

Landscapes of the mind: contested ideologies of language and the Welsh linguistic landscape

Michael Hornsby

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Bilingual signage in Wales, and indeed in many other situations of language minoritisation, would seem to indicate a positive phase in the history of the language – it seemingly indicates an official (and serious) attempt on the part of local authorities to provide full, bilingual information for those citizens who require or desire it. However, the picture is more complex than it first appears, and a number of sometimes unconscious attitudes, beliefs and ideologies come into play here.

Taking a critical sociolinguistic perspective (Heller 2003), in this paper I will explore the increasing visibility of the Welsh language in the linguistic landscape of Wales. Legislation over the past twenty years or so has ensured that ‘signs ... have a very visible impact on the character of an area, including its linguistic character’ (Planning Guidance (Wales), 2000, para. 13) but the process of making the linguistic landscape of Wales more visibly Welsh has not proved to be a smooth process, by any means. The indexicality of Welsh language signage will be explored, especially its importance for Welsh and non-Welsh speakers, and also the apparent ‘ideology of contempt’ (Dorian 1998: 7; Grillo 1989: 173-4), which has led to many instances of inaccurate signage appearing in the Welsh linguistic landscape (James 2011). The effects of such tokenism will be explored in the final, concluding sections of the paper, with reference to recent fieldwork which has recently been carried out (Hornsby and Vigers 2012).

References

- Dorian, Nancy. 1998. Western language ideologies and small languages prospects. In L. Grenoble and L. Whaley (eds.). *Endangered Languages*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Grillo, Ralph. 1989. *Dominant languages: Language hierarchy in Britain and France*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Heller, Monica. 2003. *Éléments d'une sociolinguistique critique*. Paris: Hatier.
- Hornsby, Michael and Dick Vigers. 2012. Minority Semiotic Landscapes: An Ideological Minefield? In Marten, Heiko F., Luk Van Mensel and Durk Gorter (eds.). *Minority languages in the linguistic landscape*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 57-73.
- James, Meleri Wyn. 2011. *Sgymraeg. Y gorau o gyfieithu gwael*. Talybont: Y Lolfa.
- Planning Guidance (Wales). 2000. *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20: The Welsh Language. Unitary Development Plans and Planning Control*.