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Translanguaging in the Linguistic Landscapes (LL) of the U.S./Mexico Border and U.S. Latine Transnational Spaces: Comparing Use and Identification in Sonora, México and Rhode Island, U.S.A.

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Abstract

For a special issue on linguistic landscapes (LL) and bilingualism in the Global South, our paper, like others in this issue, provides a synchronic snapshot and a diachronic consideration of the societal and educational influence of a multilingual LL of a specific Global South context—Sonora, México. However, it also goes beyond this localized analysis to include a LL contrastive analysis with a Global North context—Rhode Island, U.S.A., to ask questions about language ideologies and educational possibilities across similar, yet distinct borderland and transnational spaces. Through a multi-institutional, transnational collaboration, we specifically look at how communities in both contexts enact creative linguistic agency via translanguaging on signs in the LL, which act to both create critical identification and work toward linguistic survivance. Using conceptual tools from systemic functional linguistics (SFL), we analyze the knowledge production and power dynamics created through the textual metafunction of translanguaging in the LL. We compare and contrast societal and educational ideologies towards translanguaging in both contexts and investigate the potential for

leveraging the LL for developing bilingualism, for teaching about culture(s), and for raising critical language awareness among students in schools. We conclude by reflecting upon lessons learned from a Global South borderlands context for the greater understanding of the linguistic practices and educational opportunities for communities of transnational spaces in the Global North. A major takeaway from this work is that translanguaging acts as a powerful and unifying semiotic strategy for agentic identity formation, for linguistic survivance, and for linking geographically distant transnational spaces and histories.

“A language gives the ability of human beings
to do anything within possibility.”
-Grammatical Studies in the
Narragansett Language
(O’Brien, 2009, p. 8)

Introduction

Across Sonora, México, a México/U.S. borderland state and one of Mexico’s largest states, multilingual messages (e.g., Spanish, English, Yaqui, Mayo, etc.) can be found in the linguistic landscape (LL). Over 2,800 miles away in Rhode Island, U.S.A, the country’s smallest state, community members in Latine diasporas (principally from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Guatemala) also produce and are surrounded by a multilingual LL. Important to both contexts are their social, economic, and political histories that influence language use in their physical or diasporic borderlands.

In the context of Sonora, reaching the U.S. border takes as little as a few minutes but as much as ten hours to drive the 500 miles from the southernmost point of the state. Linguistic diversity abounds in Sonora, from beach towns popular with U.S. tourists influencing the LL to areas where the diverse Indigenous populations display signs of quotidian life in the LL. The long history of sharing a border with the U.S. has influenced purposes for language use and decisions for language choices, such as the use of English with Spanish for indexing fashion or sophistication. In Rhode Island, on the other hand, a multitude of diverse Latine diasporas distinguish their identities and vie for societal recognition, separated by visible and invisible neighborhood borders. From the beginning of the Dominican diaspora in the 1950s to the decades old Guatemalan (Spanish & K’iche’) and Cape Verdean Portuguese, the LL tells the story of neighborhoods, marked by rich linguistic and cultural histories.

What connects these two contexts separated by thousands of miles is the curious yet important and purposeful use of translanguaging in the LL for identification, recognition, and linguistic survivance (Wyman, 2013). Through a critical discourse analysis utilizing systemic functional linguistics (SFL), we ask questions about these two contexts: “How is multilingualism enacted similarly and differently in each?” and “In what ways is translanguaging used to vie for recognition, to create a shared identity, or to distinguish distinct identities?” Using the geomapping app Lingscape (https://lingscape.app/; see also Przymus & Mendoza, 2024; Purschke, 2021), researchers created a project-specific map of annotated uploaded pictures of multilingual signs in both localities (Sonora, México and Rhode Island, U.S.A.), focusing specifically on signs that included translanguaging or the use of multiple languages (e.g., Spanish, English, and Indigenous languages such as Yaqui or Mayo in Sonora or K'iche' and Portuguese in Rhode Island) within the same sign. The multinational team met several times to inductively code, analyze, and identify first themes related to language, identity, and power present in the signs. The team then discussed pedagogical implications for critically analyzing the LL with students in both contexts. Implications from this work include enhanced strategies for teaching languages and cultures across both contexts and a greater awareness of the critical use of language in society for community building and for addressing long-standing projects of linguistic colonialism in both contexts.

Finally, we conclude with how translanguaging in the LL of both contexts might be leveraged for raising critical language awareness among youth in schools, specifically focusing on what schools in Latine diasporas in the Global North can learn from how educators and youth view translanguaging in the LL of a Global South context. To gain first-hand knowledge and insight into

these possibilities, we interviewed a long-time researcher and teacher educator of languages and cultures in Sonora, México, about the diachronic (over time) and synchronic (current) views of translanguaging in Mexican schools and to what degree Mexican teachers, students, and community members might potentially use the LL for raising critical language awareness in that specific Global South setting.

Translanguaging and Language Diversity in the Linguistic Landscape

What is Translanguaging?

Translanguaging is a social theory of language that views bi/multilingualism as dynamic practice and understands the linguistic repertoire of bi/multilingual individuals as an integrated system, rather than as separate bounded languages (García & Li, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015). Grounded in sociocultural and critical perspectives on language, translanguaging theory challenges monolingual ideologies by legitimizing dynamic multilingual practice and normalizing the "*multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*" (García, 2011, p. 45, emphasis in original). Recent scholarship has also emphasized that linguistic repertoires extend beyond features of named languages (e.g., English, Spanish, Mandarin) to include diverse registers, dialects, styles, and accents, as well as multimodal and multisensory meaning-making resources (Hawkins & Mori, 2018; Li, 2018; Li & Lee, 2023).

It is also important to emphasize that translanguaging is not only a theory of language–it is a political stance, one oriented toward linguistic and racial equity (Li, 2018). In a recent "manifesto," García and colleagues (2021) argue that translanguaging challenges the premise that "some language practices and ways of life are understood as more academic, standard, or legitimate" (p. 205), elaborating:

> Translanguaging rejects abyssal thinking; it is a way to understand the vast complexity and heterogeneity of language practices, avoiding their conception as problems and their evaluation in the negative terms of the colonial imaginary line that values only those socially situated as being above and making invisible those assigned to being below. (p. 208)

In other words, translanguaging theory aims to subvert policies and practices that reinforce White, middle class, and monolingual forms of languaging as the "norm" by critically interrogating the power structures and ideologies continuing to devalue the lived experiences and linguistic practices of racialized bi/multilinguals and their communities.

Translanguaging in the Linguistic Landscape

While much of translanguaging scholarship has focused on the practice and pedagogy of translanguaging in school spaces (Hamman-Ortiz et al., 2025; King et al., 2024; Tian & King, 2023), translanguaging has also been explored in out-of-school contexts, including a growing body of scholarship on translanguaging in the linguistic landscape. Linguistic landscapes, or "the language surrounding us in forms of words, images, murals, or graffitis in public and/or private spaces" (Solmaz & Przymus, 2021, p. 10), provides a rich site for analyzing how individuals actually use language in their daily lives and for what purposes. Research on translanguaging in the LL of public spaces has explored the dynamic and power-laden expressions of multilingualism around the globe in contexts as diverse as Malaysia (Wang, 2025), Zambia (Costley et al., 2023;

Jimaima & Simungala, 2025), Switzerland (Krompák & Meyer, 2018), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tankosić & Litzenberg, 2021), Spain (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015), and Jordan (Alomoush & Al-Naimat, 2020) among many others.

Gorter and Cenoz (2015) were some of the first to bring together translanguaging and linguistic landscape scholarship, arguing that translanguaging theory advances the study of multilingualism in LL by moving the analysis beyond the scope of single signs and separate languages to, instead, "foreground the co-occurrence of different linguistic forms, signs, and modalities" (p. 54). Building upon this argument, Pennycook (2017) argues that translanguaging can support the analysis of semiotic assemblages. Pennycook points to how the

> notion of assemblages allows for an understanding of how different trajectories of people, semiotic resources and objects meet at particular moments and places and thus helps us to see the importance of things, the consequences of the body, and the significance of place alongside the meanings of linguistic resources. (p. 269)

Linking translanguaging and its appearance in the LL can help understand how individuals index their identities and work towards linguistic survivance by "forging connections to community, place, and local knowledge in the face of rapidly accumulating pressures of language shift/endangerment" (Wyman, 2013, p. 90). In both contexts of our study–the borderlands of Sonoran, México and the Latine diasporic transnational spaces in Rhode Island, U.S.A.--the concept of linguistic survivance via the LL is helpful in understanding how individuals are constantly "negotiating uneven linguistic repertoires and translanguaging in the process of learning and sharing" (p. 91).

