

A Collaborative Asset Mapping Approach to the Linguistic Landscape: Learning from the community's Linguistic Capital in an L2 College-Writing Course



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Abstract The Language Capital Project is a collaborative linguistic asset-mapping project that identifies non-residential locations in Tucson, Arizona, where languages other than English are present. This chapter introduces the project and theoretically situates it as LL research with a sociolinguistic justice approach. Through this approach, LL research is done alongside the language community members themselves, drawing from their knowledge and lived experience. This leads to a more complete understanding of the linguistic landscape, particularly minoritized community spaces, and it challenges homogenous, monolingual narratives of the southwest. After introducing the methods and outcomes of the project, the chapter presents an exploratory pilot case study of two undergraduate L2, first-year writing students who participated in the project as part of an extra credit assignment. This exploratory pilot case study showed that the students who participated in the project reported having had a positive experience as well as shifts in roles and transformational identity experiences.

Keywords Collaborative mapping · Community spaces · Language capital · (Multilingual) narratives · Immigrant

1 Introduction

In the summer of 2015, the authors initiated a project mapping places in Tucson, Arizona where one can meet speakers of languages other than English. The goal was to gather and share the information online to elevate the multilingualism present in the community and to provide a resource for new arrivals (e.g., immigrants, international students, refugees) to locate businesses and other places where their language was spoken. Specifically, this resource would help new arrivals find helpful places and practical services like doctors, mechanics, lawyers, grocers, etc. The

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project was titled the Language Capital Project (LCP).¹ The two authors are Latinx and have lived in and around the southern Arizona border communities their entire lives. When the project began, they had lived in Tucson for several years and considered themselves knowledgeable of the places in the local community where Spanish was regularly spoken. For this reason, the LCP's initial focus was mapping spaces where one can encounter Spanish speakers.

To start off the Language Capital Project, the authors incorporated into the map their shared knowledge of locations around Tucson where Spanish is frequently spoken. Their participation in the local Spanish speaking community across the years made this process relatively straightforward. The authors also consulted with their Spanish-speaking friends and colleagues. Their knowledge of the local language communities beyond Spanish, however, was very limited. For this reason, the authors worked with international students who, in many cases, had already mapped out these locations informally. The role of international students in gathering information and media was indispensable in the development of the project. Many of the international students who collaborated did so while they were enrolled in English composition courses taught by one of this chapter's authors.

As the project evolved and new locations were added to the map, the broader theoretical, pedagogical, and social implications of this type of project started coming into focus. In Sect. 2 of this chapter, the LCP is theoretically situated as linguistic landscape research that incorporates social justice-based frameworks like asset-mapping (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). In alignment with Bucholtz et al.'s (2014, 2016) concept of sociolinguistic justice, we propose that working alongside minoritized language communities while framing spaces where diverse languages are present as assets can lead to information about the linguistic landscape that extractive methods may overlook. Section 3 relates the activities involved in the LCP within the English as an Additional Language (EAL) college first-year writing courses. We propose that participation in the project allows international students to build on the knowledge of their own languages, communities, and cultures in the classroom, and this knowledge can then be extended to the understanding of similar topics in English speaking communities. Additionally, bridging students' social and linguistic capital with the goals of the academic literacy classroom makes the students feel included, motivated, and it connects them to off campus communities. Ultimately, the LCP allows members of marginalized and excluded language communities to create their own representations of the broader linguistic landscape they inhabit as well as the specific spaces that sustain their communities and cultural practices in unique ways. These can serve as counter-representations of multilingual spaces and regions such as the U.S.-Mexico borderlands where non-Anglo communities and their cultures have been historically suppressed as a result of assimilationist campaigns that date back to the colonial period (Otero, 2010; Vélez-Ibáñez, 2017). The remaining sections expand on the pedagogical implications through the examination of the experiences of one instructor and two international students who

¹ See <https://lcp.arizona.edu/>.

participated in the LCP. The goal is to provide a glimpse of the participants' experience and to encourage further inquiry into the theoretical and pedagogical implications of this type of collaborative linguistic resource mapping.

2 LCP: Linguistic Landscape Research as a Form of Asset-Mapping

The type of research done throughout the development of the LCP shares many similarities with linguistic landscape research. Both reveal information about the language communities within a geographical region. Like the LCP, Landry and Bourhis (1997) propose that the "linguistic landscape can...provide information about the sociolinguistic composition of the language groups inhabiting the territory in question. Public signs can be unilingual, bilingual, or multilingual, thus reflecting the diversity of the language groups in the given territory" (p. 26). For example, in the LCP, one of the most recognized languages other than English and Spanish in both public spaces and private businesses was Arabic (see also Bever & Azaz, "[An Educational Perspective on Community Languages in Linguistic Landscapes: Russian and Arabic](#)," this volume). Specifically, many of the students involved with the project recognized that Iraqi Arabic varieties were the most common. This is unsurprising since refugees from Iraq have and continue to relocate to Tucson (Coşkun et al., 2011). While the data so far contains mainly private business locations, Landry and Bourhis (1997) point out that "sociolinguistically, language diversity in private signs may most realistically reflect the multilingual nature of a particular territory, region, or urban agglomeration... [and it can reflect] a concrete manifestation of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting a particular administrative territory or region" (p. 27). Thus, we propose that mapping places where one can encounter speakers of non-national languages, as done for the Language Capital Project, offers a unique way of collecting information about the linguistic diversity of a region. We also suggest that the information collected with the methodology of the LCP leads to data unattainable through observation of public signs and thus it is a useful method to get fuller understanding of the linguistic landscape.

