

# PLURI Online course

## Languages in focus: From EU policy to Multilingual education

Project PLURI - Plurilingualism for better education, cohesion and linguistic diversity -  
CERV-2024-CITIZENS-REM-EUINTEGRATION

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# Working With Language Visibility in Schools and Learning Spaces

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Languages in Focus: From EU policy to Multilingual education



# Working With Language Visibility in Schools and Learning Spaces

## Part 2 – Training Linguistic Observation

Languages in Focus: From EU policy to Multilingual education



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# Why It Matters?

## For students

- Builds language awareness and flexibility
- Supports critical and multilingual thinking
- Creates safer ways to participate

## For teachers

- Sharpens awareness of classroom language use
- Improves the design of multilingual activities
- Supports reflective and inclusive practice

## For school community

- Links language, thinking, and culture
- Makes hidden hierarchies visible
- Supports ongoing school language development

# Training Linguistic Observation

## Purpose

- Help learners recognise language in everyday spaces
- Build a shared understanding of what 'counts' as language
- Prepare groups for more in-depth multilingual activities

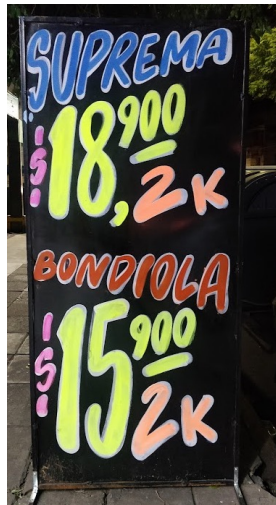
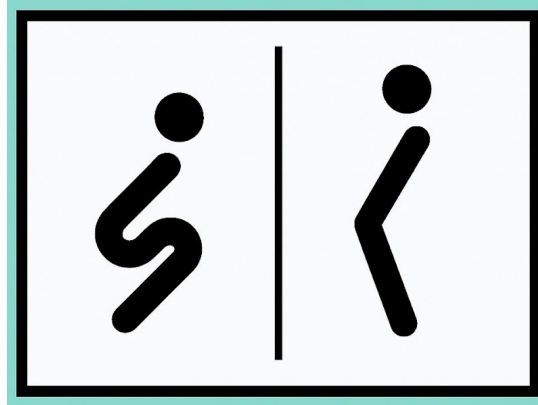
## Before the session – Make the room “readable”

- Print and prepare signs that
  - Serve different purposes
    - Directional – helps people find their way
    - Informational – gives information or instruction
    - Promotional – tries to attract attention or invite action
  - Address different audiences
  - Choose signs with symbols only, one language, multilingual
- Place some of them on walls, doors, windows



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# Training Linguistic Observation



Languages in Focus: From EU policy to Multilingual education



# Small Group Exploration With Images

## First steps

- Divide participants into small groups
- Give each group 2 – 3 images/photos
- Use photos of signs, icons, pictograms, posters taken inside or outside the school
- Allocate 10 min for discussion within the groups

## Key questions to discuss in the group (print or display on the board):

- Who is it intended for?
- What language or symbols does it use?
- How does it make you feel?
- Does it ask people to do something?

*Please choose one sign and present it to the group. Begin by explaining why you chose this sign, then describe it based on the questions above.*

# Language Detectives: Exploring the Room

## Mission

- Look for signs with a specific purpose as a group
- Observe carefully and collect examples

## How it works

- Explore individually or in pairs for 15 min
- Collect 3 – 4 signs

## Sharing

- Choose 2 signs to present
  - One that best fits the purpose
  - One that surprised you
- Discuss why these signs and what to present within 10 min

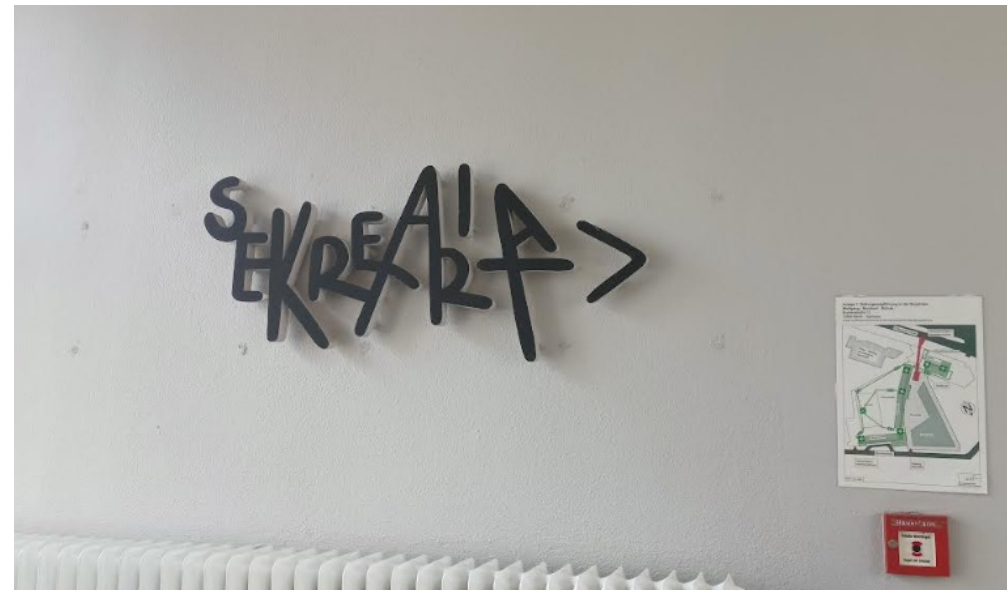


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# Card 1: Sign Purpose Detectives (Directional)

