

Introduction:

Welcome to the podcast series of the LOCALL project, where teachers and students share their experience working with linguistic landscapes inside and beyond the classroom walls. Hope you enjoy.

Interviewer:

Okay. Hello. Hello Laura. We're here today with Laura Capdevilla, who is a teacher at Saltells school in Catalonia, and she has very graciously agreed to answer a few questions about her experience with linguistic landscaping. So thank you so much, Laura, for joining us.

Laura:

Thank you. You, my pleasure to be here. Thanks for inviting me.

Interviewer:

We're really excited about hearing what you have to say. So, um, let's start with a question a little bit about your experience. Uh, this was your first time with linguistic landscapes and as part of teaching, can you explain why you were interested in trying it with your students?

Laura:

Yes. Well, I must say that from the very first time I was introduced to the field of Linguistic Landscaping, which was in a third year, a subject, um, called school language project and plurilingualism, I quickly became interested in how much information could be obtained merely by observing, um, the languages present in one's city. So when I came across to the topic, uh, again in practicum four, I thought that maybe it was the right time to launch myself into it. So basically I would say that, uh, it is a field, uh, with great potential to bring to the school as it allowed us to cover many aspects that are very necessary nowadays. And definitely, I can say that the top three reasons that convinced me the most were, uh, first the fact of giving the learners the opportunity to live a different learning experience. Secondly, the idea of taking the classroom out of the school that is to say that the learners, um, could learn about their neighborhood and their city and thus we could make the learning more meaningful for them. And finally, um, the opportunity for them to carry out an investigation under possibilities for them to develop, um, observation and critical thinking skills.

Interviewer:

All excellent answers and excellent reasons for trying this out with your students, which brings me to a second question. Uh, we haven't specified to the audience, what age group you were working with. Linguistic landscapes are often is used more for a secondary students, older students, but I believe you were using it with primary ed students. What age groups were your student?

Laura:

I was working with two groups of 25 students between nine and 10 years. So that is fourth grade of primary education.

Interviewer:

That's pretty young.

Laura: That is yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

So with that idea with working with the young learners on linguistic landscapes, uh, how did you introduce the concept of linguistic landscapes to them and how did they react when you introduced it?

Laura:

Yes, well, uh, first of all, um, the project was composed by 10 sessions and my idea was to devote the first two to the introduction of the project itself and the concept of linguistic landscape. So in the first lesson I introduced the concept of language and I asked the students the two driving questions of the project, which were, why do we learn languages? And why do we learn English at school? And then altogether they created their [Lennon wall](#), um, giving their opinions on those questions. And I must say that they were very engaged with the activity and many powerful ideas came up. And then it was in the second lesson. When I introduced the concept of linguistic landscape itself and to do it we analyzed both words in order to guess what it could be. And afterwards I presented the challenge, um, that they had as language detectives, which was how many languages do you think you can find in your city? And then, uh, they made their individual hypothesis and finally the last step to introduce a concept, uh, was, uh, presenting a model of my city linguistic landscape and they they did an activity on that.

Interviewer:

Excellent. So you had them break it down and think about what the word linguistic and landscape means, which for fourth graders is not, not common words for English as a foreign language classroom. Right. Very interesting.

Laura:

That's it, yeah.

Interviewer:

And then you had them, you told them they were going to be language detectives that's fun.

Laura:

Exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

Interviewer:

And so they reacted very, they were engaged from day one.

Laura:

Yes. They were thinking on putting on their language, detective glasses and they were really engaged. Yes.

Interviewer:

Excellent. Great. Um, so you've, you've already answered this question, but I think maybe it could be of interest if you could go into a bit more detail for people who are listening, other teachers who might be interested in doing this, you've already kind of sketched out some of the ideas of what you did with the language detectives and whatnot, but, um, can you briefly outline some of the activities you did during your project?