At first glance, there are some overt distinctions between LL research and the LCP's methods. For example, the LL chiefly focuses on texts in an attempt to identify (among other things) the range of linguistic capital of the inhabitants within a situated context, while the LCP focuses mainly on the knowledge of language group members to identify the linguistic capital of the inhabitants or of the general language group. Before moving on to other distinctions between the LCP and LL research, it is important to clarify what is meant by capital. We draw from Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth which asserts that there are varying forms of capital cultivated within Communities of Color "to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). These forms of capital are

intrinsically valuable and are used by members of speakers of language other than English to assist in their participation and navigation of new spaces and spaces where English is dominant. Two forms of capital are particularly important to this work, linguistic and social capital. Linguistic capital is defined as the “intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Social capital refers to “networks of people and community resources” (p. 79) a person is capable of drawing from for various forms of support. Importantly, this work also contends that not only do the students who are part of the current study possess social and linguistic capital but the places that they visit do as well. Places are constructed and shaped by the people who own them and by the people who visit them. Places become physically shaped by signs, sights, sounds, smells, and objects that reflect the discourses of the people who frequent them as well as objects that are in some cases symbolic extensions of the persons themselves.² These features construct a familiar and welcoming identity of a location and allow it to become a type of nexus of resources and services for members of these language communities. In short, the linguistic capital of place is the manifestation of the linguistic capital of the people who frequent it.

The extension on Bourdieu’s idea of ‘capital’ from individuals to groups is not a new concept in linguistic landscape research (e.g., Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009). It refers to the collective linguistic capital of a community, group, or population. The collaborators’ shared linguistic and social capital allows them access networks that may not be perceivable by non-members. Importantly, collaboratively gathering information directly from members of the language community may provide a more complete picture of what types of signs are possible to begin with. For example, at the time in which it was added to the map, all of the employees at a local Tucson convenience store called Market Friendly were native speakers of Persian. However, all the signs were in English. The linguistic capital of the people who manage and frequent these given spaces is not perceptible, yet it is present. In this case, the absence of Persian in the written signs of the shop was an invitation for further analysis (cf. Richardson, 2020, on “silence” in the LL for language learning). Similarly, all of the current employees at India Dukaan speak Konkani, Kannada, and Hindi. Knowing the linguistic capital of that particular space, one knows what languages are possible to find in the linguistic landscape or soundscape of the shop. In addition, at Nur Market, one finds that all employees and much of the clientele are Somali and Arabic speakers. However, the majority of the signs are in English, a few are in Arabic, and none are in Somali. It would be difficult to note where multilingualism is possible and what the visibility of multilingual practices means if one is only relying on the incomplete picture of perceived space from the perspective of outside observers or even the broader picture of conceived space³ (Trumper-Hecht, 2010). Working alongside members of minority language

² See Jennifer Gonzalez’s (1995) notion of autotopographies.

³ In an article highlighting the importance of taking into consideration community members’ own spatial representations of the spaces they frequent, Trumper-Hecht draws from Lefebvre’s notion of spatial practice, lived space, and conceived space. Conceived space in this case is space “defined as conceptualized by technocrats, planners, politicians and other policy makers” (p. 237). In other

groups also provides information of the location that goes beyond language; in many cases, international students befriend and regularly converse with shop owners who speak their language. From this, they may be able to provide more insightful interpretations of the sign-makers' choices, an often neglected layer to Linguistic Landscape research (Spolsky, 2009; Malinowski, 2009; Stroud & Jegels, 2014). They acquire knowledge that one would only be able to attain through ethnographic research.

Another beneficial outcome of the LCP is its focus in creating a networking resource. In other words, the project is not only interested in understanding the language landscape from an academic perspective but in helping it grow by allowing new arrivals to find members of their speech communities. Although the goal is to gain a theoretically grounded understanding of minority language communities, there is sometimes a lack of practical social justice components or impacts to LL data collection. This is most evident in activities that involve foreign language students, sometimes from privileged backgrounds, photographing signs in underserved communities. There is often a power dynamic that is ignored during these 'camera safaris.' In contrast, working with members of these language communities may allow one to avoid the issue altogether. According to Bucholtz et al. (2016) "linguistically marginalized individuals and communities... [achieve] some measure of sociolinguistic justice whenever they claim the right to define the social, cultural, and political roles of their own linguistic varieties" (p. 145). Claiming that international students are established members of local immigrant communities during their time abroad is an oversimplification, however. In some cases, there may be cultural or ideological differences between the international students and immigrant communities which prevent the students from gaining access to these communities. Nevertheless, we assume that in many cases, international students can more easily form bonds and achieve a more profound understanding of these communities than those who do have a shared language, ethnicity, or culture. They may also understand the experience of new arrivals and shape the overall objectives of linguistic resource mapping activities accordingly. For this reason, we conceptualize international students as temporary members of local minority language communities. In this way, Bucholtz's (2014, 2016) concept of sociolinguistic justice can be extended to a project like the LCP.

Ultimately, the LCP introduces an asset mapping component into linguistic landscape research (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). It positions spaces where non-dominant languages are practiced or understood as assets. As Low (2017) mentions, "words and their performance index space in multiple ways – linking transnational spaces, creating safe spaces and community for marginalized citizens...and spatializing class and race" (p. 122). In this way, these spaces are shaped by the linguistic practices of the people who inhabit them. In turn, the existence of these places sustains local, minoritized community identities by offering them a place to express their culture and socialize with others using a shared language. Arizona has a long

words, the perceptions of 'insiders' who dwell and feel a sense of belonging within these spaces may provide a more nuanced or unique understanding than what one might get from census data.

history of Americanization campaigns aimed at eradicating non-Anglo cultures from the region by erasing their most salient features: their languages and places (Ruvalcaba et al., [forthcoming](#); Vélez-Ibáñez, 2017; Otero, 2010; Hill, 1993, 1998). A series of racist educational language policies combined with urban ‘renewal’ projects that displaced non-Anglo communities have framed languages other than English, as well as the places where they are spoken, as obstacles on the path to progress (Hill, 1993; Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012; Przymus & Kohler, 2018; Ruvalcaba et al., [forthcoming](#)). They are seen as places where people do not speak English or do not speak ‘correct’ English. These narratives erase the vibrant cultural and linguistic capital of communities by cloaking them with ‘mental maps’ of deficiency. By incorporating an asset-mapping component, the LCP provides an alternative to a lens of deficiency by highlighting the local community’s cultural resources that persist despite being historically ignored, erased, and/or appropriated. It allows members of these communities to create their own representations of their cultures, places, and contributions to the region (Ruvalcaba et al., [forthcoming](#)). This aligns with Purschke’s (2020) of citizen science which both democratizes research and embeds intellectual inquiry within the social domain. Beyond simply connecting research to community, approaching the community as an intellectual space begins by acknowledging the cultural wealth and intellectual production of communities as well as its potential to inform scholarly work (Rosa, 2018).