*Directional sign helps people find their way.*

**Where does his sign lead?**

## Goal

- Observe the signs in the room, find and collect a couple of signs that **show direction or guide people?**

## Ask yourself:

- What tells us this sign is helping people find their way?
- Is it clear?
- Does it help people?
- Who might not understand this sign?



*As a group, please choose one or two signs from your collection that fit the description of a directional sign. You may also find them surprising, funny or unusual. Present your chosen signs to the group. Begin by explaining why you chose this sign, then describe it based on the questions above.*

# Card 2: Sign Purpose Detectives (Informational)

*Informational sign gives information or instruction*

**What does this sign tell me?**

**Goal**

- Observe the signs in the room, find and collect a couple of signs that would **help people to find information**.

**Ask yourself:**

- What information does it give?
- Is it easy to understand?
- Does it work well?
- Who might not understand this sign?

*As a group, please choose one or two signs from your collection that fit the description of an informational sign. You may also find them surprising, funny or unusual. Present your chosen signs to the group. Begin by explaining why you chose this sign, then describe it based on the questions above.*



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# Card 3: Sign Purpose Detectives (Promotional)

*Promotional sign tries to attract attention or invite to participate in events or activities*

**What action does this sign ask me to take?**

## **Goal**

- Observe the signs in the room, find and collect a couple of signs that **encourage people to take action**.

## **Ask yourself:**

- Why does this sign attract attention?
- What action does it suggest?
- Is the message clear?
- Who might not understand this sign?



*As a group, please choose one or two signs from your collection that fit the description of a promotional sign. You may also find them surprising, funny or unusual. Present your chosen signs to the group. Begin by explaining why you chose this sign, then describe it based on the questions above.*

# Card 4: Audience Explorers

**Who is this sign for?**

**Goal**

- Observe the signs in the room, find and collect a couple of signs that you like
- Think about **who the signs are for**, e.g. students, teachers, visitors, parents, everyone, or certain groups of people.

**Ask yourself:**

- Why does this sign attract your attention?
- Does the sign feel welcoming to many people, or only to some?
- Who might not understand this sign?

*As a group, please choose one or two signs from your collection that you like. You may also find them surprising, funny or unusual. Present your chosen signs to the group. Begin by explaining why you chose this sign, then describe it based on the questions above.*



# Card 5: Language Explorers

## What languages can you see?

### Goal

- Observe the signs with texts in the room, find and collect a couple of signs that you like
- Pay attention to **texts, letters, signs relating to different cultures**
- Count how many languages you can see

### Ask yourself:

- What languages do you see most often?
- Can you understand the sign without knowing the language?
- What helps you understand information on a sign, even if it's written in a language you don't know?
- Who might not understand this sign?

*As a group, please choose one or two signs from your collection that you like. You may also find them surprising, funny or unusual. Present your chosen signs to the group. Begin by explaining why you chose this sign, then describe it based on the questions above.*

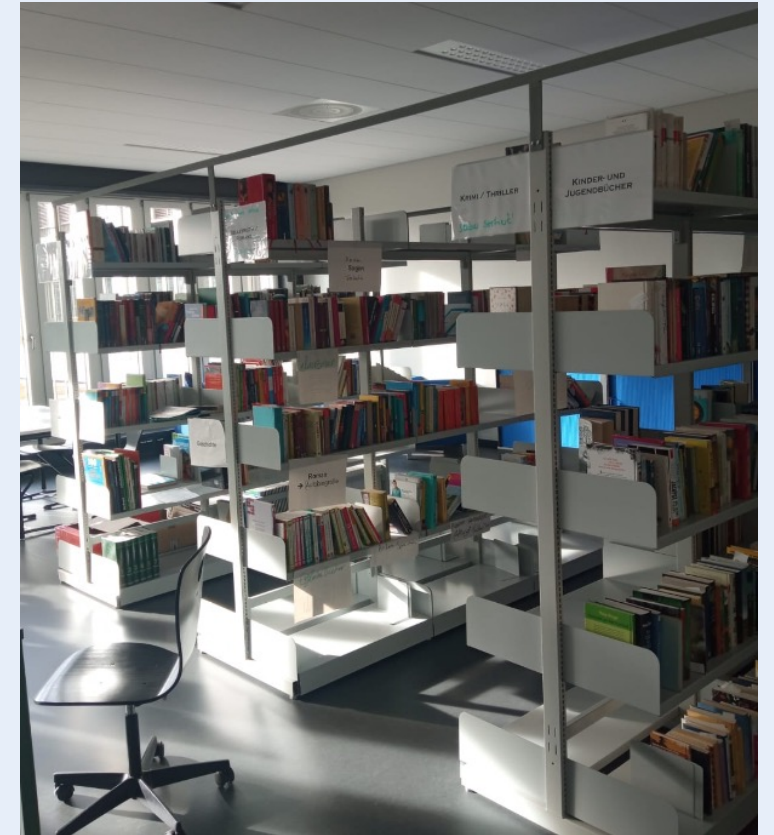


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# Card 6: Soundscape

What languages can you hear?