Finally, recent research points to how educators can combine LL and translanguaging for language-focused lessons, for intercultural competency development, and for raising critical language awareness among students in schools. Wangdi and Savski (2023) document how asking students to engage in an analysis of their linguistic landscape can prepare "students with the skills needed to navigate diverse, complex discourses about language (critical thinking), as well as fostering an agentive disposition among them (critical language awareness)" (p. 443). Przymus et al. (2025) report on three studies that took place between institutions of higher education in México, Türkiye, and the United States, where pre-service teacher candidates collaborated across cultures to co-create language and culture-focused lesson plans based on pictures in their linguistic landscapes that contained translanguaging messages. Present in the literature above and central to our current paper is how individuals enact identification via the purposeful use of translanguaging in their LL. Indeed, communities who occupy borderland spaces and diasporic transnational spaces often use the linguistic landscape to resist identities as fixed categories, reorienting them, instead, as outcomes of language use. Shifting this focus allows us to understand "identification as an ongoing social and political process" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 376), a process understood through a critical discourse analysis of how humans actually use language when they become authors of their surroundings.

Language Diversity and Representation in the Linguistic Landscapes of Our Study

Sonora, México

Spanish is considered the de facto official language of Mexico because, although the country is constitutionally multilingual and recognizes numerous Indigenous languages, Spanish overwhelmingly dominates in government, education, media, and public life, making it the primary

language for official communication and national identity (Terborg et al., 2006). Mexico is home to 68 Indigenous languages and 364 linguistic variants, placing it among the ten countries with the greatest linguistic and cultural diversity worldwide; the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms that these languages are part of the nation's cultural and linguistic heritage (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2022). Despite this recognition, English has gained prominence across Mexico; it is taught in many private schools for children and adults and included in public education through the national curriculum of the Secretary of Education, beginning formally in elementary school around age six. Since the 1990s, the Intercultural Bilingual Education Model has sought to integrate, support, and sustain Indigenous languages (Acevedo et al., 2020). However, these efforts have often been overshadowed by the growing demand for English as a foreign language, which has diverted instructional time, focus, and value away from Indigenous language education (Przymus et al., 2019). This trend is particularly evident in Mexico–U.S. border states such as Sonora, where English proficiency is perceived as a key to economic and social mobility.

When analyzing language use in Sonora, one must take into consideration the Mexican state's proximity to the United States, specifically the U.S. state of Arizona. The two international states share a border that is approximately 375 miles long, historically porous in nature, and vital to the economy of both states. Although current (2025) U.S. administration policies have severely restricted the nature of transnational flow, it is estimated that over $35 billion in goods flows across this border annually (Pima County Government, 2025). This has resulted in a deep cross-linguistic influence on language use on both sides of the border. In Sonora, "there are many words that come from English. In Sonora, people say things like "parquearse" to say to park the car, instead of the more Castilian, "estacionarse" or "las brecas" for the brakes instead of "los frenos" (Eisele, 2021). Language in Sonora is also heavily influenced by Indigenous words from the Yaqui, Mayo, Pima, Seri, O'odham, and Opata Indigenous languages. Banámichi, Baviácora, Bacadéhuachi, Bacerac, Bavispe are all town and natural places that carry on their original Opata language names (Eisele, 2021). An interesting example is the word "bato" for the English equivalent "guy" or "dude," but "according to some linguists, 'bato' comes from the Yoeme-Yaqui, 'batoi' or 'baptized,' one who has become Christian" (Eisele, 2021).

Although Sonora has a long history of mixing and combining linguistic features from multiple named languages found in the region, purposefully and officially doing so (e.g., translanguaging) in schools may not be so accepted. Studies analyzing the official language policies and practices of schools in the México/U.S. borderlands indicate strict one-language-at-a-time policies and pedagogies that discourage translanguaging. Additionally, in the case of U.S. borderland institutions, these policies and practices often privilege English over Spanish by listing English text over Spanish translations on websites, not having a Spanish translation, or non-working links to Spanish language pages (Bernardo-Hinesley & Arias Álvarez, 2025). Writing about the Mexican English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, Asomoza et al. (2026) state that "although the benefits of drawing on the resources available in one's linguistic repertoire are clear, there is still controversy about it especially in contexts of English language teaching, where it has been traditionally believed that English must be the only language spoken inside the classroom" (p. 164). Notwithstanding these ideologies at school, the presence of translanguaging in the LL of Sonora is a practice that makes up much of the quotidian experiences and surroundings of Sonoran and México/U.S. borderland inhabitants (Escandón, 2019). In looking specifically at the translanguaging in the LL of Northern México borderland regions, Escandón (2019) found that the linguistic landscape in this region "evidences contact between English and Spanish, which gives

form to lexical creativity and hybrid forms that also reflect social practices" (p. 4). An example of lexical creativity and hybrid forms is seen in Image 1 of the menu of a restaurant in Hermosillo, Sonora's capital city.

Image 1

Menu of Restaurant in Plaza Quiroga, Hermosillo, Sonora, México

The influence of Spanish/English contact is evident in the names of the menu offerings (e.g., Kfreeze, Rockaccino, Smoothies, Brownie, etc.). Although clear examples of translanguaging, one might also consider that the daily influence of borderland language contact may create lexical items that have simply become part of the regional language, rather than purposeful language play combinations of Spanish and English. Both explanations for this lexical creativity are likely true.

In continuation, we compare the above use and ideology of translanguaging in society and schools in Sonora, México with use and ideologies in Rhode Island, U.S.A. Although separated by thousands of miles, the presence of dominant societal linguistic ideologies may be similar and may exist among the same need for communities to play with language use for distinguishing themselves from others and for curating desired identities.

Rhode Island, United States of America

For a state that is only 48 miles from north to south and 37 miles from east to west, Rhode Island has a rich history of linguistic and cultural diversity. Some of the earliest linguistic diversity in Rhode Island stems from the Narragansett Indian Tribe, who are descendants of the aboriginal people and who have inhabited the region for over 30,000 years (Narragansett Indian Tribe, 2025). The Narragansett tribe is one of the largest tribes in the New England region of the United States. The Narragansett language was nearly eradicated, but after gaining federal recognition in 1983,

tribe members led a revival through political advocacy and educational outreach (Hall, 2020). Although this paper is about comparing and contrasting the use of translanguaging in the LL of México (Sonora) and U.S. (Rhode Island) Latine borderland and transnational spaces, we provide this diachronic (throughout time) and synchronic (current day) introduction to the Narragansett language because 1) it is an Indigenous language like those that have influenced synchronic language use in the Global South, such as the Spanish language and language use in Sonora[1] and 2) the Narragansett language is physically displayed throughout the State of Rhode Island in the names of towns, rivers, and schools (Parsons, 2006). An example of this is the historic Pawtuxet Village (est. 1638), which gets its name from the Narragansett word for "little falls," and sits on the Pawtuxet River, which flows into the Narragansett Bay (see Image 2).

Image 2

Welcome Sign to the Historic Pawtuxet Village

An additional motivation for this treatise of Rhode Island's linguistic landscape is to raise awareness of the state's linguistic and cultural diversity. We might also argue that when asked about the modern-day linguistic and cultural diversity in Rhode Island, many outside of the state would not know how diverse the state is today,[2] and even among those who live in Rhode Island, few might mention the Narragansett peoples and language as part of today's cultural and linguistic diversity. With this paper, we address both the under told story of Rhode Island's Latine diversity and language use in the LL and the inattentional blindness to the actual use of the Narragansett language.

Although geographically the smallest state in the United States and 45th out of 50 in population, over 100 languages are spoken in Rhode Island, and the state is experiencing the fastest growth of multilingual learners in the United States. In fact, between 2010 and 2020, Rhode Island experienced the fastest growth of multilingual learners (MLLs) population in the United States

[1] See above discussion of the influence of various Indigenous languages on modern day Spanish in Sonora, México. Also, it can be noted that the distinct forms of Spanish spoken today in Rhode Island, such as Dominican and Guatemalan Spanish, also have been influenced by Indigenous peoples and their languages (e.g., Taíno and other Arawakan words in Dominican Spanish and Guatemala Spanish influenced by K'iche' and other Mayan languages).

[2] Anecdotally, several authors have experienced the surprise of people from other parts of the country upon learning of the linguistic and cultural diversity of Rhode Island.

(Rhode Island Department of Education, 2024). Out of over 20,000 cities in the United States, Rhode Island's capital, Providence, ranks 25th in cultural diversity and 21st in linguistic diversity, with other RI cities also in the top 50 (Pawtucket, 44th) and top 100 (Woonsocket, 77th) (McCann, 2025; see also Appendix A for 2025 Census Bureau chart of most commonly used languages other than English in Rhode Island, indicating Spanish at 57.5%).

A zoomed in view of languages spoken by neighborhood in Rhode Island's capital, Providence, illustrates that among Spanish-speakers, Dominican (34%) and Guatemalan (17%) are the two leading linguistic groups. Pulled from the United States Census Bureau American Community Survey, Image 3 shows Providence neighborhood borders and the percentage of individuals who were born outside of the U.S. by country of origin. And although helpful in illustrating the linguistic and cultural diversity of the city, our own geomapping documentation of the LL demonstrates even a greater presence of Spanish and Portuguese in Eastside neighborhoods where the map shows China as the only outside the U.S. country of origin.