Finally, the LCP frames the linguistic landscape of a region as the emergence of unique places, each with its own social, political, and cultural context. The importance of understanding the local social context within which linguistic landscapes research takes place is prominent in recent research. Studies aim at understanding not only the distribution of languages and language communities, but also the social context within which they exist and the broader implications of their visibility. The placement of a sign is crucial to understanding what it represents and the discourses it may form part of. Public spaces, as Blommaert & Maly (2015) points out, are “social arenas -- circumscriptions on which control, discipline, belonging and membership operate and in which they are being played out.” Thus, the meanings, implicatures, and functions of the language and design of a sign can represent and enforce local social structures. Serwe and de Saint-Georges (2014) extend Blommaert’s idea of the normative nature of public space to his investigation of signs within a private space. More specifically, they look at the shelf labels at a Thai immigrant’s grocery store located in a rural German town. They point out that outside of economic and sociology disciplines, little research has been done on the language practice of ethnic businesses. Serwe and de Saint-Georges’s (2014) investigation combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, and their findings offer a glimpse into globalized local spaces, specifically the “internationalisation of local markets” (p. 240) in rural settings. It is also telling of the presence of “multilingualisms that are usually invisible on a regional or even national scale in Germany” (p. 240). Serwe and de Saint-Georges (2014) also observe the complex linguistic strategies the shop’s owner utilizes to best serve multiple language communities. Additionally, they gain insight about “the routinized ability of globally mobile individuals to access the resources of various semiotic systems” (p. 241) in a business setting (see also Bever and Azaz,

“An Educational Perspective on Community Languages in Linguistic Landscapes: Russian and Arabic”, this volume). From Serwe and de Saint-Georges’s (2014) study, one can see how much can be learned by carrying out both quantitative and qualitative research on the linguistic practices within private, non-residential spaces. In less urban environments, focusing solely on visible signs within public spaces may cause researchers to overlook important information about the language practices and social mobility of small language groups. They may misinterpret the lack of their languages’ presence in public spaces as a sign of decreased ethnolinguistic vitality. While not all of the data collected as part of the LCP is as detailed as Serwe and de Saint-Georges’s (2014) study, each entry classifies each location according to the services offered (religious, business, cultural center, medical etc.), and this may provide an idea about the discourses occupants participate in. Although the information on the LCP resource can offer basic information such as this, we regard it more as an invitation for further research like that of Serwe and de Saint-Georges (2014) and the larger body of research on complex languaging practices in minoritized community spaces (cf. Blackledge & Creese, 2019; Peck et al., 2019; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

3 LCP Research as Inclusive Classwork in L2 College Writing Courses

The LCP is not only a collaborative, linguistic asset-mapping project that challenges conventional representations of diverse, contested spaces, it can also provide a more nuanced understanding of how place and language interact and shape one another. As a sociolinguistic research project, it can be incorporated into the L2 writing classroom where language diversity, discourse, and pragmatics are routinely discussed. The incorporation of the project’s research activities can be turned into exploratory class assignments. Students can thus engage in data-collection, interviews, observations, and reflective description of culturally diverse spaces in the local community. By incorporating the research aspects of the project in the classroom, students are able to participate in the project, become acquainted with qualitative research methods, and receive class credit for their participation. Ultimately, the collective findings of students’ engagement in these research activities allows for a more complete representation of culturally rich borderlands regions frequented by people whose presence have been historically erased, excluded, or overlooked. This section explains how participation in the project’s research activities by students in L2 writing courses can connect to the students’ sense of belonging, their own linguistic capital and awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity.

In recent decades, there has been a notable increase of international student populations in institutions of higher education in the U.S. Valdez (2015) explains that “the increasing number of undergraduate Chinese students... is drawing attention from higher education administrators, but unfortunately researchers and administrators have paid little attention to classroom experiences of international students...

(p. 8).” Valdez (2015) provides a critical literature review and overview of how classroom experiences in American institutions of higher education can lead to feelings of inferiority, uselessness, invisibility, and isolation among international students (Kim, 2012; Hsieh, 2007). Additionally, students’ social networks help them deal with these notions of exclusion and the sense of not belonging (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). Valdez (2015) argues that including and starting with students’ own culture and expertise is a way to make the classroom more inclusive and fundamental to a more equitable pedagogy:

Developing and nurturing a strong self-image based on the embracement of one’s own culture and expertise, is essential to the successful implementation of a critical pedagogy of internationalization. Having a secure sense of identity allows students to see the value and potential of their own contribution to the class content and subsequently be able to develop a more critical comparative perspective on different topics. (p. 28)

From these assertions, one can infer that bringing the students’ cultural knowledge into the classroom as well as creating opportunities for them to expand their social networks may help offset the sense of exclusion many of them experience. Although most research into international students’ experience in American colleges and universities tends to look at their social networks on campus with fellow students, it is also possible to connect to social networks off campus as a way to help mediate these challenges.

