TIC-TAC-TEP para el aula. *Lingue e Linguaggi, 25,* 277-295. https://investigacion.usc.es/documentos/6176ddf3aaa31904cd2c2d26

Sáez, D. (2021). El paisaje lingüístico como herramienta pedagógica para la enseñanza de la lingüística: un estudio de caso en la confección de blogs especializados en español. Recursos para el Aula de Español: Investigación y Enseñanza, 1(1), 167-204. https://erevistas.publicaciones.uah.es/ojs/index.php/rr/article/view/1504

Solmaz, O. (23 de junio, 2022). Linguistic Landscapes as a pedagogical resource in English language classrooms. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-andevents/webinars/webinars-teachers/linguistic-landscapes-pedagogical-resource-english

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For further information, see www.equiling.eu/en

With the collaboration of the MIRCo-UAM Research Centre for Multilingualism, Discourse and Communication.

If you decide to start a workshop, contact us:

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This guide inaugurates a series of **resources to raise sociolinguistic awareness** with which the **EquiLing** action-research project seeks to encourage collaborative participation. We want to share the results of our research with society to support all those who, whether in formal or informal educational settings, associations, or various groups, **seek an integrative and open model of linguistic citizenship.** The aim of this **open science** exercise **for popular education** is to focus on all those situations (very frequent, but often unnoticed) in which language plays a key role in the generation and reproduction of situations of **inequality.**

In an attempt to go further and address the unjust situations to which we draw attention, we share strategies and tools. Thus, we follow the **conscientization** method proposed by Paulo Freire of education for social change, which advocates that knowledge and reflection be understood as a **collaborative and dialogical endeavor.** It is, therefore, about a joint awareness that leads to action, and, to this end, we offer guidelines, recommendations, and a sequence of steps with which to implement workshops in places of study, work, or volunteering. The guide includes **support material**: worksheets, videos, a glossary, and a bibliography.