Image 3

U.S. Census American Community Survey Map of Providence, Rhode Island Neighborhood Residents' Countries of Origin

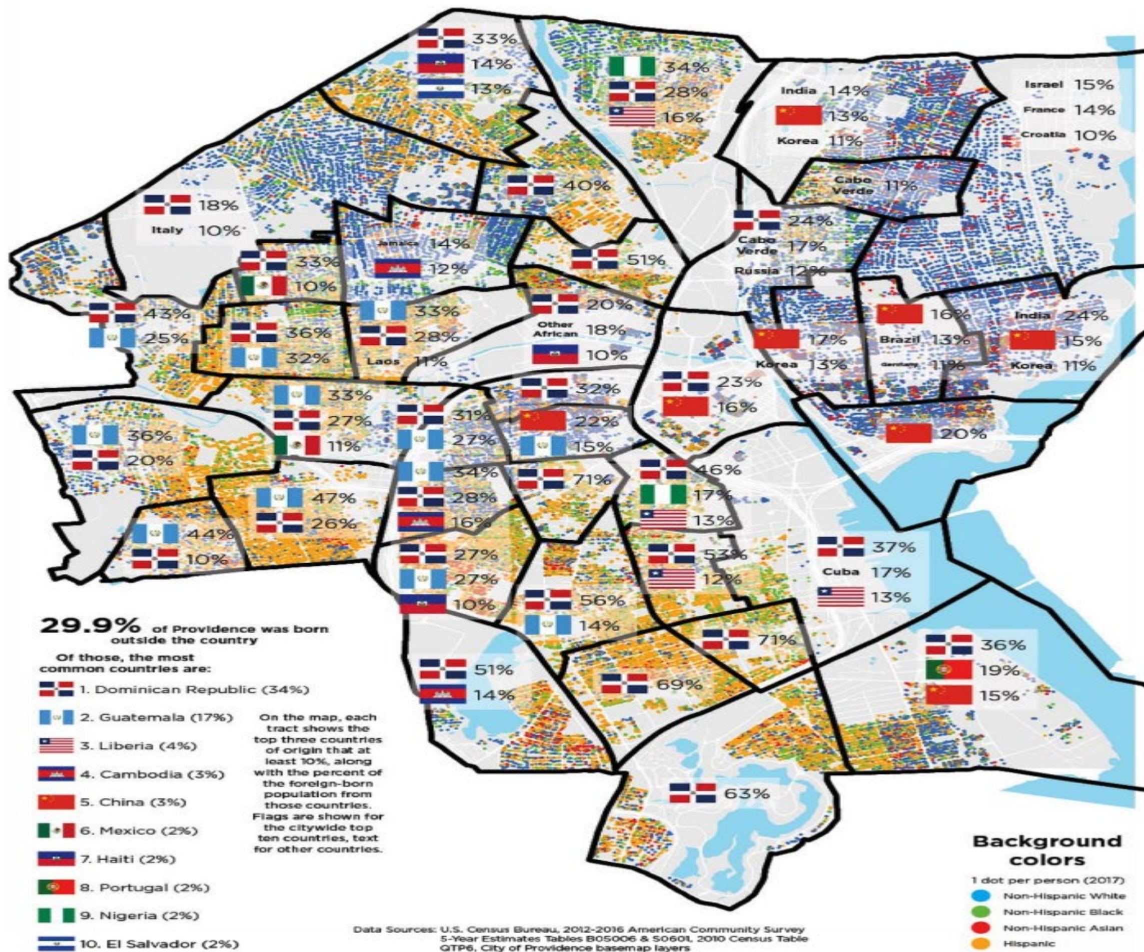


Fig. 2: Neighborhood-level Countries of Origin

Map of Providence detailing most prevalent countries of origin per census tract and city-wide, per the latest American Community Survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau

Of great interest to us is understanding how individuals use language—specifically how they translanguage—in the LL of these neighborhoods to create distinct recognition and identification in these transnational spaces. In other words, similar to how business owners in Hermosillo, Sonora creatively use Spanglish for menu items to create a borderland sense of belonging and identity, how might Dominicans enact authorial agency in language use to demarcate their Providence, Rhode Island neighborhoods in ways that resist categories of fixed identities, raise their recognition as a unique linguistic and ethnic group in Rhode Island, and strive toward Dominican linguistic survivance? An example of translanguaging to purposefully perform a specific kind of Spanish can be seen in Image 4. Taken on a street in the majority Dominican neighborhood of Washington Park, Providence, Rhode Island, this photo shows a memorial to Josefina "Doña Fefa" Rosario, widely considered to be one of the first Dominicans to settle in Rhode Island. The Nuestras Raices Latino Oral History Project tells the story of how Doña Fefa moved to Providence from New York in the 1950s, established a business, and helped other Dominicans establish lives in Rhode Island (https://nuestrasraicesri.net/DonaFefa1.html). Beyond the claim to space in Image 5, AQUI ME QUEDO "THIS IS WHERE I WILL STAY," we raise awareness to two more linguistic phenomena, visible in the photo. First, WELCOME TO LA BROÁ is a wonderful example of translanguaging, as the sentence begins with English and ends with Spanish. And secondly, LA BROÁ is the Spanish equivalent of the name of the street (Broad Street) where the sign is located. To most the dropping of the /d/ from the English street name "Broad" to "Broá" may be considered a more phonologically Spanish word or simply just easier to pronounce in Spanish. However, linguists have also identified that Dominican Spanish, specifically, has a high occurrence of the weakening and full elision of final consonants, which may more accurately explain how "Broad" became "Broá" and how this language use uniquely indexes this neighborhood as Dominican.

Image 4

Image Taken in the Dominican Neighborhood of Washington Park, Providence, Rhode Island, That Remembers and Honors Doña Fefa, the Recognized "Mother" of Rhode Island Dominicans.

What follows is a description of the two contexts of this linguistic consideration and comparison of translanguaging in the Global South and equivalent transnational spaces in the Global North. We describe how we collected and documented examples of translanguaging in the LL of each context; how we utilize SFL as an innovative discourse analysis tool for understanding language use, knowledge production, and resulting group and individual identification in the LL; and we share how we learned about the linguistic ideologies surrounding translanguaging and schooling in both contexts, through a review of official educational documents in Rhode Island and an interview of a Sonoran educational researcher and teacher educator. We conclude the paper with potential implications for using the LL, specifically for highlighting translanguaging practices in the LL, for teaching about languages and cultures in schools, and for raising critical language awareness among students. Taken holistically, the analysis of translanguaging in two contexts of borderland and transnational spaces and review of translanguaging ideologies across both localities allows us to consider the following research questions:

(1) In what ways is translanguaging used in the linguistic landscape of Sonora, México for community recognition, critical identification, and linguistic survivance that are different from and similar to translanguaging in the linguistic landscape of Latine diasporic transnational spaces in Rhode Island, U.S.A.?
(2) In what ways might educators in both contexts leverage the linguistic landscape and examples of quotidian multilingual language use in the linguistic landscape as a learning tool for developing bilingualism, teaching about other cultures, and raising critical language awareness among youth in schools?

Methods

Contexts

This study represents a transnational (México/U.S.A.) and multi-institutional (La Universidad de Sonora and the University of Rhode Island) collaboration. Although the Mexican state of Sonora is approximately 45 times larger than the U.S. state of Rhode Island, both states provide a similar linguistic diversity (Spanish, English, and Indigenous language) to compare. Furthermore, through intimate knowledge of both contexts, the research team identified that due to the borderland context of Sonora, México and the multiple and unique ethnic and linguistic diasporic neighborhoods and transnational spaces in Rhode Island, how individuals act in their respective places may also be something to compare and contrast. Finally, both institutions are the major public research universities of their respective states, and several researchers from both universities had previously interacted together on a collaborative online international learning (COIL) project, which, in turn, facilitated this current project.