While Valdez (2015) looks at international students’ experiences in general college and university classes, her insights regarding the importance of bridging the classroom with EAL learners’ communities and culture are especially applicable in the L2 classroom. Sharkey (2012) points out that English teaching standards in colleges and universities recognize the value of incorporating the students’ culture, heritage, and communities into the English as an Additional Language curriculum.⁴ In this way, effective teaching in the EAL classroom builds on students’ cultural and social capital. By creating activities that include students’ culture and knowledge, students can participate more deeply and effectively in the classroom. This can lead to a sense of inclusion and empowerment. In turn, this can play a positive role in the development of their L2 literacy. In his discussion of the importance of bringing college English Language Learners’ mother tongue into the EAL classroom, Parmegiani (2019) states that “‘affective or motivational factors and academic achievement’ are inseparable... To remove these obstacles, or at least reduce them, it is essential to remove academic literacy instructions from the ‘experiential vacuum’ (Cummins, 1996, p. 2) that often surround it and ground it in the social realities of the students” (p. 32). Parmegiani (2019) argues that by bringing students’ culture and experiences into the classroom, the academic literacy is not only more relevant and meaningful but also “an instrument of inclusion and progressive social change” (p. 32). Designing

⁴Sharkey (2012) states that “...according to [TESOL and NCATE’s 2009] standards, teacher candidates who exceed expectations in the domains of culture and planning, ‘design classroom activities that enhance the connection between home and school culture and language; ... act as advocates to support students’ home culture and heritage language’ (p. 43); and ‘use students’ community and family to locate and develop culturally appropriate materials (p. 55).”

activities based on students' culture, expertise, and languages not only makes the content more meaningful, accessible, and relevant, but it also contributes to an inclusive class culture that may alleviate feelings of invisibility, inferiority, and isolation often experienced by international students.

Parmegiani (2019) advocates for the use of students' mother tongue in college L2 writing courses. He points out traditional approaches to teaching second language literacy have omitted students' existing cultural knowledge and identity and have trended toward assimilationist goals:

...among critical language and literacy scholars...there is a lot of consensus about the idea that traditional concepts of academic literacy, based exclusively on a dominant language, a dominant dialect, and a set of dominant discourse practices, create a sense of alienation in nonmainstream students. (p. 33)

It is the routine omission of students' social, cultural, and linguistic capital which reinforces the deficit-based approach of traditional approaches to teaching academic literacy. Like Parmegiani (2019), the LCP aligns with the assumption that EAL writing courses should build on students' capital, as defined by Yosso (2005). Not only is this conducive to a more inclusive classroom environment and more relevant activities, it allows students to position themselves as experts. This allows students to "develop more positive identities as learners who are knowledgeable and capable" (Parmegiani, 2019 p. 36). To that end, the LCP proposes an asset-mapping approach to collaborative linguistic landscape research which positions EAL writing students as experts with knowledge to share about their language and language communities. Students identify spaces in the city where speakers of their mother language socialize, gather, and provide services. They examine the signs at these spaces and situate them within their own experience as well as within a broader sociopolitical and historical context. They are not only able to transfer their knowledge of sociocultural, geographic, political, and linguistic factors surrounding the varieties they identify in the city, but they are also able to explore ways in which these spaces sustain and nurture local minoritized communities. This prior knowledge and critical examination of language and local spaces can be transferred to broader topics, such as the varieties of English as well as the power dynamics and competing narratives of each English variety (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010).

4 Procedure

4.1 Methods

The current study seeks to understand how an asset mapping approach to sociolinguistic research as embodied by the LCP can be integrated in the EAL college writing classroom. More specifically, it explores the extent to which this type of collaborative project facilitates the incorporation of students' cultural knowledge and background into the academic literacy classroom.

To explore these open-ended questions, the study presents the experience of an instructor who invited students to participate in the LCP as an extra credit opportunity within the EAL writing classroom context. The instructor's reflection draws from their experience in the classroom, teaching notes, electronic communications with students regarding the LCP research activities as well as related classroom discussions and activities (e.g., discussing and in-class mapping of students' mental and experiential maps of the languages of the Tucson community). The experiences discussed in this reflection are situated within the context and goals of a first-year writing and composition course for L2 learners. The instructor's reflection additionally serves to contextualize the other form of data collection, namely, a pilot case study of two students who completed an extra credit ethnography assignment as part of the LCP (see also Jiménez-Caicedo, "[Uncovering Spanish Harlem: Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Projects in an Advanced Content-Based Spanish Course](#)", this volume).

The exploratory pilot case study (Yin, 2003) focuses on two students' experiences who participated in an extra credit opportunity that asked them to (1) identify a place off campus where a language other than English is spoken, and (2) interview a key stakeholder at this location (owner, pastor, employee, volunteer etc.). This exploratory pilot case study aims to understand students' experiences, particularly their response to the LCP research activity and what sorts of insights they gain through their participation. It draws from the instructor's knowledge and experience working with the students and from a questionnaire that elicited open-ended responses regarding students' experiences with the activity. These two sources of data serve to explore the question of how this sort of research activity can facilitate the incorporation of students' cultural knowledge and background into the academic literacy classroom.

4.2 *Participants*

During the time that this study was carried out, the instructor who provided a reflection was a graduate teaching assistant. He was a doctoral student in a second language acquisition and teaching program and had been teaching first-year writing and composition courses for 6 years. He was also the co-creator of the Language Capital Project and one of the authors of this chapter. Like the students described in his reflection, the instructor is an English as Additional Language learner with an L1 of Spanish.

The students discussed in the instructor's reflection were all first-year writing and composition courses for EAL learners at the University of Arizona.

