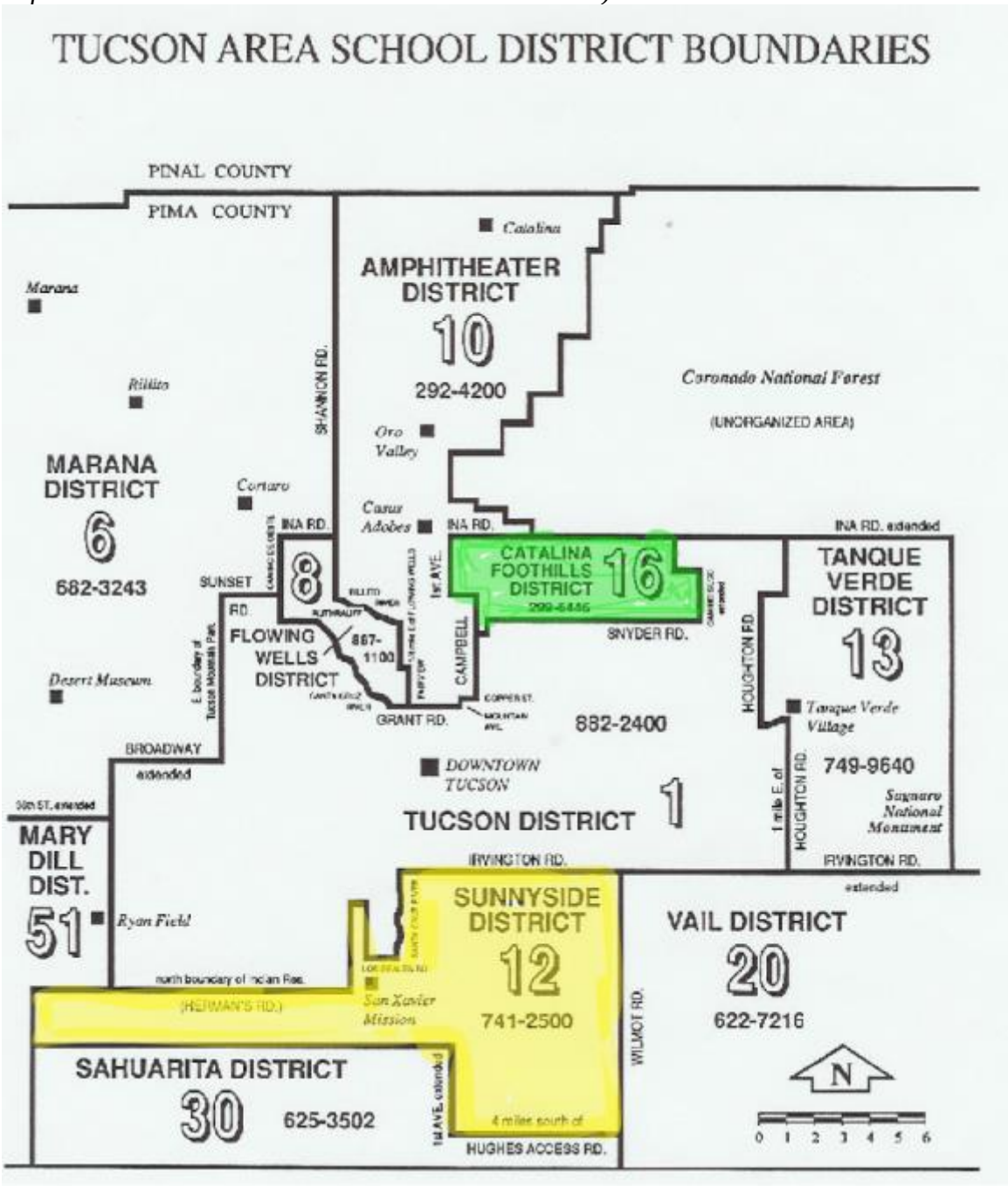
Figure 1*: Tucson Area School District Boundaries (retrieved April 28, 2014 from http://realestatetucson.com/schooldistricts/index.html)*



# The Subliminal Influence of Street Signs in Schoolscapes: Elective vs. Circumstantial Reverse Indexicality in a Tale of Two Tucsons

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"Homo non intelligendo fit Omnia"
(Vico, 17th Century, in Fernandez, 1991, p. 4)

## Overview

There is a risk of diluting our logic by looking at things absolutely (Peirce, in Hoopes, 1991, p. 187). Signs gain their meaning, not in any absolute sense, but rather in relation to their context in any given time, and in relation to their meaning to any given interpreter. According to Eco (1979) "A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else" (p. 7). A sign not only stands for something, but it stands to someone and that important relationship with the signs in our landscape is what I discuss below. I begin in section one by describing two parts of Tucson, a city of around one million inhabitants in the Southwest of the United States, that are different in many ways, but curiously differ in their linguistic landscapes. In section two I define linguistic landscapes and situate an analysis of street signs within linguistic landscape research. Section three is a diachronic and synchronic analysis of street signs in Tucson, including the myths (Barthes, 1972) that have accompanied the acceptance of street sign language at different points in the city's history and how these myths have served to promulgate what Jane Hill (1993) refers to as a larger social project of the white elite in maintaining a dominant economic and political position of power in society. In section four I focus on how street signs interact with all those who view them on both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. A deeper explanation of how these linguistic messages enter our cognition and influence our ideologies continues in section five with a description of the various conceptual metonyms and metaphors born out of street sign language and organization. All of these sections treating the unconscious understanding and influence of street signs feed into section six and a discussion on the seemingly conscious and intentional authorship in linguistic landscapes (Malinowski, 2008) and how the expected commitment of top-down governmental signs, such as street signs, to the linguistic code of the dominant culture (Gorter, 2006), is violated in both parts of Tucson through reverse indexicality. I make a distinction in this section between what I call *elective* vs. *circumstantial* reverse idexicality in order to attempt to explain the differing power dynamics at play in the two Tucsons and link these dynamics to educational policy.