Researchers' Positionalities

Author 1 is a white, Spanish-English bilingual researcher from the United States who has lived and worked in three different Mexican states and the Dominican Republic, and is currently an associate professor of TESOL/bilingual dual-language education at the University of Rhode Island. Author 2, originally from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, México, has lived the past 32 years in Sonora and is a full professor of English Language Teaching at the Universidad de Sonora, in Hermosillo, Sonora, México. Author 3 is a white, educational researcher who specializes in designing and evaluating

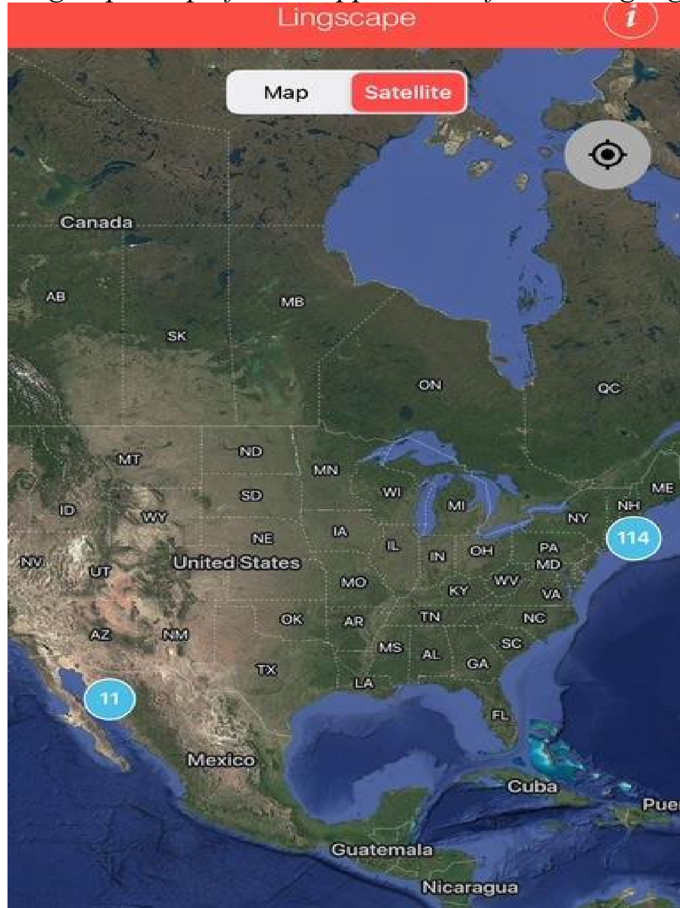
language programs and policies; she is a monolingual English speaker and former teacher and administrator from the United States. Author 4 is a white, bilingual (English/Spanish) researcher from the United States with experience teaching or studying in Chile, Spain, Ecuador, Uganda, and Brazil and is an assistant professor of TESOL and bilingual education at the University of Rhode Island. Finally, Author 5 is a white, applied linguist and former teacher from the United States, who has lived as a student and as a teacher in France and Italy, respectively; she speaks English and French and is currently an assistant professor of TESOL/bilingual dual-language education at the University of Rhode Island. Author 1 and Author 2 met each other 15 years ago, while studying at the same doctoral program at a major U.S. university. After reconnecting several years ago at a conference in México, they have collaborated multiple times, connecting their students via COIL projects that focus on language use in the LL. These experiences facilitated this current study.

Data Collection

Date collection consisted of three primary methods: 1) purposeful sampling of evidence of translanguaging in the LL of Sonora, México and Rhode Island, U.S.A.; 2) review of official educational policy regarding translanguaging in Rhode Island, U.S.A.; and 3) an interview with Author 2 regarding translanguaging in educational spaces in Sonora, México. Author 1 contacted the University of Luxembourg to request a project specific login and password for the geomapping app Lingscape in order to take pictures of translanguaging in both contexts and document this use on the project specific map. Purposeful sampling for this LL comparison of translanguaging in the LL of two contexts were drawn from the larger corpus of Lingscape documentation of the whole multilingual LL of Rhode Island, with the addition of targeted documentation of translanguaging in Sonora. Signs were collected via research teams that included faculty and graduate students from both institutions and uploaded to the same Lingscape research map. All environmental print and authorship (e.g., private, governmental, etc.) were considered signs, and the only inclusion criteria was the existence of translanguaging on the sign. Image 5 shows a map of North America and illustrates geomapped pins of photos across the transnational contexts.

Image 5

Lingscape Map of Geomapped Pins of Translanguaging Photos in Sonora and Rhode Island



In order to provide context for the potential educational use of analyzing translanguaging in the LL, Author 3 conducted a critical review of educational policy in Rhode Island to gauge mention, framing, and value of the concept of translanguaging in the official educational landscape of Rhode Island. In order to be able to compare how translanguaging is viewed in the official educational landscape of Sonora, the research team interviewed Migdalia Rodríguez (Author 2), who has lived much of her life in Sonora and is an applied linguistics researcher and professor at the University of Sonora. The decision to add an "expert/local" perspective, via the interview with Dr. Rodríguez, originated from the realization that although we provide a historical contextualization of each context, what we actually are analyzing is a synchronic view of the LL. Both the policy analysis of Rhode Island's educational landscape and the expert, "on the ground" interview with Dr. Rodríguez add a diachronic depth to our overall analysis. Interview questions sought a historical and modern-day view on translanguaging across multiple named languages (e.g., Spanish, English, Yaqui, Mayo, etc.) to trends over the past 5-10 years of translanguaging in the LL of Sonora and to potential pedagogical implications for leveraging the LL and raising critical language awareness about translanguaging, power, identity, and learning in schools. Qualitative analysis of Dr. Rodríguez's interview responses fell within the same iterative process of coding and theme analysis as the corpus of signs in order to triangulate her specialized, local, and lived knowledge with the systemic functional linguistics' analysis of the photographed signs.

Data Analysis: Applying Systemic Functional Linguistics to Analysis of Linguistic Landscapes
Systemic functional linguistics, originally developed by Michael Halliday (1975, 1978, 1994), is a social-semiotic view of language which holds the following claims: "1. that language use is functional; 2. that its function is to make meanings; 3. that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged; 4. that the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meaning by choosing" (Eggins, 2004, p. 3). Within this framework, language is understood to be situated, dynamic, and responsive to interlocutors, context, and purpose (Grosjean, 1982; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Language evolves fluidly in given historical, social, and political contexts (Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1993, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Martin 2009) and is used in nested, purposeful interactions, or socially defined and enacted genres (Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1993, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin 2009). This flexible, transferable framework shifts across languages, cultural contexts, and contexts of interactions which enables researchers to explore translanguaging across contexts (e.g., linguistic landscapes) through this lens. In fact, one of the reasons for the development of SFL was to oppose and reinvent traditional, structural views of linguistics that could result in linguicism (Christie, 2007; Halliday et al., 1964; Harman & Khoate, 2018; Hasan, 1996).

In order to illuminate the multiple meanings, present within a text, SFL proposes three metafunctions of communication: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Eggins, 2004). The *ideational metafunction* conveys the ideas expressed within a text (the "field"). Specifically, the topic of the text includes the what, who, where, when, and under what circumstances the text or interaction is occurring. The *interpersonal metafunction* conveys information about the relationship, frequency of contact, and power dynamics between interlocutors (the "tenor"). Finally, the *textual metafunction* communicates how a text is structured and held together by cohesion (within the text) and coherence (within the context of use) (the "mode").

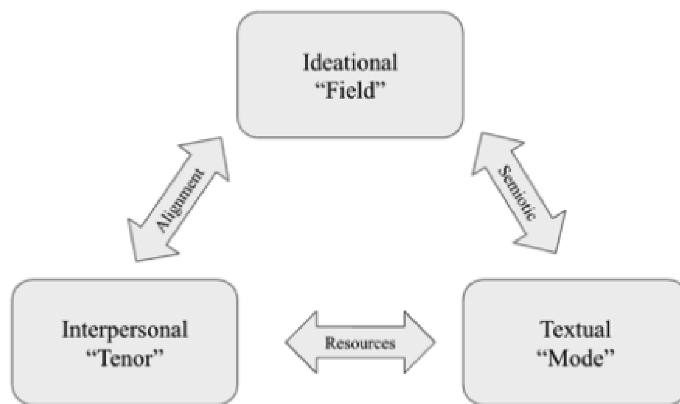
As an example of how these metafunctions could be applied to understanding the meaning(s) produced through translanguaging in the LL, we can use Image 6 to show how SFL can help uncover all that is taking place in the discourse of a multimodal sign when semiotic resources are aligned. Starting with the textual metafunction from the decision to use both English and Spanish in the Mexican context, to the location of the English (Pool Factory) on top of the Spanish, to the colors (shade of blue) to index the business name, to the angles and flow of the text to index water, and to the curved figure in the top right-hand corner, so many textual semiotic decisions are present in this one photo and all are involved in meaning-making; in fact, the information conveyed textually is semiotically dense (Norris, 2004) and cohesive in conveying a message of water. On a basic level, these textual decisions result in creating multiple messages of knowledge (ideational metafunction)—simply the name, type, hours, etc., of the business—but also on a more analytical level, an ideational message that this business is multinational and a business for multilingual clientele. Even the Facebook profile conveys a multinational identity through a translanguaged moniker. Finally, this informs the interpersonal metafunction or the metafunction that helps explain the intended audience and the power dynamics present among people who interact with this sign. The upscale, global, multilingual, multinational tenor created via the semiotic decisions (e.g., translanguaging across multiple named languages) curates a purposeful relationship among those who might shop at this business both in-person locally and online globally. Taken together, all three of these metafunctions work in alignment to reify and facilitate future semiotic interactions

associated with this sign. In other words, those individuals whose identities are confirmed via their interaction with this sign may indeed translanguage (textual metafunction) themselves at this locale, creating more knowledge (ideational metafunction) that this is a transnational space and resulting in more bilingual communicative interactions among individuals who identify with an identity of being multilingual and transnational (interpersonal metafunction).