The case study examined two students' experiences participating in the LCP, namely Li and Hamza (both pseudonyms). Li was an international student enrolled in the second semester of first-year writing and composition for EAL learners. She was a business major from China whose first language was Mandarin. Hamza was

an international student enrolled in the second semester of first-year writing and composition for EAL learners. He was an engineering major from Saudi Arabia whose first language was Arabic.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Methodologically the current study drew on qualitative methods for both data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). Data included the instructor's written reflection, and the two students' open-ended semi-structured questionnaires (conducted via email). The instructor's class notes, email exchanges, class discussion, and material items, such as in-class work and handouts, helped contextualize the main data. Both authors conducted an initial reading across all data. After the initial close reading, the authors individually coded *in vivo*. Afterwards, the two authors compared and categorized both sets of individually generated codes and located emergent themes. Smagorinsky (2008) states that "the flexible and generative nature of the collaborative approach [is] more likely to produce an insightful reading of the data because each decision is the result of a serious and thoughtful exchange about what to call each and every data segment" (p. 402). These emergent themes are discussed in the Student Experiences section below.

5 An instructor's Reflection on the Collaborative Resource Mapping

At first, the map of multilingual spaces in Tucson mainly consisted of locations where people who speak Spanish work, volunteer, or gather. Since the instructor is a member of the local Spanish speaking community, these locations were not difficult to find. Many of the instructor's Spanish speaking friends and colleagues also contributed to the map. Their knowledge of the presence of other languages in the city was practically non-existent. When the instructor and a colleague started the map, the instructor was teaching an international section of English composition. Towards the end of the semester, he sent a brief email to his students telling them about the project and asking if anyone knew anything about the foreign languages spoken in local Tucson businesses. The response was surprising. Students who rarely spoke in class replied with Yelp screen shots with accompanying information about languages spoken at each location, others sent detailed lists, tables, or excel files containing the names and addresses of local businesses, the specific linguistic varieties spoken by the people who worked there, where the employees were from originally, and the types of services they offered. Along with basic information about each place, some students also responded with observations about language use at these locations.

One student responded with the observation that bilingual waiters at some restaurants switch from English to Chinese when they are around international students from China. This student also said that many of the Chinese speakers of local restaurants came from southern China and spoke fluent Cantonese and used Mandarin mainly with international students. Other students specified whether the people at these locations spoke the language (i.e. Chinese, Arabic etc.) as their native language or whether they had learned it as their second language. In some cases, the students specified how they had gathered this information. Some proudly mentioned they were friends with the owners or employees of these locations. Others said their friends were friends of the people at these locations. One student explained that a local restaurant had so many international student clients that they created a separate menu with foods they knew the international students would like. In many cases, the instructor responded to their emails with more questions. The students answered with more details and explanations. The nature of the correspondence was one in which they were experts teaching the instructor about the local language community they belonged to. In the instructor's experience, it seemed that this topic was enjoyable for them. For this reason, the instructor decided to build on it in future semesters.

The following semester, the instructor taught another EAL section of English composition. This course focused on close reading, textual analysis, and academic writing. The instructor introduced the map to the class as a resource where they could find speakers of their L1s. The instructor also invited them to participate and offered extra credit for video-interviews of people who owned or worked at any of the locations on the map. In addition to the video-recording, they had to write a translation of the interviewee's comments and a reflection on their experience. The students who participated typically went to locations from the map that were close to the university or close to where they lived. Many conducted interviews at places they frequented, and, in some cases, these were not yet on the map. Some students informed the instructor that they had chosen to conduct an interview at a specific location because they were friends with the employees or owners. Because this was a peripheral activity, the instructor did not set up many constraints regarding the recording equipment they used. All of the video-interviews ended up being recorded on the students' phones with varying degrees of quality. While most of the students gravitated towards speakers of their L1, the instructor was surprised to see that some submitted interviews of people speaking languages the students did not know. The number of video-interviews that were submitted by the end of the semester was unexpected. In the past, students had not participated as much in extra credit assignments. The instructor anticipated that the process of going off-campus, meeting new people, introducing them to the project, and then getting them to agree to a video-recorded interview would be somewhat daunting for a class of first-year students. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that students were able to build on the previously formed friendships to do the interview. Afterwards, some of them went on to explore new places with speakers of languages they did not know.

Other international sections the instructor taught focused more on rhetorical analysis, language variation, and language choice. The learning objectives were to help students develop pragmatic competence in their L2 writing (cf. Ritchey, “[Building the Politeness Repertoire Through the Linguistic Landscape](#)”, this volume). These topics allowed the instructor to incorporate the resource mapping project into daily lesson plans. The instructor and the students discussed the rhetorical purpose and effect of the video-recorded interviews the instructor had accumulated from previous semesters. One student mentioned that immigrant business owners could use these media to promote their business directly to current and future international students, thus allowing their customer base to grow. The discussion also touched on how to make the video-recorded interviews interesting and helpful for both university students and immigrants or tourists. As a group, the class came up with a long list of questions they could ask in each interview to yield information relevant to the target audience. The class discussed other types of locations that could be added to the map, besides restaurants and shops, which people may seek out upon arriving in a new country. For example, many said they wanted to know where one could find a mechanic that could speak their native language. Others said they wanted to find barbers who spoke their native language. They understood the needs of new arrivals. Thus, they know what type of information the project should focus on collecting.

The concepts of linguistic variation and diversity were a common topic of discussion. For example, some of the international students who worked on the project attempted to identify the different varieties of Chinese or Arabic in some of the restaurants or shops they had visited. Most of the Chinese students were aware of the many Chinese varieties but did not see them as distinct languages. Many students referred to them as “accents” while others disagreed and said they were completely different languages. Some students reported having visited different places in China and being unable to understand what the locals were saying to them even though this local variety was officially defined as Chinese with an ‘accent’. This led to interesting comparisons between the varieties in China to other countries, like the U.S., and the discussion turned to the complexity of defining language, accents, and dialects. In one email thread, several students were trying to identify the variety of Arabic spoken by the owner at a local restaurant. Some students said it was Palestinian Arabic, but others said it was Jordanian Arabic. One student explained that they were very similar varieties, but she thought it was Jordanian because in Palestinian Arabic “the last letter in every word [is] pronounced differently” (Female international student, personal communication). This shows the extent to which students’ expertise in these communities made them indispensable collaborators in the data collection process. In addition, this level of analysis showed not only students’ awareness of variation but also their capabilities of describing the systematic differences like sociolinguists. Working on the project collaboratively allowed the instructor and the students to touch on concepts like language variability, the definitions of “language” versus “variety,” and the origins and nature of linguistic change. These

concepts are helpful for students to gain awareness about nondominant forms of language and literacy as well as the hegemonic contexts they exist within.