In the final section, all of these contributions get funneled into a cone of connections, which together illuminate how ideologies are influenced regarding classroom language of instruction policies that both promote and prohibit Spanish language use in schools. This study proposes to extend the idea of *schoolscapes* from the elements, text, and space, within a school-based environment (Brown, 2012; Szabó, 2015), to the immediate streets and neighborhoods surrounding schools, to demonstrate the subliminal influence of street signs on (re)constructing the language ideologies of individuals who live in these neighborhoods and who support the language policies of their children's schools. In taking this stance, my desire is not to claim that there exists a

linear connection between street sign language and classroom language of instruction policy, with exception to the case of *National City* discussed below; rather it is my goal to light a match of awareness of the great potential for meaning making that street signs possess and leave in the reader a profound awakening that impacts how she or he sees, interprets, and thus understands street signs for quite some time. As I attempt to overtly uncover covert collocations of hidden agendas and implicit messages in the linguistic landscape of educational environments, I recognize that as an academic living in the American Southwest, I am both a product of these messages, influenced perhaps in ways that remain unconscious to me, and a producer of messages through my own interpretive research of their potential meaning.

## Introduction

How do we know where we are going? When you and I look at a street sign, either in a car or on public transportation, how do we see it? We are the deictic center of our own understanding, and the meanings of words, which we use to create our figured worlds (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), depend greatly on the time, place, and context in which they pass our bodies. So when we frame a street sign through a car window (as illustrated in all the examples below), we are essentially viewing our representation of our framed or figured world. But who determines the names and languages of street signs? If a collection of street signs, as I argue here, string together the semiotic sentences of our linguistic landscape, who is writing the text? They syntagmatically flow one after the other in contiguity, creating the pages of the novels of our daily lives. As the principle characters of these novels, we believe that our free will and decisions construct our lives, but our ideologies are influenced by what we observe daily, and unconsciously we read from the script of all signs in our landscape and act out the movies directed by the modern day bourgeoisies, be it the influential, wealthy lobbyist, the politician, the TV or radio talk show host, etc., based on the myths that they spin. We drink the wine. Not only do we choose to believe that a glass a day is not harmful to us, we believe that it may actually be beneficial. So upon viewing a stream of street signs in English in the predominantly Hispanic Sunnyside neighborhood in the south of Tucson, we choose to interpret patriotism, solidarity, oneness, and a strong fabric of nationalism, no matter how diverse the quilt. So too upon observing a string of Spanish language street signs in the largely Anglo, monolingual English-speaking, Catalina Foothills in the North of Tucson, we choose to understand acceptance, tolerance, global, educated, and upscale. We accept the myth.

The simplicity of the traditional, stereotypical language of street signs, 1st Street, 2nd Avenue, Tucson Blvd. etc., leads to the slovenliness of our thoughts (Sapir & Mandelbaum, 1964, p. 57) and further strengthens the myth of the first level, general meaning of these signs as mere directional markers. We are given a gift, then, when a street sign is marked by a different language or an unfamiliar name or word. This divergence should shock the pool of our thoughts and cause us to consider the second level, contextual meaning. But the myth is strong.

This paper is a sort of exercise in abduction (Peirce, 1955). I consider the anomaly of the language of street signs in the two disparate parts of Tucson from many angles and present enough ideas for the plausibility of a hypothesis, one for all that view street signs

to test: *The language of street signs influences our ideologies concerning language use and status and subliminally justifies our classroom language of instruction policies.*

**1. Two Tucsons**

Many things distinguish the South of Tucson and the Sunnyside School District from the North of Tucson and the Catalina Foothills School District (see Figure 1 above). The following information comes from U.S. Census American Community Survey and reflects data gathered from 2008-2012 (www.usa.com). The Sunnyside Unified District spans 97 square miles across the extreme South and West of Tucson and represents a community population of 87,770. Median household income for the school district is $32,999 and the median house value is $99,100. At 82%, Hispanic is the most dominant ethnicity of the school district (Retrieved May 6, 2014 from http://www.susd12.org). Sunnyside Unified ranks 11th in the state of Arizona school districts with the highest percentage of Hispanic individuals (Catalina Foothills School District ranks 175th). Spanish is the primary home language for 67% of Sunnyside students, which ranks Sunnyside 11th in Arizona districts with the most Spanish language used at home (the Catalina Foothills School District ranks 154th).

In comparison, the Catalina Foothills School District spans 25 square miles across the North part of Tucson and represents a community population of 31,188. Median household income for the school district is $84,416 and the median house value is $447,200. The most dominant ethnicity in the Foothills school district is Caucasian, at 88%. The Hispanic population of the school district makes up 9% of the population. English is the primary language spoken at home, representing 82% of the population. Spanish is the home language for 7% of the Catalina Foothills School District population.

The geographic landscapes of the two parts of Tucson differ vastly as the Catalina Foothills brushes against the Santa Catalina mountains at 2,967 ft. above sea level, is dense with desert trees and cactuses, and is spotted with posh gated communities, high-end strip malls, and golf courses. The Sunnyside community sits at 2,525 ft. above sea level and can be best described as a lengthy desert plain, spotted with industries, trailer courts, and the Tucson International Airport. The linguistic landscapes of the two Tucsons publish a curious narrative. As can be expected, the Spanish language is visible in the Sunnyside community on billboards, business windows, and on other signs which Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25) label as "private." The appearance of Spanish on "governmental" signs, such as street signs, is sparse (p. 25). In conducting a corpus analysis of 303 street signs in the Sunnyside Unified School District, I found that the overwhelming majority of street signs are in English (81%). One might argue that this is not that surprising, considering that Tucson is in the United States and that the city government of Tucson may favor, without an implicit agenda, English language street signs. This is indeed the view that most would probably take. This argument, however, suffers a deep setback when the linguistic landscape of the Catalina Foothills is analyzed. I then conducted a corpus analysis of 510 street signs in the Catalina Foothills School District and found that over 75% of the street signs are in Spanish. Spanish is also the favored language for the names of elite gated communities, such as *Vista del Cielo* (View of Heaven), *Colonia del Sol* (Community of the Sun), and *La Paloma* (The Dove). But what specifically does the language of street signs have to do with language ideologies of use and status and policies of classroom language of instruction in public schools? First, I

will spend the next few sections taking a very close look at street signs as a semiotic tool for meaning making, what role these signs have played historically and at present, and on the importance of looking at the influence of our linguistic landscapes on our formations of ideologies and policy decisions.