Image 6

Swimming Pool Equipment Store, Hermosillo, Sonora, México and a Systemic Functional Linguistic Application of This Multilingual Sign (Adapted From Przymus & Mendoza, 2024)

Knowledge/Message:
A bilingual pool supply store



Identity/Audience:
Bilingual, global, educated upscale, people shop here

Use/Form:
Translanguaging via English language name

In order to identify the textual metafunctions (semiotic modes) to insert into our SFL analyses and to discuss their resulting cyclical influence on the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions in each context, researchers met in-person, on Zoom, and over live chat via WhatsApp to code the data, identify themes, and process each theme through the triadic multimodal SFL model above weekly throughout October-November 2025. Intercoder reliability reached nearly 100%, with disagreements largely solved by deferring to the expert, lived, and professional experiences of the researchers' local contexts (e.g., Dr. Rodríguez' perspective of sign meanings in Sonora, México).

Our application of SFL is akin to how Harman and Khote (2018) developed critical systemic functional linguistic (CSFL) praxis in order to explore the interplay of meaning within registers in multilingual contexts. This interplay of meaning can be described as responsive and dynamic repertoires that leverage different named languages and modalities (Matthiessen, 2018; Matthiessen et al., 2008) in a similar manner to translanguaging (García, 2009). Within CSFL, translanguaging can be viewed as the repertoire multilingual speakers use to navigate across registers to express multiple meanings as they shift communicative style based on purpose, context, and interlocutor. We believe our application of SFL for analyzing and interpreting translanguaging in the LL to be a continuation of this critical semiotic analysis and an innovative and needed critical methodological tool for future LL research.

Results

Sonora, México

An Analysis of the Multilingual Linguistic Landscape

Due to its proximity to the U.S. border, the use of English and combinations of English and Spanish together is very common on signs in the linguistic landscape of Sonora, México. As will become evident through the interview below with Dr. Migdalia Rodríguez (Author 2), English has become a quotidian part of Sonoran life and a ubiquitous part of the linguistic landscape. The research team in Sonora documented a purposeful sampling of translanguaging with English and Spanish, mostly on shop signs in the capital city of Hermosillo. We will provide a systemic functional linguistics analysis of textual use, ideational knowledge production, and interpersonal power dynamics of a few of these signs below to uncover possible motivations for this hybrid language practice and resulting meaning making.

Before exploring the use of English and Spanish in the capital city, it is important to note that although Indigenous languages still exist in use in Sonora (and Indigenous language revitalization efforts are in place), finding these languages (e.g., Yaqui, Mayo) written and represented in the linguistic landscape is much harder, as they are almost non-existent in urban centers. In more rural northern or southern parts of Sonora, however, these languages can be found in the linguistic landscape and soundscape. Image 7 comes from the site of Namakasia Yaqui community radio in the South of Sonora (Vícam, Sonora), where the language is sustained through radio programming, and Image 8 shows a flag representing the Yoreme, Mayo Indigenous group, also in the South of Sonora (around Álamos, Sonora).

Image 7

Banner at Namakasia Yaqui Community Radio Station in Vícam, Sonora, México

Image 8

Flags Representing the Yoreme, Mayo Tribe in Southern Sonora

Although there is evidence of the above Indigenous languages in the linguistic landscape of Sonora, the geographical closeness with the U.S. explains why the majority of multilingual signs are in English and a combination of English and Spanish. And although this geographical relationship clearly adds to motivation for this multilingual authorship, a closer inspection of the practice of translanguaging reveals an additional motivation for translanguaging with Spanish and English: the reverse indexicality of English. Reverse indexicality is a semiotic process by which individuals can position themselves with imagined and desired identities (e.g., global, transnational, diverse, upscale, educated, etc.) by claiming spaces through linguistic signs and use that might not

otherwise be recognized as local or familiar to their daily surroundings (Inoue, 2006; Weidman, 2014). Chinatowns in major cities around the world are examples of this, as although the Mandarin language might not be readily visible in, for example, the streets of Melbourne, one can be transported to a foreign, distant place via all of the Chinese language signs in the Melbourne Chinatown. Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) explain how reverse indexicality allows people to make "the foreign and distant, familiar and present" (p. 8). Przymus (2017) relates reverse indexicality to linguistic landscape research by documenting how wealthy, white, and mostly monolingual English-speaking residents of Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A. overwhelmingly (85%) give their gated communities and street signs Spanish language names as a way of indexing global, educated, and high-class lives and to claim diverse, multilingual identities.

Across the border from Tucson, Arizona, the opposite is true. Instead of the wealthy using Spanish to index a desired identity, shop owners in Hermosillo use English in isolation or in combination with Spanish as indicators and tokens of the upscale, the high class, the beauty, the wealth, and the perception of health consciousness and the highly educated. Examples of this reverse indexicality abound. Take for example Image 9, a sign from "Jung Real Food," a juice bar and health food restaurant chain in Hermosillo. Beyond the English in the name of the restaurant, English is leveraged all throughout the sign in Image 9 to index being "eco-friendly," "gluten free," "detox," and for claiming that this business offers "superfoods." This kind of language use to establish a desired identity continues beyond the traditional linguistic landscape to the digital linguistic landscape as Instagram posts and videos also contain frequent translanguaging (see Jung Real Food for the use of English words, such as "healthy," "keto friendly," and for images of ice cream called "Sweet Zero").

Image 9

Advertisement for Jung Real Food Juice Bar and Health Food Restaurant Chain in Sonora, México

Images 10 and 11 also provide evidence of this specific reverse indexicality motivation for translanguaging in the linguistic landscape of Sonora, México.

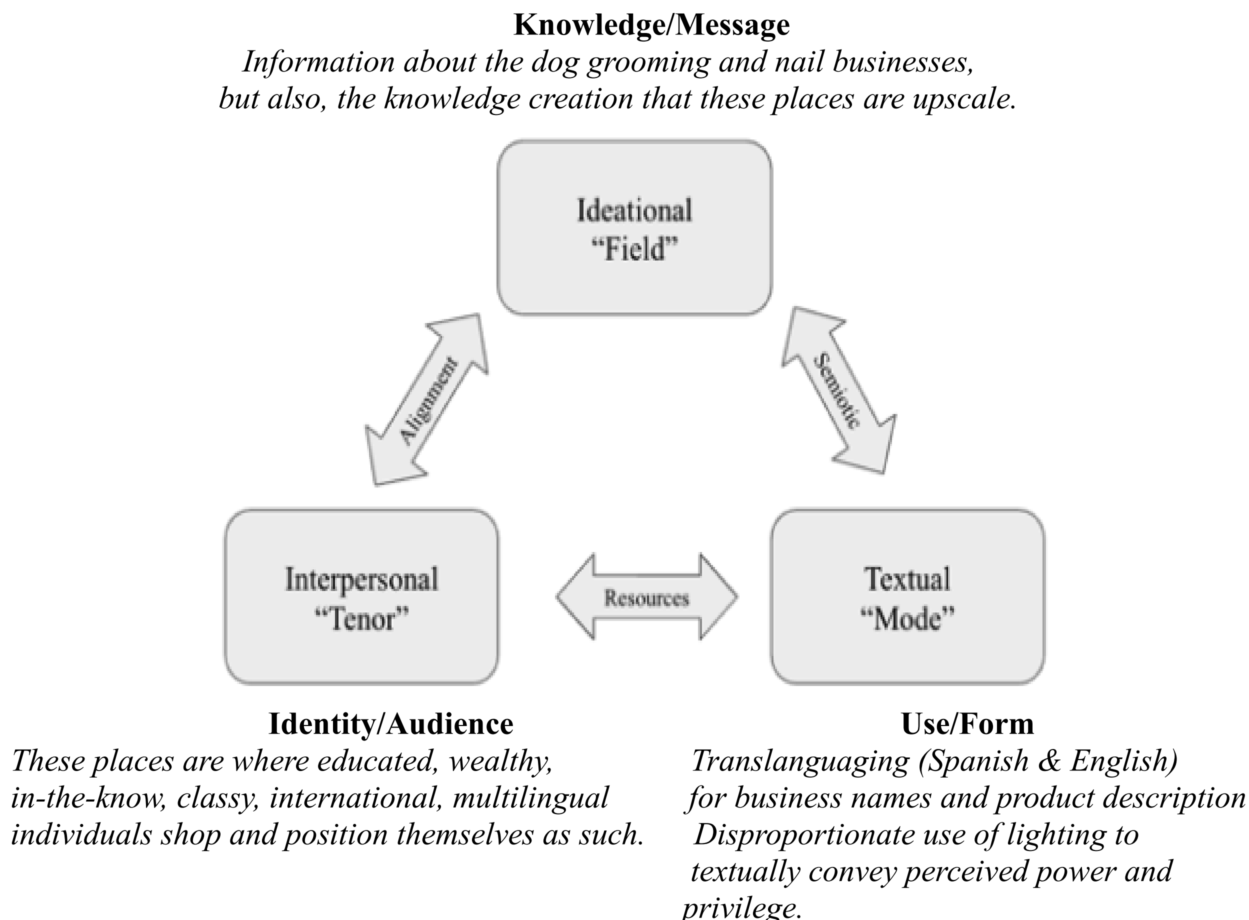
Image 10
"Special Dog's" Canine Salon

Image 11
"Naily Bar" Nail Salon

Applying a systemic functional linguistics analysis (Image 12) to the above two photos, we can again see how the specific use and organization of the text on these signs (textual metafunction) and decisions to translanguage (e.g., Special Dog's Salón Canino; Naily Bar Uñas & Café) go beyond just communicating knowledge about the businesses (ideational metafunction) to also index and claim a certain identity that in turn produces a power dynamic (interpersonal metafunction) among the people who shop at these places or use their services. Of particular note, the breed of dog chosen (Poodle) is often associated with wealth and "high class" and only the English words and the dog silhouette in the Special Dog's Salón Canino sign are lit (textual metafunction); this chosen image and lighting effect emphasize the message of power and prestige associated with the English words.