In short, the instructor's personal experience has shown him that collaborating with international students on a resource mapping activity presents many pedagogical opportunities in the second language writing classroom. It naturally led to discussions of various 'levels' of language, like pronunciation, word-choice, syntax, and meaning. Importantly, the project seemed to be motivating to international students for multiple reasons. First, students seemed to understand that the project had the real-world purpose of unifying newly arrived immigrants, refugees, and international students with their language community. In conversation, several students talked about the type of help or information they got from these locations. For instance, one student from India said he regularly visited a shop owned by speakers of Hindi, Konkani, and Kannada. He said that during one visit, the owner gave him tips on how to find reliable and affordable transportation. Another positive aspect of the assignment was that the students could negotiate and define their own language communities from a place of expertise. It aligned with other studies showing that allowing students to investigate their communities leads to more engagement (Bucholtz et al., 2014). In the instructor's experience, it gave some of the students more confidence to discuss concepts that may otherwise seem abstract. Third, the students understood that their role in the project is crucial. Their knowledge of multilingual spaces in the surrounding communities was not always available to outsiders. To the instructor, it seemed that they had already researched these places informally. When they lacked knowledge of the surrounding communities, they could consult with someone in their circle of friends and find out more. Valuing this knowledge in class discussions allowed the instructor to make the topics relevant to the students' experience. The project started from the assumption that the students' L1 was a resource rather than an obstacle⁵ on their way to develop English competence. A more systematic investigation is needed to measure the precise effect on their academic development.

6 Student Experiences

From the instructor's perspective, many international students involved in the project appeared to enjoy the collaborative mapping of multilingual spaces in the city. It is important, however, to hear from the students themselves. The insights of two international undergraduate students presented below are by no means representative of every student's experience. Nevertheless, their perspective may inform future inquiries on these types of collaborative resource mapping activities. Although the students talked about their experience in conversation during, before, or after class,

⁵The literature about international students in higher education has been shown to follow a deficit perspective specifically around language and culture. See Straker (2016) *International Student Participation in Higher Education*.

we asked them to write about their experience after they had completed the course (see Appendix A for Li's questionnaire and Appendix B for Hamza's). More specifically, each student filled out an open-ended questionnaire via email. This method was chosen because both students had left the city for winter break and were not available to respond to the questions in person. Each questionnaire consisted of 8 open-ended questions designed to elicit responses pertaining to each students' experience and attitudes regarding the project, the class, the English language, and their L1. The questionnaire attempted to capture how participation in the project affected them as students and as new members in the Tucson community.

6.1 *Li's Experience*

Li was an international student from China whose L1 was Mandarin. Her participation in the project started in an English composition course for EAL students. She submitted several video-recorded interviews of local business owners or employees for extra credit. In addition, she commonly made suggestions about how to expand and fund the project. The first video-recorded interview she submitted was of a business where several Chinese speakers worked. The location had not been on the map; it was a place she regularly patronized. The second and third interviews were at locations she had never been to before. Overall, her answers to the questionnaire suggest that the student found her participation in the project to be a positive one.

According to the responses for the questionnaire, Li's participation in the project helped her gain more confidence in her verbal and nonverbal English despite feeling nervous. In response to a question that asked her how she felt about the class and the project at the end of the semester, she said that it made her "more comfortable using English." Her answers also showed that she compared her own English development with the English development of members in the Chinese immigrant community. Interestingly, she noticed how Chinese immigrants had progressed in their acquisition of English and cited this as a source of encouragement in her own experience as a EAL learner: "I felt I was not afraid of talking in English anymore because I talked with the business owner about how they were getting used to this different community and language and I got great advice." She also expressed that she was initially interested in participating because the project seemed "meaningful" to her. During her participation in the project, she managed to discover a location that was meaningful to her as well: a shop that sold traditional Chinese herbs (Fig. 1).

In conversation, Li reported that she had shared her discovery of the Herb Shop location among her social media circles and that other international students expressed an interest in visiting the place as well. Without being prompted to do so, Li took photographs of the location after interviewing the owner.

She photographed a multilingual sign listing out the business's products in Chinese, Pinyin, and English (Fig. 2). This sign reflected not only the linguistic

diversity of the space but also the broad range of imported products available to the Chinese community as well as the broader community of Tucson.

In another interview, she could not communicate with the interviewee because the interviewee only spoke Cantonese. Thus, Li asked her boyfriend, a Cantonese speaker, to translate. This exemplified how she was able to use her own social capital to find out more about a location and then share her discoveries among her friends. Finally, in her answers to the questionnaire, she made the recommendation of translating the video-recorded interviews into English. In other conversations, Li mentioned that she discussed her participation in the project when she began to apply for graduate school. In this way, she was able to use her participation in the project to further her academic progress beyond the English composition classroom.

6.2 *Hamza's Experience*

Hamza was an international student from Saudi Arabia and his first language was Arabic. His participation in the project also began in an English composition course for EAL students. He submitted one video-recorded interview for extra credit and wrote a short description about his experience. The location he chose was one that was not on the map; it was one that he had discovered on his own. It was a restaurant owned by Iraqi immigrants housed in one of the city's malls. He used his phone to video-record the interview of one of the restaurant employees in-situ.

According to Hamza's responses to the questionnaire, participating in the resource mapping project helped him become more comfortable with the instructor. It also allowed him to feel more comfortable in the host community. This is evidenced by his answer to question three where he stated that he felt at home in places where his language was spoken: "I felt like I am in my home because they speak my language and have our food" (Fig. 3).