**2. Linguistic Landscapes**

In the introduction I asked the question, how do we know where we are going? Here I ask, where do we get our point of view? I posit that we both know where we are going and get our point of view through interactions not only with street signs, but also with our entire linguistic landscape that surrounds us daily. What represents a relatively new field of study, in 1997 Landry and Bourhis used the term "linguistic landscapes" to link publicly displayed discourse to the ideology of language use and policy of a specific place (p. 25). "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on governments buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry and Bourhis, 1997, p. 25).

According to Blommaert (2013), an increased interest in linguistic landscape research can be explained through an "increased attention to space, location and the physical environment…a growing interest in urban multilingualism" and to what is quite relevant to this current study, "a focus on language policy in relation to public signs…to the ways in which different languages were represented in public spaces" (p. ix). The relationship between public street signs and language policy in this study is how our linguistic landscape influences classroom language of instruction policy in public schools. Blommaert (2013) continues by saying that the use of English in the public sphere, "at the expense of other language," has gathered attention as well (p. ix).

What differentiates this study, situated in the American Southwest, from linguistic landscape research conducted in other countries, where English is not the first language spoken by the majority of people, is that it is the use of another language, Spanish as a minority language thrust into the public landscape and appropriated by dominant English communities, that has garnered my attention. This ubiquitous use of Spanish language street signs in primarily English monolingual sections of the city of Tucson, and this influence of the linguistic landscape on ideologies of language status, power, and classroom instruction policy has gone, however, largely unquestioned by the majority who live there. Herein lies the great potential and importance of linguistic landscape research, the uncovering of dominant ideologies influenced, at times perhaps unconsciously, by the dialogue that the signs in our environment present. Blommaert (2013) states, "One has a tendency to assume that one's everyday habits is a well-known place that holds few, if any, mysteries to its inhabitants" (p. vii). Even though "language surrounds us, directs us, hales us, calls for our attention, flashes its messages to us" (Blommaert, 2013, p. ix), it may take someone with fresh eyes to bring these messages to light and give their true meaning context. Gorter and Shohamy (2009) expand the dialogue on linguistic landscape research to show how "it contextualizes the public space within issues of identity and language policy of nations, political and social conflicts" (p. 4). In this study, I cast a set of fresh eyes to contextualize the public space of Tucson, Arizona and in so doing bring to the surface issues of identity, language policy in public schools, and the social conflict, that is always strongly flowing in the undercurrent of life

in the United States, of language, power, and the suppression of those who speak languages other than English.

In a community landscape the presence of language is ubiquitous in our visual space (Gorter, 2006). This may at times render research of linguistic landscapes quite challenging. Due to the diagrammatic iconicity (Nöth, 2008; Peirce, 1988/1904; Waugh, 1994) of street signs, I argue that they comprise some of the most influential and organized elements of our linguistic landscapes. Even though this should easily bring to light the importance of street sign influence on our ideologies, I posit that through their pattern of being at every street corner and their consistency of size and color they take on the connotation of our life routines and provide us with an expected stability that helps us make sense of our world. In doing so, they become diagrammatically iconic and lull us into a passive interaction with them that lays the fertile soil for an environment of false consciousness.

I will use another example here to show how our linguistic landscape influences our thinking and ideologies. In the introduction, I stated that we are the deictic center of our understanding and that when we see a street sign while in a car or on public transportation, that sign is framed by the window of the car, bus, train, or even (for those with quite good eyes) the oval window of a plane upon take off or landing. How we view these is quite normal and "old hat" as we have become accustomed to viewing and interpreting life through other similar frames, which focus our attention to the self-filtered, ideologically-favored, like-minded pop culture and news media delivered to us through computer screens, cell phones, and TVs. From the indoctrinated television programing in the living room to the uncritically accepted linguistic landscape framed through the car window, we are constantly constructing our worldview. How is it then that we organize these messages into cognition and understanding? In the sections that follow, I will attempt to answer this question by looking at how street signs flow syntagmatically as we pass them, by considering the paradigmatic choices that were made when naming streets, and by considering street signs as first conceptual metonyms and then conceptual metaphors. First, however, in order to contextualize this study of street signs in Tucson, Arizona, a brief discussion is needed on the historical role that street signs have played in Tucson and how they continue to influence ideologies of status and power today.

## 3. A Diachronic and Synchronic View of Tucson Street Signs: The Beginning and Perpetuation of Myths

Marcel Danesi (1999) in *Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things,* lays out three principles of semiotic analysis. The first is to unearth the historical roots of the signs being analyzed. Below, I will inspect the possible historical significance of Tucson street sign names, with help from Jane Hill's (1993) critique of Anglo Spanish in the Southwest in *Hasta La Vista Baby* and Thomas Sheridan's (1992) book, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941.* The second task before the semiotician is to attempt to understand how signs influence what people view as normal behavior (Danesi, 1999, p. 20). This is very important in achieving my argument that street signs influence our ideologies of language use and educational policy through daily reiteration of normalcy. The final principle of semiotic analysis takes this idea of justified normalcy and focuses attention on how individuals' understanding of normal behavior

shapes their worldview. This may explain why thousands of people everyday pass Spanish language street signs in the Catalina Foothills and English language street signs in Sunnyside and never consider the meaning potential that these signs have on language policy in education. To accomplish this semiotic analysis I first take a diachronic perspective of street signs as semiotic signs to try to understand their meanings in the past and at subsequent stages in history. Synchronically then we couple the historical meanings with the proposed current meanings today. "Because it is arbitrary, the sign is totally subject to history, and the combination at a particular moment of a given signifier and signified is a contingent result of the historical process" (Culler, 46). However, an ahistorical analysis, an analysis that defines it in relation to other signs at the current moment or its synchronic state, is also required, and it is this synchronic state of street signs that helps us understand current language ideologies and classroom instruction policies.

Street signs provide an interesting vehicle for spreading myths. A myth, according to Barthes (1972), "…is a system of communication…a message" (p. 109). It is not the street sign itself, that which defines the message, but rather how it delivers the myth through its interaction with people. Throughout the history of Tucson, from its turn of the 20th century large and influential Mexican heritage communities and Spanish speaking cattle ranches to its mid 20th century social, economic, and political Anglicization of the city center outward, street signs have played an essential role in positioning the Mexican heritage population as the "other" and as inferior (see Hill, 1993; Sheridan, 1992). This social project of dominance in some ways was accomplished without visible violence or obviously racist legislation (Hill, 1993). This was made possible in part by the eradication of the Mexican American community, Mexican architecture, and Spanish language street signs from the city center, replaced with new buildings and the sprawling civic center complex, all of which signified the upward movement of English speaking Anglos and the English language (Hill, 1993). The myth was that English is progress, and according to Hill, spread by the Tucson elite of the time (p. 158).