Image 12

Systemic Functional Linguistics Application to Signs in the Linguistic Landscape of Sonora, México



Interview with Dr. Migdalia Elizabeth Rodríguez Rosales

In order to cross reference our above analysis of the multilingual linguistic landscape of Sonora, México, with a local, human perspective, what follows is an interview with Dr. Migdalia Rodríguez (Author 2), who was born in the Mexican border state of Nuevo Leon, but she has lived for the last 32 years in Sonora, México and is currently a Full Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at La Universidad de Sonora, in Hermosillo. Beyond giving her perspective on the historical and modern-day ideologies around translanguaging, Dr. Rodríguez also adds to her positional/reflexive context of this research via her thoughts on the potential for educators in Sonora to leverage the linguistic landscape and especially translanguaging signs for developing bilingualism, learning about other cultures, and for raising critical language awareness among students in schools.

Q1. How would you describe the historical and modern-day perceptions of mixing named languages (Spanish, English, Yaqui, Mayo, etc.), or translanguaging, in Sonora, México?

Dr. Rodríguez: Historically, Sonora has been a Spanish-dominant region with indigenous languages like Yaqui, Mayo and Seri often marginalized or confined to specific communities. Although currently… I perceive that more people are interested in revitalizing those languages and

promoting respect, for example, by having the official elementary school textbooks in those languages for some communities (https://libros.conaliteg.gob.mx/indigena_primaria.html).

English has mainly entered through cross-border trade and tourism, but for decades, mixing languages was seen as informal or even stigmatized—associated with lack of education or "Spanglish" stereotypes. People would think the ones speaking English were showing off or wanted to look or sound better than the ones who didn't know the language. This reminds me that before the word "Pocho" had more of a negative connotation, *pocho* was a word for people who don't speak Spanish well who live in the U.S. and have Mexican parents. When you are "pocho" you use both languages because you don't know the words or you forget them and that is why you talk in Spanglish.

I think that nowadays, the perception of knowing English has changed and somebody who understands and speaks that language is seen as someone educated, with more opportunities, or who is "in" and following trends. Perhaps that is one reason why mixing languages is not seen necessarily as bad as before. Also, the massive use of social media has young Mexican speakers using trendy phrases in English—for example, cringe, cool, lit, chill, aesthetic, troll, vibe, low key, FOMO, etc. These speakers are not necessarily very proficient in English; however, they understand the meaning and use it, accordingly, mixing [the words] with Spanish. Also, there are other words or phrases now more common that might even be considered anglicisms (I'd have to check that): home office, coffee break, influencer, toppings, ketchup, etc.

So, I would say that modern perception has changed. Globalization and U.S. proximity have normalized English in business, education, and technology, and social media have helped popularize pop culture. Thus, I think that translanguaging is increasingly viewed as a resource rather than a deficiency, especially in academic and bilingual education contexts. Indigenous language revitalization movements have gained visibility, though they remain less mainstream. At least, I perceive more respect and willingness to do something about not losing this heritage.

Q2. Have you witnessed a change over the past 5-10 years in the places (e.g., businesses) that have started to translanguage on their signage or in the way that these places have used more than one language on signs?

Dr. Rodríguez: Yes, there's been a noticeable change in Hermosillo over the past 5–10 years: Restaurants, coffee shops, wellness, beauty service, and gyms often use English for branding (e.g., "Coffee Break," "Fit Zone," "Nails," Spa, Barber, etc.) alongside Spanish descriptions.
Shopping malls and franchises mix English and Spanish on signage ("Sale / Rebajas").
Local businesses adopt English for prestige or trendiness, while still catering to Spanish speakers.

Asking around I confirmed that there's still this perception that English is a language of status and is used more and more for marketing appeal. In a shopping plaza called "Andenes" here in Hermosillo, for example, you can find that many businesses have its name in English:

- House of Hype (tennis shoes) https://www.instagram.com/houseofhypemx/?hl=en
- Suzies Cookies (galletas) https://www.instagram.com/suziscookies/?hl=en
- Bliss Frozen Yogurt (nieve de yogurt) https://www.instagram.com/bliss.frozenyogurt/?hl=en
- City Salads https://www.instagram.com/citysalads_andenes/
- JC Hats (JC means Jesús Castro) https://jchats.mx/
- Patricia: Lashes & Brows https://www.instagram.com/patricia_hmo/?hl=en

Another shopping plaza near the one just mentioned also has businesses with English names:

- Wrap It https://www.instagram.com/wrapit_/
- Pancake Factory https://www.instagram.com/pancakefactorymx/
- Boba Drinks https://www.instagram.com/ilovebobadrinks/

Nearby, in Plaza Paseo 111 Col. Santa Fe, 83249 in Hermosillo, Sonora, we can find more stores with a name in English or English and Spanish:

- Sunny Smile Clínica Dental https://www.instagram.com/sunnysmile.hmo/
- Littlegirls Dress Shop & Boys https://www.instagram.com/littlegirlsdressshop/
- Jung Real Food https://www.facebook.com/JungEcotienda/

Not only English is in the names but also inside the stores. Some descriptions of products can be observed; in Jung, for example, we can find words such as "healthy," "gluten-free," "detox," etc. These examples reflect a growing linguistic hybridity in public spaces, probably signaling a more global identity and marketing appeal. Indigenous languages are rarely seen in urban signage, though cultural festivals sometimes include them.

Q3. How is translanguaging viewed as a practice that students or teachers can use in schools to communicate knowledge and curate an identity?

Dr. Rodríguez: In schools, translanguaging is increasingly recognized as:

- A pedagogical tool: Students use their full linguistic repertoire to understand and express ideas.
- An identity marker: It validates bilingual or multilingual identities, especially for students who navigate Spanish-English environments. Sonora is a state that borders the U.S. Many people here have relatives who live in Arizona or California. For economic and other different reasons many students come back to Mexico to continue their undergraduate education. The public university where I work, for example, has many students who are considered returnees (estudiantes migrantes de retorno). However, there are still some more traditional teachers who still discourage mixing languages, equating it with lack of proficiency in both languages. More progressive educators, especially in language teaching programs, embrace it as a way to deepen learning and cultural awareness.

Q4. In what ways have or haven't teachers leveraged the linguistic landscape of their localities to teach about languages and cultures?

Dr. Rodríguez: I think that many teachers in Sonora haven't really exploited or taken advantage of the local linguistic landscape. It might be that there's a lack of awareness of translanguaging as a teaching resource. Also, curriculum prioritizes "standard" language use. We can notice that by the use of EFL commercial textbooks to teach English in the language schools. Teachers might use bilingual signs from shopping plazas, malls, or cafés to teach vocabulary and cultural differences. Also, awareness about the use of English in the name of places could begin discussions about cultural identity, heritage, and globalization.

Q5. In your experience, how might teachers utilize the linguistic landscape, and specifically signs that have translanguaging, to teach about languages, to teach about cultures, and to raise critical language awareness among their students?

Dr. Rodríguez: In our program, the B.A. in English language teaching for the Sociolinguistics course, the professor gives students an assignment in which they have a Photo Walk Activity in downtown Hermosillo. Students photograph signs with mixed languages (e.g., "Coffee Break – Desayunos") and analyze why both languages are used. As mentioned before, this might be used for critical discussions using questions such as, "What does using English in a Mexican business signal?" or "Who is the intended audience?"

Another task could be to compare cultural aspects: Compare local signs with those from other regions in the same country; for example, what we observe here similar to places who are not as close to the border? How is it in big cities such as CDMX, Guadalajara and Monterrey? How is it in cities from states like Oaxaca, Yucatán, or Tabasco? What happens in other Latin-American countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, etc.? Students could also be asked to design their own bilingual or multilingual signs for hypothetical businesses, reflecting cultural values. This approach raises critical language awareness, showing how language choices relate to power, prestige, and identity.

Taken together, these interview responses, along with our use of systemic functional linguistics to visually represent the alignment of semiotic resources for meaning making, demonstrate how translanguaging in the linguistic landscape of Sonora, México is much more than basic knowledge sharing. It creates and accomplishes a purpose that is meaningful for the ways of being for the people who live there and is an agentive way for individuals to index particular kinds of imagined and desired identities. Now we turn to Rhode Island, U.S.A. to 1) analyze multilingual signs in the state and 2) review official educational policy documents to try to uncover the use, motivations, and ideologies around translanguaging in the linguistic landscape and its potential as an educational resource for bilingualism development and critical language awareness in schools.