Besides making him more comfortable, he stated that participating in the project made the course more interesting to him as well, which he associated with his good grade: "I learned a lot honestly and I enjoyed it at the same time because there something different, I mean not the whole lecture was about English, and that made the class more interesting." Like Li, Hamza was drawn to the project because it was meaningful to him. He stated, for instance, that this type of information would be helpful for new arrivals who speak Arabic. He also expressed a desire to share the cultures that he associated with the Arabic language with "non-Arabic" people. In other words, he expressed an interest in using the map as a way to educate locals about his own culture and the culture of the Arabic speaking immigrant communities in Tucson: "First because it is a project that is going to help the new Arabic people when they got here. Second, it is a thing that will lead other people who are not Arabic to know more about our culture." He goes on to mention that he enjoyed hearing people who did not speak fluent Arabic were still greeting people in Arabic at these locations. Finally, he mentions that his visits to these types of locations do not always involve only speaking in Arabic; sometimes English is spoken. Because

Fig. 3 Still frame from Hamza's video-recorded interview with the owner of Kebab King



of this, he points out, visiting these types of locations is useful for practicing English as well.

7 Questionnaire Results and Discussion

The instructor's reflection and students' answers to the questionnaire provide more insight on the pedagogical implications of the LCP in the EAL college-writing context. Reading through these accounts, one sees broad and inter-related themes emerge, such as (1) positive student experiences related to conducting interviews, and (2) shifts and transformations. In both students' accounts, they expressed that they were drawn to the project because it was in some way meaningful to them. Both students reported a positive experience at the locations they investigated. They also said they felt comfortable or, in Hamza's words, 'at home' at these locations. Moreover, one can see the resources, advice, and skills gained through their participation in ethnographic interviews. For instance, in his reflection, the instructor states that one of the students who carried out an ethnographic interview at an Indian grocery store received help in navigating the wider community from a knowledgeable community member. Li explained that her work on this activity was listed prominently on her application for graduate school. Many of the other positive

experiences that students reported were the result of a shift or transformation that came about through their participation in the project.

Another broad theme we identified involved shifts in roles and transformational identity experiences. This theme emerged from statements in the instructor's reflection and the students' answers to the questionnaire that describe or imply instances of change or modification of thought, feelings, or practices. This can refer to shifts in and outside of the classroom. For instance, Li explained that she felt the activity gave her more confidence in her use of English despite having felt nervous prior in the semester, moving her closer to an identity as an English speaker. Hamza also discussed how he felt like he was part of the same community as his interviewees at the Kebab King restaurant. He shifted from an outsider to an insider, from an international student identity to one where he also feels affiliation with the local Arabic speaking community. Additionally, while he stated that he feels a sense of belonging in these spaces, the activity also gave him the opportunity to share his culture with others. In other words, Hamza ultimately went from being an international student to an ambassador of this community. Thus, it is now not just a matter of finding community but also sharing it with others. Li also explained that after conducting the research for the asset mapping activity, she used social media to inform her friends about the local traditional Chinese herb shop. Students also had a chance to shift from student roles to that of teacher and researcher. Students were provided the space to share their knowledge and opportunities to work with their own language community in a researcher role. This shift in role and identity, in our opinion, provided positive outcomes for the students and shifts in their initial feelings and practices regarding the English from the start of the semester. Finally, the instructor's LCP asset mapping activity also transformed the way he approached the project because of the collaboration with his students. They helped inform and orient the project in ways the instructor had not initially considered at the onset. The ability of the LCP asset mapping activity to shift and respond to the needs of each class is what makes this compelling and appropriate for the language classroom.

Finally, another important and positive transformation happened within the classroom. The LCP activities provided an opportunity to bridge students' social and linguistic capital with the goals of the academic literacy classroom. According to the instructor reflection, LCP activities opened classroom discussion in a way that students could talk from their own expertise and daily life observations in describing the language features in local spaces. As a result, students were able to contribute in ways they otherwise would not have. For instance, they contrasted L1 versus L2 accents within these spaces, they discussed phonological features from different regional varieties in trying to identify a local restaurant owner's accent, and they noted the codeswitching practices of waitresses. Additionally, they were excited to share these observations and interpretations of language practices in the surrounding communities. This also prompted classroom discussions about the geographic and political factors surrounding the labeling and categorization of language varieties as well as the ways language changes according to the situation.

The incorporation of the students' experiences, culture, and knowledge about the local language communities into the classroom and classroom activities seemed to

have a positive impact on the students. Li mentioned that she was “nervous because it is my first semester of studying abroad and I have never taken a English class with a native speaker at that time...” As discussed in Sect. 3, international students tend to experience isolation, exclusion, and a sense of not belonging in the college classroom. The current study suggests that students can draw from their social and linguistic capital to explore, become part of, and learn from the local community, expanding their networks beyond the campus. They can also draw from their knowledge and lived experience to reposition themselves as experts within the EAL classroom. Indeed, the LCP activities seemed to produce a positive change in the classroom.

In conclusion, each student saw the project as meaningful and interesting for similar and distinct reasons. Moreover, they both found that participating in the project allowed them to do well academically and improve their English and learn how “people who had already [lived] in Tucson improved their language.” In this way, students can diversify their concept of the way English sounds in the U.S. Additionally, it altered classroom discussions and allowed the students to connect their cultural knowledge, experiences, and observations to the class content. Because this sample only includes two students’ opinions, it cannot be generalized to the experience of others who participate in a project like this. Nevertheless, the discussion above provides a starting point for future investigations on this topic. Future investigations can look at ways to maximize any potential benefits of these activities in the L2 writing classroom. In addition, future studies can look at limitations and problems that may come up with these types of activities.

8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a brief discussion of the social, theoretical, and pedagogical implications of working alongside international students in resource mapping activities like the LCP. The pedagogical implications were explored through the analysis of an instructor’s reflection and participating students’ answers to a questionnaire.