It wasn't just the elite of the time that strengthened the bonds between English and upward mobility. According to Sheridan (1992) a series of dissertations written between 1929-1946 give us an insight into public school perspectives on the education of Spanish speaking youth in Tucson (p. 227). A dissertation approved by the University of Arizona's College of Education in 1929 began by stating that the "solution to the problem was to 'socialize' the Mexican in the United States, to give him 'an opportunity to understand' the 'democratic ideals and practices' of his adopted country" (Sheridan, 1992, p. 228). The Superintendent of Schools in the 1920s, C.E. Rose, called for the "Americanization" of "foreign" Mexican and Native American students, and according to Sheridan (1992), stated that the problem was that these foreigners (many coming from families that occupied this land long before the Gadsden Purchase) lived in communities where they did not have the need to speak English (pp. 225-226).

I do not believe that it is a coincidence that less than a decade later, in 1930, a new development/neighborhood was created in the exact current location of the Sunnyside school district, called *National City*. Under an advertisement trumpeting "Here Is Your Chance" a new neighborhood was created, with street signs such as Lincoln, Washington, MacArthur, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Iowa, and many other U.S. State names. As Sheridan (1992) points out, "The street names, with few exceptions, may

have represented some Anglo developer's vision of America" (p. 244). I posit that the language and ideals proffered by these street signs provided just the Americanization and socialization of American democratic ideals and practices that the superintendent and some in academia were calling for at that time.

On the other side of town, English was favored for the language of street signs up until the 1960s when the elite spread into the developing Catalina Foothills to the North and adopted, as we saw above, an overwhelming use of the Spanish language for the new streets. This restriction of Spanish in some parts of Tucson (where real Spanish speakers lived) and the freedom to use Spanish in other parts of town (mainly in the Anglo Catalina Foothills) necessitated a shift in myth. In Spanish speaking enclaves of Tucson, the myth, strengthened through the increasing number of English street signs and U.S. state names, continued to be that of economic progress and when needed, especially during times of heavy immigration, as a sign of nationality and patriotism. The myth in the Foothills would have to be different, however, and could be explained as innocuous *nouvelle* usage of Spanish to construct the "'romance of the Southwest'" (Hill, 1993, p. 146).

Synchronically, I believe that to some degree, both of these myths continue today. Even though the Spanish used for street signs in the Catalina Foothills is rampant with grammatical and semantic distortions, no one would ever imagine that this was done pejoratively (for a comprehensive discussion on "mock Spanish" see Jane Hill, 1993). Myths act to cover up contradictions. Masked by the myth, the justification for Spanish language street signs may also be explained as attempts of open-minded acceptance, but actually may serve as a tool for distancing inhabitants of this area from actual Spanish speakers. This metonym, *language for people*, stands apart from the metonyms that I will discuss below, but adds a greater depth to the meaning-making potential of street signs and how people not only perceive a language, but also the native speakers of the language, can be influenced by our linguistic landscape. This use of Spanish in the Catalina Foothills could be explained as an act to democratize language use, but for whom? When language is used to privilege the realities of some and suppress the realities of others (Chandler, 2007, p. 13) then it stabilizes and legitimizes the status quo (Wodak, 1996). How is it then that street signs, as a language system, are organized in a way that people understand them, perhaps unconsciously, as discourse in our environment?

**4 Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relationships**

Signs get their value from what they are not. Perhaps that's why the first time I drove through both the Sunnyside and the Catalina Foothills communities, it seemed very counterintuitive to me that the street signs were written primarily in English in Sunnyside and Spanish in the Catalina Foothills. The value of these street signs correspond to concepts, but these concepts are not positively defined by their content, but rather negatively defined by their relationship with other street signs not in English (De Saussure, 2013). This can only be if the organization of street signs is such that at some level we realize and make note of the specific combination, selection, and contiguity of the signs as they flow by us during travel. This particular context of street signs in schoolscapes affords us the opportunity to apply traditional concepts of language structures to linguistic landscape research. Blommaert (2013) states that "If we claim that it is through semiotic activity that physical space is turned into social, cultural and

political space, we need to understand how exactly these processes of semiotization operate" (p. 14). From a social semiotic perspective, Jakobson, Waugh, and Monville-Burston (1990) divide language into two axes: syntagmatic and paradigmatic. The syntagmatic axis describes the simultaneous and successive combinations of contiguous language structures, in our case words, that language users use to form and understand messages (p. 115). Below we can see how street signs syntagmatically flow, one after the other, in a succession of words in our landscape and produce meaning through a one-way discourse between people and their linguistic landscape. Image 1 below shows six street signs in the Catalina Foothills, all of which one would pass in succession while driving to Ventana Vista Elementary School, where the use of Spanish is encouraged in the classrooms.

Image 1*: A Syntagmatic String of Spanish Language Street Signs in the Catalina Foothills*


*Pl. Paisaje* → *Paseo Otoño* → *Placita La Gracias*
(Scenic Place) (Autumn Drive.) (Place of Grace)

*Placita Alta Reposa* → *Via Divina* → *Camino Del Mar*
(Place of High Rest) (Divine Way) (Road of the Sea)

As can easily be observed in these images, inhabitants of this neighborhood are daily immersed in the Spanish language, and messages that this is beautiful and somehow even divine.

In Image 2 below, the Spanish language use in the Catalina Foothills is starkly contrasted by U.S. state names on street signs that one would pass in succession upon driving to Rivera Elementary School in the Sunnyside School District, where Spanish is prohibited in the classroom.

Image 2*: A Syntagmatic String of English Language Street Signs in Sunnyside*


Oregon St → Louisiana Dr. → Wyoming St.


Dakota St. → Alaska St. → Iowa St.