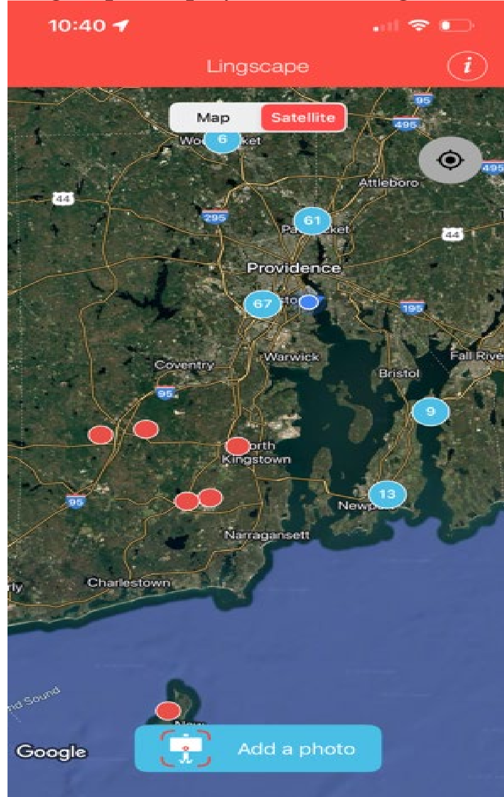
Rhode Island, U.S.A.

An Analysis of the Multilingual Linguistic Landscape

Historically, there has been little documentation of multilingualism in the linguistic landscape of Rhode Island, U.S.A., nor has a comprehensive story been told about the cultural and linguistic diversity of the state. To address this need, to tell the rich cultural and linguistic story of Rhode Island, and to promote critical language awareness activities among students in Rhode Island schools, researchers at the Translanguaging Lab at the University of Rhode Island (https://web.uri.edu/translanguaging-lab/) have begun a comprehensive project "Putting Rhode Island on the Map" to document and analyze the use of Rhode Island languages. To date, over 172 multilingual signs have been uploaded to the lab's Lingscape research database and map (see Image 13), representing multilingual language use across all regions of the state. From Woonsocket in the north to Newport in the east and New Shoreham "Block Island" in the south, signs in at least 17 languages (Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, French, Gaelic, Italian, Japanese, K'iche', Korean, Narragansett, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese) have been documented and analyzed. As can be noted in Image 13, the state's linguistic diversity is centered around Providence and surrounding cities.

Image 13

Lingscape Map of the Multilingual Linguistic Landscape of Rhode Island, U.S.A.

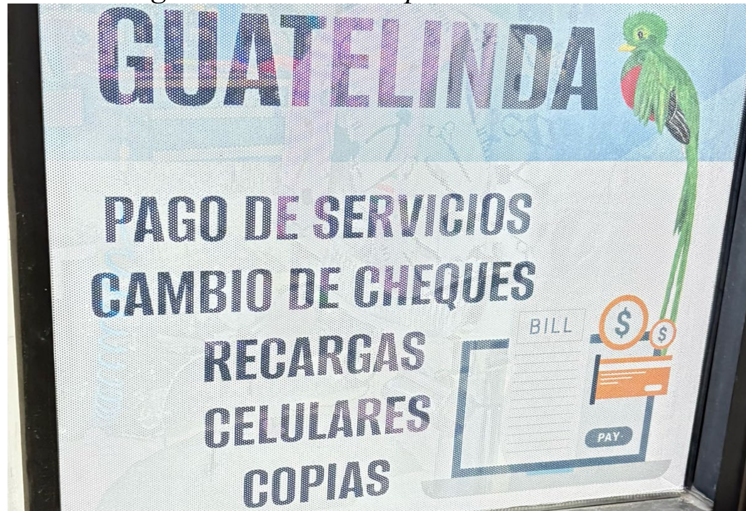


As mentioned earlier, and central to this paper, there are diverse “Spanishes” that are spoken and used in the linguistic landscape of Rhode Island, and they are leveraged in creative and hybrid ways that index this diversity and particular identities. Above, we pointed to the unique and purposeful use of morphophonological features specific to Dominican Spanish being used to demarcate and index a neighborhood as Dominican, as opposed to being Guatemalan, Salvadorean, Mexican, or Puerto Rican. In some ways the semiotic process of reverse indexicality could also help to explain this purposeful use of language in the linguistic landscape. We might argue that even though these neighborhoods of Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls (all part of Providence County, Rhode Island) are quite diverse and some even demographically majority minority, the state still feels very white, very English language dominant, and thus even the use of Spanish in these neighborhoods achieves the goal (much like in Chinatowns across the U.S.) of making the foreign and the distant, familiar and present. Beyond creating and claiming spaces that are Dominican or Guatemalan, etc. to make the homeland feel closer, purposeful and creative use of language (and multimodality[3]) can also distinguish these neighborhoods ethnically from other communities that are also Spanish-speaking. Consider in Image 14, how the language play of combining Guatemala with the Spanish word linda creates a new word/name meaning “beautiful Guatemala.” This is not only a clever name for this business, but it also acts, along with the visual of the Quetzal or national bird of Guatemala and the use of color (which mirrors the Guatemalan flag), to index the place where this business is as a Guatemalan neighborhood and distinguish it

[3] Beyond written text, visuals in signs produce meaning, as well (e.g., Quetzal bird, the national bird of Guatemala, is prominently displayed in Image 14).

from a Dominican neighborhood. Even though the sign clearly claims Guatemalan recognition, identification, and pride, reminders that this sign is still in an English-dominant state and environment are still readily evident, as the words “BILL” and “PAY” are included.

Image 14
Business Sign in Guatemalan Spanish

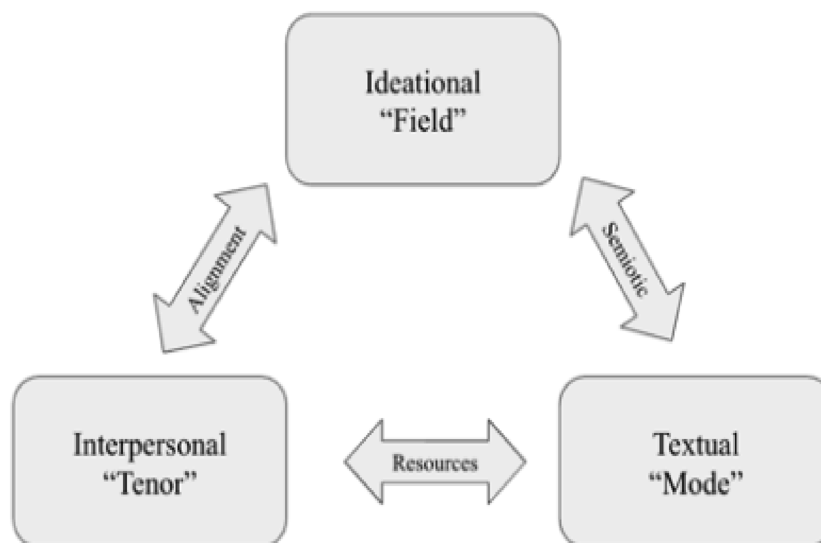


Here we must also consider the importance of not only distinguishing one’s Spanish from that of a different Spanish-speaking cultural group, whose neighborhood borders one’s own, but that the use of English on these signs also positions these community members as important contributors and valuable residents in both worlds (i.e., their homeland and diasporic spaces).

In Image 15, we use systemic functional linguistics to uncover some of the multiple layers of meaning produced in this example of the linguistic landscape of Rhode Island.

Image 15
Systemic Functional Linguistics Analysis of the Alignment of Semiotic Resources and Resulting Meaning Making in Multilingual Signs in Rhode Island, U.S.A.

Knowledge/Message
List of services provided at this business, but also, a produced message that this is a proud Guatemalan store



Identity/Audience
The people who shop here are proudly Guatemalan.

Use/Form
Part of "Guatemala" used for the name and English words "bill" and "pay" are used to demonstrate bilingualism, and visually the tail of the Quetzal *connects to the act of paying in English, cohesively connecting this act of pay to the Guatemalan identity.*

Our analysis of multilingual signs in the linguistic landscape of Rhode Island begins the process of trying to understand authorship, motivation, and the need for community members to create hybrid, translanguaging signs. The unique linguistic features, including those to distinguish between other Spanish-speaking communities (but also the inclusion of English), perhaps reveal that these communities have a desire for cultural and linguistic recognition, the need for ethnic identification, and the ever present burden of having to prove they are both proud of their ethnic features that set them apart, while are also being fully Rhode Islanders and English speakers/users. This last push and pull tension takes us to our last consideration and comparison between these two (Global South and Global North) borderland/transnational contexts: an evaluation of the ideological and pedagogical acceptance of translanguaging in Rhode Island schools.