Laura:

Sure. Yes. Um, the sequence of the session was organized, uh, following the steps of a social research. So we started with the Lennon wall activity in which they gave their first answers to the initial questions of the project. And then in the second session, um, the language detectives' challenge was posed and

they made their hypothesis. Then when we moved, uh, to the next stage, when, when they collected the data and they had a little more than a week, uh, to check the pictures of the languages present in the city. And afterwards we analyzed the data by answering some questions. And then in lesson five, uh, we interpreted through, through a bit of debate. And finally, in the following session, uh, they drew their conclusions by refuting or validating the hypothesis and, well, uh, the last four lessons where they voted basically to the creation of their city's linguistic landscape brochures, and, the preparation of the oral presentations and the presentations themselves.

Interviewer:

Okay. So, uh, in one of the sessions, you said session three, that they collected the data. Did you, was this outside of the class or did you go as a class into the street?

Laura:

It was outside of the class. So with their families.

Interviewer:

So you had informed beforehand to the families.

Laura:

Exactly. Yes. We sent an email to the families and they did the task together.

Interviewer:

So, um, I've seen the output, but the people who, um, that are listening our listeners, they're not familiar with it, like I am. You did this beautiful thing with the students that created brochures of what they found. And then you uploaded this on a virtual website. Um, maybe you want to explain a little bit more about how you had them then do a recorded presentations, I think without having seen the output, uh, you just kind of skipped over this very wonderful part. So could you explain that a bit?

Laura:

Yes of course. Um, they created their brochures, uh, with the results of their, of their findings on the research of the linguistic landscape. And then I created a virtual museum with their brochures. So they, they explained over there, um, the results, what they loved, what they enjoyed the most, and they shared opinions. And then we shared these virtual world with the families, with the school so that everyone could have a look to the, to the research they've done.

Interviewer:

Yeah. And I just wanted you to highlight that because you kind of, you kind of skipped over and it was such a nice output considering we'll, we'll, we'll put this, uh, link, if we have permission, we can put a link to the webpage on this podcast. So thank you for that. Um, so this was your first time.. Which activities did you like best as a teacher?

Laura:

Definitely um, the activities I enjoyed the most were the ones in which the students were actively involved and they were the main agents of their learning. And I especially loved the one in which they did their group presentations. It was very exciting and rewarding for me to see their learning from the project and the research on the linguistic landscape of Cerdanyola.

Interviewer:

Okay, so as a teacher, that was your favorite one, seeing what they had learnt, what do you think as students ... what do you think that they liked the best?

Laura:

I think that the ones they liked the best were also the ones in which they were the main, the main agents. They, they were, uh, participating, for instance, uh, in lesson four, they were sharing their pictures, analyzing them, the ones in which they took part and were involved, they enjoyed them a lot.

Interviewer:

Yeah. That's excellent. Uh, an excellent overview and an excellent perspective for other teachers. So you, you're saying they need to really be engaged.

Laura:

Of course, that's key.

Interviewer:

So, um, what does em- This is what I asked you, what you felt like they enjoyed the most, what you enjoyed the most. What do you think are the most important points that your students learnt from this experience? I mean, you, you're saying that you enjoyed hearing about what they learnt. For you, what would be the most important or most relevant points that they've learnt?

Laura:

Well there's a lot to say, but I would say that first of all, they have understood what social research means and which are the steps that are implied. And in relation to the linguistic landscape field, they have demonstrated an understanding of the multilingual character of their city and of the considerable presence of English indeed. And they have developed reflections that are so powerful on the reasons for this high presence of English, such as, um, because it's the universal language, uh, because science in English sounds sound better. So they come up with these idea of coolness, um, because of the, of the number of foreigners that now is higher than some, some years ago. And, uh, all this has led them to better understanding the importance of learning this language. And they have made numerous reflections on what learning English brings to them. So for example, they said, uh, meeting people from other cultures, um, traveling, uh, being able to understand foreigners and even having a better job opportunity. So in short, I strongly believe that this project has broadened their perspectives on the coexistence of different languages and cultures in their city. Uh, since at the very beginning of the project, when they made their hypothesis, they thought they would find three languages. So Catalan, Spanish and English, and by the end of the project, they concluded that, uh, Cerdanyola is a multilingual city in which English is highly present. So that's really powerful.