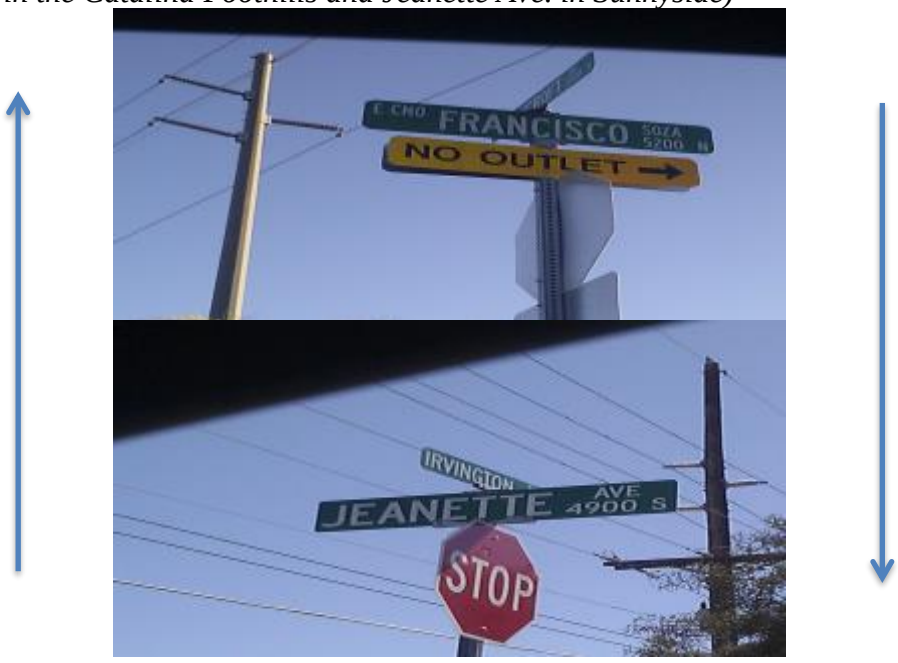
These images portray a quite different message; this is the United States, English is spoken here (see the section below on metonymies and metaphors for a more detailed discussion). These images daily influence and perhaps subliminally justify English immersion policies in the Sunnyside schools.

The paradigmatic axis provides the other reality of language, that of choice and substitution. Out of all of the choices for the language and content of street signs, some similarities are obvious. There is the choice between road, street, way, avenue, place, court, lane, etc. Another choice for substitution is that of language. We see in the examples in Images 3 and 4 below that not only are street signs paradigmatically chosen by the options of language, but also content. Where the signs say way, street, road, and avenue in Sunnyside, they say *via, calle, camino,* and *avenida* in the Catalina Foothills. Image 3 illustrates an example of a paradigmatic selection of content; Mountain in Sunnyside and *Montanosa* in the Catalina Foothills.

Image 3*: Paradigmatic Axis of Street Sign Language Selection (E Corte Vista Montanosa: in the Catalina Foothills and Mountain Ave. in Sunnyside)*


Image 4 illustrates a paradigmatic choice of names, whereas in largely Hispanic and bilingual Sunnyside, street signs largely have Anglo names, such as Jeanette and Randall and in the largely Anglo and monolingual Catalina Foothills, the street signs have Hispanic names, such as Francisco Sosa.

Image 4*: Paradigmatic Axis of Street Sign Language Selection (E Camino Francisco Soza in the Catalina Foothills and Jeanette Ave. in Sunnyside)*



Whereas syntagmatic analysis studies the "surface structure" of a text, paradigmatic analysis seeks to identify the various paradigms (or pre-existing set of signifiers), which underlie the manifest content of texts. This aspect of structural analysis involves a consideration of the positive or negative connotations of each signifier (revealed through the use of one signifier rather than another), and the existence of "underlying thematic paradigms (e.g., binary oppositions such as public-private) (Chandler, 2007, p. 87). Here the paradigm set is language. How does changing the language change the meaning and the message? The paradigmatic transformation here is a substitution of one language for another. According to Jakobson, binary opposites are needed for language to make sense (Waugh, 1976). Human tendency to view the world in opposites makes it so that when we see a sign written in Spanish, even with the absence of the sign in English, it is present in our thought and vice versa when seeing an English sign in a predominantly Spanish speaking area. Not only are linguistic opposites elicited, but I posit that other binaries are present; us-them, L1-L2, national-international, native-foreign, familiar-strange, dominant-subaltern. We do this to make sense of our world.

If street signs indeed construct sentences for our sub-consciousness, then the paradigmatic selection of an L2 is certainly a curious one. For communication to be successful, the addresser forms sentences of lexical items stored in the lexical storehouse and which it is presumed to be shared in common with the addressee (Jakobson et al., 1990, p. 117). This certainly would not be the presumption in the Catalina Foothills with streets such as Chubasco (a monsoon storm) and Vara (a pole, leafless tree, or magic wand), or in Sunnyside with streets named S. Jeanette Blvd. or Leghorn. Who's Jeanette and what's Leghorn? These are certainly not part of the inhabitants' of these two areas "file cabinet of pre-fabricated representation" (Jakobson et al., 1990, p. 117). What is lacking here is a common code. In fact, rather, it seems to be an effort to essentially break the common code. This can be observed by the selection of WASPy[1] names, such as Randall and Jeanette, on street signs in the Sunnyside community and Hispanic names, such as Francisco de Soza, on street signs in the Catalina Foothills (see Image 4 above).

The selection of language may appear to the non-linguist, or the majority of people who pass street signs in their linguistic landscape daily, as equally equivalent in one respect and different in another. And indeed, the myth would have us believe that this is the case. Even though there exists great importance in the linear representation of these street signs and their semiotic message daily influencing our paradigms of language use and policy, it is the selection of associative, similar terms that also is interesting and gives us an insight into the historical paradigms of language use, planning, and policy.

**5. The Metonymic and Metaphoric Functions of Street Signs**

If by this point in the paper I have convinced the reader that street signs are linguistic expressions, then a discussion on the relationship of these linguistic expressions to conceptual metonymies and metaphors should not require a great leap of faith. Even if

[1] WASPy: White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant-like in description. The use of this adjective purposefully taps into the critical use of this term to address the disproportionate control of political, financial, and power of this high-status, influential group of White Americans in the U.S.

one does not quite accept street signs as dialogue, their metonymic function is worthy of highlighting. In fact, most, if not all, of what comprises linguistic landscape (LL) research is inextricably dependent upon metonymy. Metonymy works through a series of deletions to figuratively state what is to be understood, without fully needing to state it. Many artifacts, and the messages they produce, studied in LL research have an impact on their local context because of the conceptual fluency of the people who interact with them. Simply through viewing street signs in one neighborhood, our minds complete the "part for whole" metonymy and the larger conceptual metaphor, that the streets in this neighborhood are the veins of the larger body, which is the city. Nor do we need to see all of a sign to understand its meaning. Take for example the street sign in Image 5 below. Even though we cannot clearly see all of the letters (and even less so when speeding by it in a car), through metonymy our minds complete it as Wyoming.