A Review of Official Educational Policies Regarding Translanguaging in Rhode Island Educational Spaces. Rhode Island's rich linguistic diversity evident in the linguistic landscape of its communities has largely not been leveraged in the design or implementation of school-based

practices despite the state's efforts to better serve its multilingual student population. In 2018, Providence Public School Department reached a Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to remedy twelve violations of multilingual learners' lack of access to equitable and meaningful educational programs (United States Department of Justice, 2018). The resolutions to the Agreement resulted in substantial revisions to State-developed policies and subsequent guidance documents, shifting from a deficit to asset-based approach (e.g., from using the term "English learners" to "multilingual learners"), one that emphasizes equity through culturally and linguistically responsive ideologies. However, the empowering ideologies disseminated within these documents are often juxtaposed with contradictory language or pragmatic roadblocks for practitioners to enact change. Thus, applying a systemic functional linguistics lens across the State's documents, a reader might perceive the metafunctions of SFL to be *mal*functions,[4] prohibiting social change and stifling critical language awareness schools.

Rhode Island's first public document released after the DOJ Agreement was the *Blueprint for Multilingual Learner Success*, which asserts that the *Blueprint* and its corresponding *Plan* "unequivocally [affirm] the cultural and linguistic assets of MLLs and [set] priorities for continuous improvement in serving these students across the state" (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2020b, p. 2). While the State's guidance document encourages an asset-based mindset shift, throughout it refers to multilingual learners (MLLs) as "these students," which exemplifies a linguistic contradiction of support for MLLs and marks the first in a series of documents that lack cohesion and coherence on how educators can embrace and enact a translanguaging stance.

The textual malfunctions continue throughout the State's guidance documents. *The Blueprint* and *Plan* posit aspirational principles and goals where "all educators …work to develop MLLs' academic and linguistic capacities within environments that respect, value, and sustain their languages and cultures" and schools leverage "MLL families' knowledge, culture, and language assets to build strong learning communities (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2020a, p. 4, 7). The aspirational ideology fades to compliance-focused language when guiding principles become action steps and "leverage," "co-construct," and "engage" are eroded to "translate information" for MLL families (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2020b, p. 22-23) and honoring *all* MLLs' funds of knowledge is reduced to "supporting the top five languages in RI" (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2020b, p. 23), thereby neglecting the linguistic needs of the most marginalized MLLs (who speak over 100 languages in Rhode Island). The vision drift between the principles and action steps creates challenges for practitioners to uphold asset-based ideologies in an environment confined by weakly measured outcomes.

Again, the State frames their guidance documents with socially just, linguistically empowering proclamations, and yet the textual malfunctions thwart the advancement of practice. Their practitioner-focused *High Quality Instructional Framework for MLLs to Thrive* recommends educators use the State-developed MLL Classroom Snapshot Tool and Academic Discourse Tool, found in the Appendices, as resources to enact translanguaging-adjacent ideologies. However, these Tools do not capture educators' responsibilities to draw from students' funds of knowledge; worse, they perpetuate the expectations of the dominant language and cultural group. The MLL Classroom Snapshot Tool includes no actions for educators to elevate students' use of their linguistic repertoires. Instead, the responsibility is placed on the student to "use their home language(s) and communicative traditions to learn content," which reinforces individualistic classroom dynamics

[4] With our play on words from metafunctions to malfunctions, we draw a connection to Kaveh et al.'s (2022) use of maleficiaries in lieu of beneficiaries.

rather than collectivist and communal multilingual learning spaces (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021). Additionally, the Academic Discourse Tool does not mention students' home languages, or anything language adjacent, and embeds results-oriented, high uncertainty avoidance practices common in U.S. classrooms, such as "participation structures lay out clear roles and discussion norms" (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021, p. 33). The *Framework* doubles down on the U.S.-normed lens of academic discourse by describing how grade-level State standards and future employers expect all students to have prescribed oral language skills, "irrespective of MLL status" negating their earlier call to action for educators to honor students' home language practices and "interrogate the ideologies and systems that underpin social norms" (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021, p. 9, 16).

What the above review of the major official education policy in Rhode Island points to is that policymakers may recognize and even explicitly state the value of translanguaging in the documents but fail to meaningfully support these efforts. Considering how culturally and linguistically diverse the state is and how important hybrid languaging practices, such as translanguaging, are for recognition and identification, bridging the gulf between official language policies and quotidian language use will continue to be an important call to action that we hope this paper magnifies.

Discussion: Potential for Raising Critical Language Awareness through Pedagogical Linguistic Landscape Analysis

In Sonora

Based on the literature reviewed regarding the pedagogical acceptance of translanguaging in Mexican educational settings and the interview with Dr. Rodríguez, it seems as if socially translanguaging is acknowledged as something individuals, especially those who live in borderland states, do, but that it has yet to be fully embraced in schools. Just as in the U.S. and other contexts that are confronting issues of how (and in what ways) to acknowledge hybrid and holistic language use in schools, it is noticeable in Dr. Rodríguez's interview responses that attitudes seem to be shifting in México regarding translanguaging. It may be the case that social change (e.g., the view that translanguaging with English words is seen as trendy and prestigious) may eventually influence change in school policy and practice or that academic studies regarding the effectiveness of translanguaging will trickle down to schools—the former seems more likely—but, regardless, there is proof of increasing acceptance.

Dr. Rodríguez's example of her university's BA in English programs incorporating a "Photo Walk Activity in downtown Hermosillo, where students photograph signs with mixed languages (e.g., "Coffee Break–Desayunos") and analyze why both languages are used" is a perfect example of how schools could leverage translanguaging in the linguistic landscape for bilingualism development and for raising critical language awareness among students. In her interview, Dr. Rodríguez's suggests giving students practical questions to get started: What does using English in a Mexican business signal? Who is the intended audience? And although she acknowledges that there still remain negative ideologies towards mixing languages and that there is still a stubborn insistence to use "standard English" in textbooks and curriculum, Dr. Rodríguez also states that it might just be that there's a lack of awareness of translanguaging as a teaching resource. It is our hope that this paper might change that.

In Rhode Island

The results of the review of official education policy regarding translanguaging as a teaching resource in Rhode Island were similarly sobering. However, as is the official motto of Rhode Island, there is *hope* in these documents. One of the tangible outcomes of the Rhode Island Department of Education's *Strategic Plan* was the creation and distribution of the State's *High Quality Instructional Framework for MLLs to Thrive*. While the guidebook does not explicitly use the term translanguaging, it does capture critical concepts of the theory and practice. For example, indicators of effective instruction include "students use[ing] home language(s) and communicative traditions to learn content" and educators "draw[ing] on the linguistic and cultural resources of their students as springboards for new learning" (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021, p. 7). The *Framework* also explicitly addresses the tension of defining "academic discourse" by explaining,

> The language practices promoted in pursuit of academic language often correspond to those exhibited by monolingual, upper middle class, White language users in non-rural communities. Judgements about which language users are intelligent, who is competent, and who sounds professional often reflect dominant language ideologies. These ideologies often reinforce hierarchies among language users—hierarchies that shape our understanding of what makes language *academic*. Given these biases and power dynamics, educators have a responsibility to validate students' home language practices and interrogate the ideologies and systems that underpin social norms around academic language. (p. 9)

This block quote, alone, could be used as a springboard for raising critical language awareness with students in Rhode Island schools. Asking questions with students, such as "Why do you think the language practices promoted in pursuit of academic language often correspond to those exhibited by monolingual, upper middle class, white language users in non-rural communities?; or Have you ever had your intellect and competency judged based on how your language sounds?" These queries, coupled with asking students to document and analyze the multilingualism in their local linguistic landscape, would be critical language awareness activities that might provide students with the reason, the motivation, and the seriousness of instruction worthy of their attention and could raise their engagement and investment in school at the same time.

Conclusion

Regarding the first research question, in what ways is translanguaging used in the linguistic landscape of Sonora, México for community recognition, critical identification, and linguistic survivance that are different from and similar to translanguaging in the linguistic landscape of Latine diasporic transnational spaces in Rhode Island, U.S.A., there exists much overlap to be learned from and further explored. Just as in Sonora, multilingual individuals in Rhode Island play with language as a means of indexing their desired identities and place in their larger communities. Both contexts display a need to use both Spanish and English (and at times Indigenous languages) to position the users as multilingual, deserving, and valuable members of their local (and international) societies. In terms of critical linguistic survivance, there is a need in Rhode Island to keep culturally and ethnically distinct linguistic practices alive as both a connection to the past and an earned place in the present and future.

And finally, returning to the second research question, we have identified some ways educators in both contexts might leverage the linguistic landscape and examples of quotidian multilingual language use in the linguistic landscape as a learning tool for developing/cultivating bilingualism, teaching about other cultures, and raising critical language awareness among youth in schools. That said, we have also shown how educators in both contexts have uphill battles to fight in confronting and addressing negative linguistic ideologies around translanguaging practices. However, it is in that fight where opportunities exist to have critical discussions with students around language value, language use, origins of language ideologies, and how those ideologies can be changed, for the better.

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Appendix A

2025 Census Bureau Most Common Non-English Languages Spoken in Rhode Island