The social implication of this activity is that it normalizes the presence of languages other than English in the city. The project elevates these spaces as resources that are intrinsic to the cultural identity of the region more broadly. By supporting and acknowledging the contributions of these spaces, one can highlight their importance within our communities. Many of them serve as informal community-building resource centers for new arrivals, including international students. Moreover, following findings in research on the role of spaces, social networks, and the mobility of immigrants (Nock, 2009; Garcia, 2005), it can be argued that new arrivals’ L1 can help establish a bond between new arrivals and established members of these ethnic communities. This bond then allows new arrivals to access other forms of capital in these spaces. Additionally, these locations allow people to express their language and cultural practices outside of the home. Ultimately, the project allows

members of these communities to create their own representations of their own communities within a region that has been historically hostile toward non-Anglo communities, their places, and their languages.

The chapter discussed the theoretical and research implications of exploring the linguistic landscape through an asset-based approach (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). By working alongside members of the marginalized language communities, one avoids an extractive approach to the language landscape and allows members of these groups to create their representations of their spaces, services, language, cultural practices, services, and contributions. It provides a glimpse into the way a language and/or the presence of its speakers is embedded in the identity and meanings associated with a particular space. Similarly, it shows how the locations provide a safe and familiar space that normalize otherwise ignored or marginalized cultures and can feel like “home,” to quote Hamza. In this way, the spaces help sustain these cultures, languages, and communities by normalizing the outward expression of one’s culture in domains outside of the home. Thus, approaching the study of the linguistic landscape through an asset mapping approach reveals another layer between community, language, and place.

Lastly, the chapter explored the pedagogical implications of integrating this activity within a first-year writing and composition course for EAL students. The study reported here revealed that it leads to positive experiences and outcomes as well as positive transformation in attitudes, feelings, and practices. First, it provides an opportunity to bridge students’ knowledge, experiences, and goals with the content and goals of the class. In addition, it allows international students to form connections with off-campus communities. As a result of these two outcomes, one can address some of the common challenges that international students face in institutions of higher education in the U.S. Nevertheless, this study is limited to the current context, namely, an urban public university in a diverse southwestern city. It is also limited mainly to the two students who participated in the project and agreed to fill out the questionnaire reported in this chapter. Future studies could create more in-depth questionnaires with more students administered by someone other than their instructor. In addition, future studies could track how the language focused discussions generated by LCP activities can be more systematically connected with the variation within English writing.

The interrelated social, theoretical, and pedagogical implications discussed here can serve as a point of departure for future studies investigating how an asset-mapping approach to linguistic landscape can help EAL college writing students gain a sense of inclusion and succeed in their L2 goals. Parmegiani (2019) mentions that “...valuing the knowledge base students bring to the class is crucial for promoting academic success, especially when this knowledge base is rooted in languages, dialects, discourse, and cultural practices that tend to be discounted by learning institutions and mainstream society” (p. xiv). For this reason, we see the LCP as a classroom activity that connects students’ knowledge with the EAL classroom goals while contributing to the surrounding communities and to our understanding of the linguistic landscapes they inhabit.

Appendices

Appendix A: Li's Student Questionnaire Responses

1. How did you feel at the beginning of the English course?
I felt a little bit nervous because it is my first semester of studying abroad and I have never taken a English class with a native speaker at that time, and I was totally unfamiliar with the APA or MLA format.
2. What made you want to participate in the project?
At first, I think this project is a meaningful project. When we are studying abroad, we do need a place to meet some people or eat some food from our own country.
3. How did you feel visiting and talking to the people at the location?
I felt great. Talking with them is pretty natural because we use our own language. And I found a lot of interesting place because of this project.
4. Does this make you want to explore Tucson more? Please explain.
Yes. Take the [Herb Shop] as an example, I have never expected there was a place selling Chinese traditional herbs. And because of that experience, it made me want to explore more in Tucson.
5. How does this experience make you feel about your language?
I felt great by using my own language with them because we are from same place, and I also improved my English skills by talking about how those people who had already [lived] in Tucson improved their language.
6. How does this experience make you feel about the English language?
I felt I was not afraid of talking in English anymore because I talked with the business owner about how they were getting used to this different community and language and I got great advice.
7. In your opinion, how can participation in the Language Capital Project help students with their English?
I think translating the video can help students improve their language a lot.
8. How did you feel about the class and the project at the end of the semester?
I felt you reached me a lot including both verbal and nonverbal expression skills, and I felt more comfortable using English.

Appendix B: Hamza's Student Questionnaire Responses

1. How did you feel at the beginning of the English course?
Actually it was interesting because it was about analyzing the movies, so basically we watch movies and analyzed themes.
2. What made you want to participate in the project?
First because it is a project that is going to help the new Arabic people when they got here. Second, it is a thing that will lead other people who are not Arabic to know more about our culture

3. How did you feel visiting and talking to the people at the location?
I felt like I am in my home because they speak my language and have our food
4. Does this make you want to explore Tucson more? Please explain.
Yes because I realized that Tucson has multiple cultures
5. How does this experience make you feel about your language?
I feel good because non Arabic when they go there, they tried to speak Arabic and learn some words in Arabic like (ASLAM ALEIKOM) which means (peace upon you)
6. How does this experience make you feel about the English language?
Honestly it is weird because even that the people how work there are Arabic, I still speak English with them and that makes me feel that my English got improved and at some causes it is advance more than my native language
7. In your opinion, how can participation in the Language Capital Project help students with their English?
It helps a lot because students are going to explore and go to the places to participate and actually in most of the places, people speak English so students who are not native, are going to practice English while they are participating
8. How did you feel about the class and the project at the end of the semester?
I learned a lot honestly and I enjoyed it at the same time because there something different, I mean not the whole lecture was about English, and that made the class more interesting. Moreover, I feel that the main reason behinds getting an A in English was participating in the project, because it made me got closer to the teacher and be comfortable with him

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