Image 5: *Street Sign in Sunnyside Neighborhood*


Also, through the contiguous relationship of a string of U.S. state names (Nevada St., Iowa St., Louisiana St., Wyoming St. etc.), this part for whole metonymy of state name for part of country, creates a set of synecdoches of *We live in America* (Catalano & Waugh, 2013, p. 408). Through the subliminal power of metonymy, the message *This is the United States and the patriotic and national language of this country is English*, is conveyed by this series of U.S. state names, surrounded by all English language street signs and Anglo names. The metaphoric function of these street signs is to tap into the metalanguage and to summon similar or related terms that could be substituted for existing signs. The conceptual metaphor being manifested here is LANGUAGE is NATIONALISM and through the English language on the signs and the abundance of U.S. state names, ENGLISH IS NATIONALISM. This is achieved first through metonymy, as stated above. Then as a metaphor, the abstract target domain, NATIONALISM, is understood though the link to the concrete source domain, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (Kovecses, 2002).

The Spanish language street signs in the Catalina Foothills metonymically then metaphorically create a link to luxurious landscapes, such as Camino del Mar – Road of the Sea (of which there is obviously none in the desert), states of being, such as Placita

La Gracias[2] – A blessed or place of divine grace, and Placita Alta Reposa – a place of great rest and tranquility. Most importantly, for my argument that these signs in our daily linguistic landscape create a subconscious justification for classroom language of instruction ideology and policy, a metaphoric link to globalization, internationalization, "high class," an academic link to the Latin language, and exoticism is created that metalinguistically makes us think also of the English equivalents of these signs. The mere fact that English was not chosen exudes a power of choice, dominance, freedom, and linguistic superiority which I posit influences the existence of the Spanish immersion program and the stark classroom language of instruction policies that exist in the Catalina Foothills School District compared to the Sunnyside School District in the south of Tucson. In the Catalina Foothills the conceptual metaphor of SPANISH IS EXOTICISM AND POWER is manifested through the abstract target domain of POWER and EXOTICISM, as seen on street signs in Spanish, being understood through the concrete source domain, again LANGUAGE, but this time a foreign language, SPANISH. By choosing Spanish for street signs, inhabitants of the Foothills have the luxury of flowing between global identities, as through this association of comparisons the plurality of worlds is joined (Lodge, 1988). Of course most inhabitants of a community do not themselves name the streets and therefore are subject to those who do. I now briefly comment on the authorship of these signs and a description of one more semiotic tool used to maintain the status quo.

**6. Authorship, Power, and Elective vs. Circumstantial Reverse Indexicality**

The authorship of private signs, the signs of private businesses or signs posted by individuals, usually reflects better the linguistic reality of the speakers of the area. This holds true for these two Tucsons, as many Spanish language private signs are found in Sunnyside, but are almost non-existent in the Catalina Foothills. For this study I specifically focused my analysis on governmental signs, such as street signs, as they may give us an insight into the prevailing language ideology of those in power. According to Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) "…the presence and dominance of one language over others (in frequency of occurrence or prominence of display) may indicate the relative demographic and institutional power of an ethnolinguistic group over others" (p. 10). Focusing solely on governmental, or top-down, signs also removes much of the "domain of human agency behind the linguistic landscape" (Malinowski, 2008, p. 108), as the bureaucratic process of naming signs is mostly done by a few city planners and community developers, not by the people who will live among these signs.

The us vs. them dichotomy of the two Tucsons at the very least is curious, but how might we explain the semiotic process that I claim influences ideologies and educational opportunities? I posit that in the Catalina Foothills, Spanish language street

[2] Spanish used for street signs in Tucson is rampant with grammatical and semantic distortions, such as the example here of the wrong definite article *la* for *las*. Anglo Spanish in the American Southwest includes "borrowing, like parodic mimicry, hyperanglicization, and grammatical boldness and impossibility…creating an extreme distance from speakers of the source language and in constituting the source language, and by metonym, its speakers, in the most casual and apparently random way, as deeply contemptible" (Hill, 1993, p. 167).

signs are used in a reverse indexicality (Inou, 2006; Weidman, 2014) that acts to position the people who live there in a complex global way, allowing them to claim, much like what is done by immigrant groups in "China Towns" across the United States, these spaces for themselves, making "…the foreign and distant, familiar and present" (Jaworksi & Thurlow, 2010, p. 8). Although reverse indexicality offers a possible explanation of the usage of Spanish language street signs in the monolingual English speaking part of Tucson, I believe that it also, if expanded in conceptualization, could provide a greater understanding of the use of English in the bilingual south of Tucson. In extending the concept of reverse indexicality to the Sunnyside community, it would be helpful to distinguish between *elective reverse indexicality* and *circumstantial reverse indexicality.* In making these distinctions we can better describe the elective reverse indexicality of Spanish in the Catalina Foothills as the purposeful use of Spanish to index the foreign and distant and make this familiar and local. Hill (1993) might consider this specialized use of the Spanish language as supporting "…a broader project of social and economic domination of Spanish speakers in the region" (p. 146). Applying circumstantial reverse indexicality to the usage of English in Spanish speaking Sunnyside removes the element of agency and choice and acts to highlight the nature of how English has been forced upon this community of bilingual speakers and framed as an immediate necessity for educational success, adaptation, and acceptance. Reverse indexicality as a semiotic process holds true for this part of Tucson as well, as many, evidenced by the high usage of Spanish in the private linguistic landscape, may view the high volume of English in their governmental landscape as making a foreign language (their second language) local and familiar. The difference is that this presumably was not by their own choice, but rather a circumstance of prevailing language ideologies.