Interviewer:

Yes. And that's uh deep thinking for fourth graders as well. Congratulations on, on, on orienting them towards such, uh, excellent, uh, and deep research thoughts. Yeah. It says a lot about your capabilities as a teacher as well. Um, so, okay. This is what your students learnt from the experience. Uh, what about you, because this was your first time using linguistic landscapes in your teaching. So did you learn anything, uh, as a teacher?

Laura:

Yeah. Um, above all, um, the most relevant learning I have had from my experience has been to discover the extraordinary capacity of the students to reflect on the coexistence of different cultures and

languages, the reason, uh, as, as well, the reason, um, for their presence in their immediate, immediate context and the importance of, of learning more from them. So I have definitely experienced first hand the potential of the linguistic landscape field and the opportunities that it has in the classroom.

Interviewer:

Right. Very good points. And perhaps I would highlight one that you didn't say it directly, but sometimes we underestimate our students. Do we not? So in a way you're saying you, you realize that, um, we always, we need to be reminded to never underestimate our students.

Laura:

It's the Pygmalion effect, right? Yes.

Interviewer:

Exactly. So looking back, is there anything that you would do differently?

Laura:

Yes. Yes. I think always we can improve something and for further applications, I would probably like to devote more time to the group work of preparing the presentation of their research results. Since I think that the step of sharing what you have discovered is extremely relevant, uh, for their learning process. And this requires a good preparation that allows them to gain confidence to orally present it. So I would devote more time to this part.

Interviewer:

Good point. Very good point. I know we've covered a lot of ground, but is there any point or anything that you would highlight about linguistic landscapes and teaching that we haven't mentioned yet?

Laura:

Well, basically I would say that it is a field of study that provides a very large input for students and meets all the requirements to lead a meaningful and motivating learning experience for them.

Interviewer:

Okay. Nice point. Right. For everyone who's out there listening to our podcasts, which I hope will be many, many potential linguistic landscape teachers. Uh, what would you tell other teachers who are looking into this idea of implementing linguistic landscapes with their students? Do you have some tips or anything you would share with them?

Laura:

Yeah, I would definitely tell them that it's worth it to give it a try. I must say that at the beginning, uh, I needed a little extra time to gain a deeper insight into the field and feel confident enough to bring the linguistic landscaping into the classroom, but the benefits that it has for (...) for one as a teacher and for the learners are priceless. I mean, you have a natural and genuine opportunity to bring to the classroom issues as important today as globalization, linguistic imperialism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism, or diversity. So, um, all this being worked from a student centered approach in which they are the ones carrying out a social research it's it's, it's great. What can you say? So, uh, I highly recommend it to all those teachers who also believe that this is valuable enough to be integrated into the, into the classroom.

Interviewer:

Oh, thank you. Thank you for those words. Um, very inspiring, very inspiring words. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with our listeners? Any points that we haven't covered? I'm sure there's a lot, but perhaps there's something ...

Laura:

There's especially one I would like to, to emphasize that is, um, the last aspect implicit in the project was, uh, the participation and implication of the families. And, uh, with the language detectives' challenge, there was an opportunity for parents and children to investigate more about their city together and to be engaged in the investigation of their children. This was a very good experience for many of them. And they, in fact, sent us emails expressing their excitement for being able to contribute to their, uh, children's, uh, learning processes. So that's one more reason to give this field of linguistic landscape a chance.

Interviewer:

Wow, that's so empowering. Um, it's absolutely fantastic that the parents were so responsive and in a, in a positive way with what you were doing. That must have been an absolutely fantastic feeling to get those emails.

Laura:

Yes. Yes. Because you see that the work you're doing is worthy.

Interviewer:

Yes. Yes. Well, thank you, Laura. Thank you very much for joining us for this podcast. Uh, you've explained a wonderful experience, and as I've said, we will make the output for your, uh, of your students, uh, linguistic landscape products as language detectives we'll make that available if we have permission from your school to do so. And it's, it's been delightful to hear about your experience. Thank you so much.

Laura: Thank you. My pleasure.

Closing narrative:

Thank you for listening. Please stay tuned to our website and YouTube channel. New and inspiring podcasts are coming soon.

If you'd like to see the students' linguistic landscapes in a 3D gallery, go [here](#).