Language has indeed been used throughout history as a powerful weapon for social and economic control and maintenance of the status quo. The institution where this has been largely observed is education. Making this distinction between elective and circumstantial reverse indexicality also serves the principle argument of this paper by harkening to Guadalupe Valdés' (1992) distinction of elective and circumstantial bilingualism. How some have the privilege to elect to become bilingual in schools and others become bilingual, or lose their bilingualism, as a circumstance of English only policies in schools, will be taken up in the final section of this paper. Here we consider all that has been discussed thus far and with new eyes and understanding revisit our hypothesis once more: *The language of street signs influences our ideologies concerning language use and status and subliminally justifies our classroom language of instruction policies.*

**7. The Language of Classroom Instruction: Preference and Prejudice**

In the year 2000, Arizona voters approved Proposition 203; a ballot initiative entitled *English Language for the Children in Public Schools.* This law severely limited bilingual education in Arizona public schools and all but replaced it with a *Structured English Immersion* (SEI) program (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, Jiménez, 2005). The name itself, commonly shortened to *English for the Children*, sent a message loud and clear that English is the fairest, smartest, and most sensitive choice that parents could make for the educational future of their children. In actuality, the psychological effects of prohibiting students to learn in their first language (L1) can lead to youth believing that

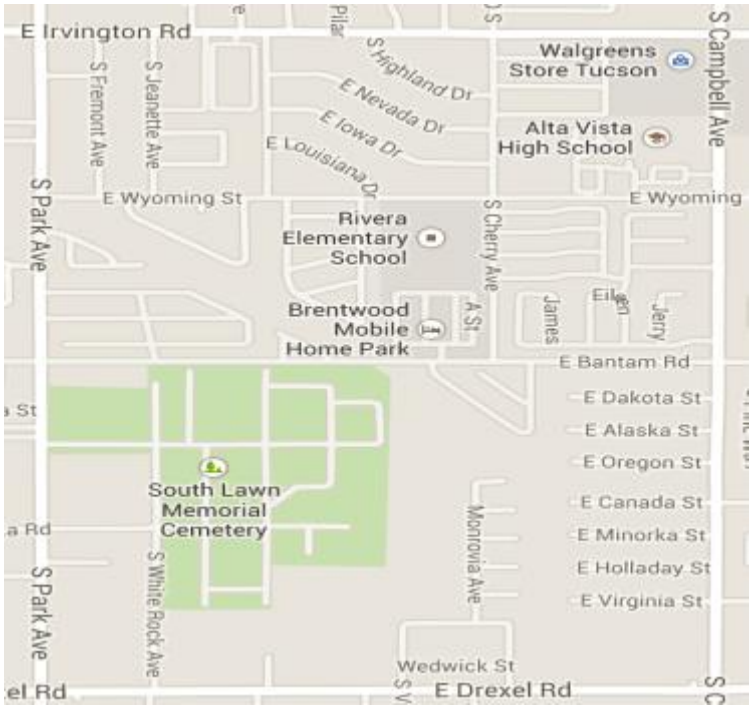
their L1 is inferior and to the positioning of these youth, by default of not beginning proficient in English, as somehow deficient, problematic, and not as good as their peers. Well-intentioned Arizona voters, including many Spanish-speaking parents, chose to believe the myth.

According to Barthes (1972), people create a link between the myth and reality by either making the two inseparable or by making the distinction between them so stark that they become extreme opposites. The daily interaction that Sunnyside community members have with English language street signs creates a strong link between the ideology of *English for the Children* and their accepted reality. The opposite reality, Bilingualism for the Children, is reinforced and justified daily through the interaction that Foothills inhabitants have with Spanish language street signs.

To demonstrate this point further, I narrowed my corpus analysis on the one hand to just the street signs that parents, children, teachers, and all educational stakeholders would pass while taking the four main routes to Rosemarie Rivera Elementary School in the Sunnyside School District, where Spanish language of instruction is prohibited and on the other hand to the street signs that one would see driving the main routes to Ventana Vista Elementary School in the Catalina Foothills, where a popular Spanish one-way dual language immersion program is in its sixth year.

Of the 33 street signs (see Figure 2 below) that one might pass driving to Rivera Elementary School from either Irvington Rd. to the north, Park Ave. to the west, E. Drexel Rd. to the south, or Campbell Ave. to the east, 32 are in English, and consist of eight U.S. state names and six Anglo names, such as Robert Hanson Dr. and S. Randall Blvd. Although the ethnic make-up of Rivera Elementary School is 93% Hispanic (Retrieved April 28, 2014 from www.zillow.com/tucson-az/schools/rivera-elementary-school-77234), the linguistic landscape surrounding Rivera is predominantly English and Spanish use is prohibited in classroom instruction.

Figure 2*: Sunnyside Streets Surrounding Rivera Elementary School (Google Maps, 2017)*

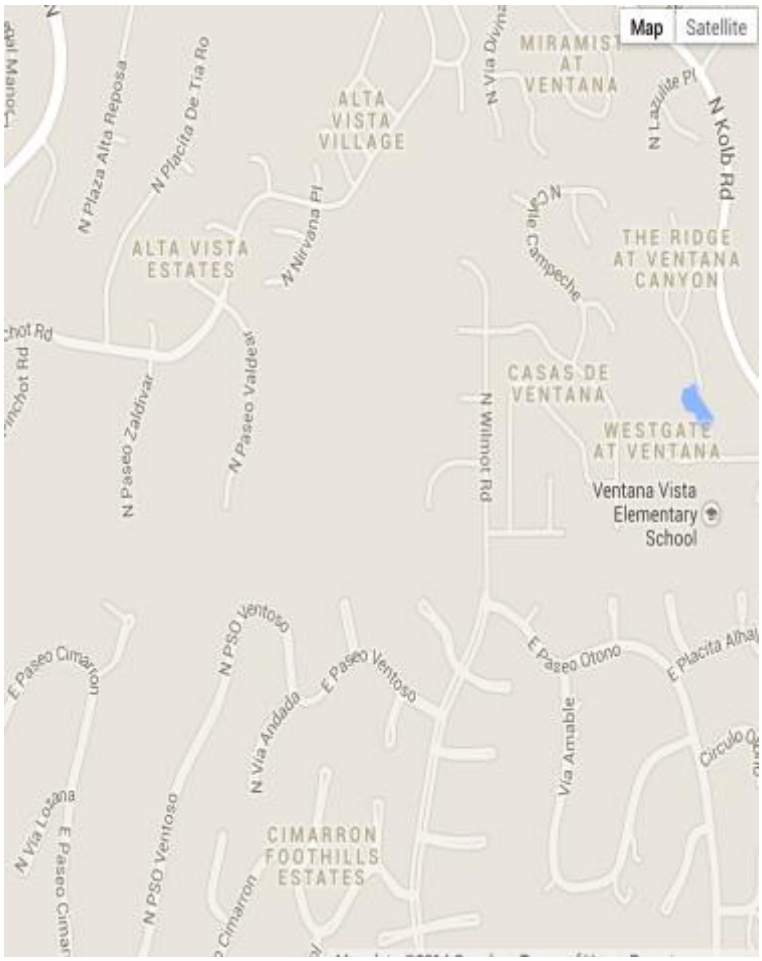



1. S. Campbell Ave.
2. E. Irvington Rd.
3. S. Cherry Ave.
4. S. Highland Dr.
5. S. Mountain Ave.
6. E. Nevada Dr.
7. E. Iowa Dr.
8. E. Louisiana Dr.
9. E. Wyoming St.
10. S Jeanette Ave.
11. S Fremont Ave.
12. S Park Ave.
13. E. Park Estates Cir.
14. E. Robert Hanson Dr.
15. E. Bantam Rd.
16. Dakota St.
17. E. Minorka Rd.
18. E. Holladay St.
19. E. Drexel Rd.

20. S White Rock Ave.
21. S. Randall Blvd
22. Leghorn
23. S. Stewart Blvd
24. S. Vine Ave.
25. *S. Del Moral Blvd*
26. S. Monrovia Ave.
27. E. Virginia St.
28. E. Canada St.
29. E. Oregon St.
30. Alaska St.
31. Theresa
32. S. Martin
33. E. Ponderosa Pl.

Figure 3*: Catalina Foothills Streets Surrounding Ventana Vista Elementary School (Google Maps, 2017)*

1. E. Camino Francisco Sosa
2. E. Corte Vista Montanosa
3. N. Craycroft Rd.
4. E. Corte Vista Montanosa
5. E. Sunrise Dr.
6. E. Paseo Cimarron
7. N. Via Verdosa
8. N. Camino Del Mar
9. Jochums Dr.
10. E. Pinchot Rd.
11. E. Shadow Ridge Dr.
12. N. Finisterra
13. E. Placita La Gracias
14. E. Placita Alta Reposa
15. N. Placita De Chubasco
16. N. Placita Acebo
17. N. Paseo Tamayo
18. N. Avenida De Las Palazas
19. N. Via Divina
20. N. Canyon Crest Dr.
21. N. Miramist Way
22. N. Resort Dr.
23. Estes Way
24. N. Lazulite Pl.
25. Ventana Crest Pl.
26. Mountain Shadows Pl.
27. E. Ventana Canyon Dr.
28. N. Kolb Rd.
29. N. Placita Paisaje
30. N. Paseo Otoño
31. N. Wilmont Rd.
32. N. Paseo Sonoyta
33. N. Via Zarzosa




Of the 33 street signs (see Figure 3) arriving to Ventana Vista Elementary School from N. Craycroft Rd. on the west and north, Kolb Rd. on the east or Sunrise Dr. on the

south, 18 are in Spanish. Driving off of these main routes and into the neighborhood, we find that 63 out of 83 street signs are in Spanish. Although the ethnic make-up of Ventana Vista Elementary School is 65% Caucasian and only 19% Hispanic, most of the street sings are in Spanish and the use of Spanish in the classroom is encouraged and privileged. However curious these two corpora may seem, based on the complete discussion presented above in this paper, I do not believe that this treatment of language on street signs and the corresponding classroom language of instruction policies that prohibit and promote the Spanish language is a mere coincidence.

## Conclusion

In directing our attention to the influence of our linguistic landscape on our ideologies concerning classroom language instruction policies, we better understand how so much of what is in our linguistic landscape comprises our metalinguistic processing of our daily experiences. It may be useful here to use Markus and Cameron's (2002) discussion on the importance of buildings in our landscape as a way of understanding the influence of street signs in our surroundings. Markus and Cameron view buildings, not as representations themselves, but as objects that organize space for people and provide a place for interaction and a co-construction of our worldly representation, influenced by the buildings' design, how the building is referred to by others, etc. Also, we can consider the actor on the stage, as does Lotman (1990). The art that the actor performs does not in its own transmit information, but rather provides the outlet, the sign for perceiving information (Lotman, 1990, p. 93). We can perhaps view street signs in a similar manner. Even though they saturate the world with meanings (Lotman, 1990), alone, without interaction with people, they are meaningless. Until a street sign is at some point perceived as a meaning making sign by the mind of human beings, it does not yet exist as a sign. Hoopes (1991), referencing the work of Charles Sanders Peirce (1873) states, "…If it is not a sign in any mind, it is not a sign at all" (p. 142).

The power of a street sign or any sign in our linguistic landscape is cognitive. This cognitive connection between the reciprocal relationship between our ideas, the signs that resemble them, and vice versa, create strings of lucidity and created understanding that give birth to succeeding understandings and that in total shape our perception of our world.

> We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristics of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge. . . . Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general" (Bergson, 2004, p. 295).

One can convincingly see, therefore, how our interactions with our linguistic landscapes and especially street signs that flow by us, as we pass them in a discursive flow of constructive reality, can influence our learned experience and cause our ideologies of language use and language status to be solidly footed in our thoughts, beliefs, and identities. For "indeed, a sign does not only convey knowledge, it makes it possible for knowledge to be extended" (Savan, 1988, p. 25). Street signs not only orient us in our daily travels, but have the potential to "orient us through different levels of territorial and societal stratification including identity claims, power relations and their contestations" (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010, p. 8).

I call for here a conscious interaction with street signs, one that understands their potential for meaning making in our lives. In doing so, perhaps we can narrow the gap between the immediacy of our understanding of objects and the dynamism of the potential interpretation of the knowledge being extended and a truer, purer reality. For, what greater danger could there be than to unconsciously be influenced by our linguistic landscape and passively fall victim to the ideological conversations that surround us every day.

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