## Goal

- Take notes of the sounds and languages you hear
- Close your eyes and pay attention to **music, voices, accents, announcements, noises**

## Ask yourself:

- What languages could you hear?
- Did certain sounds make you feel something, and if so, what was it?
- Who might not understand the announcements?
- Do you think that certain noises, announcements, music or words could sound unusual or unpleasant to some people?

*If you feel comfortable doing so, please share your experience with the group.*

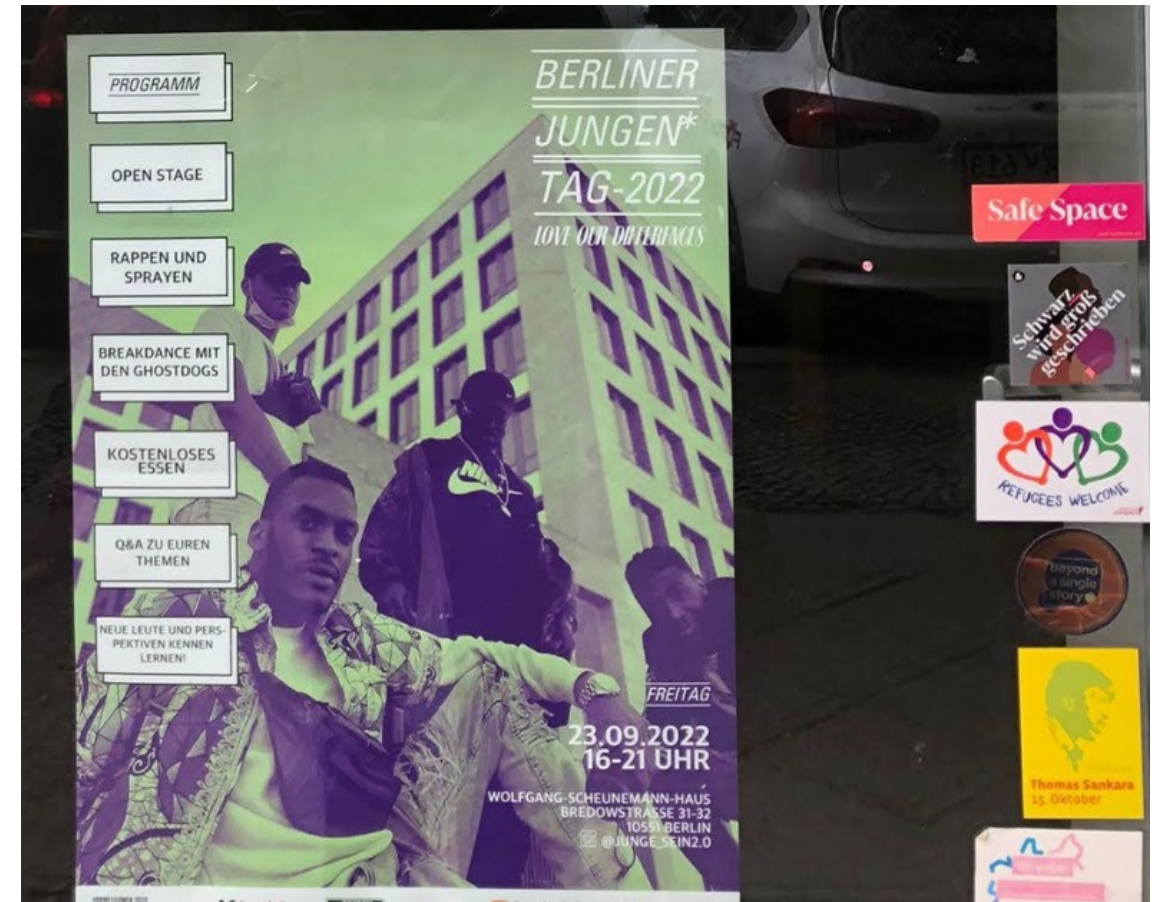


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# Deeper Reflection (optional)

## Design and meaning

- How do colours and icons communicate?
- How can design include or exclude?
- How can symbols help or limit understanding?



# Next Step – Linguistic Landscaping Activities

## Linguistic Landscaping:

- Focuses on visible language: street signs, posters, stickers, graffiti etc.
- All these signs create "linguistic landscape" of an area (street, city, school)
- Written languages in public spaces tell researchers about people, power and culture in the place

## Why languages in public spaces matter:

- Public signs show which languages are seen as important or "normal" in the area.
- In multilingual areas demonstrate that language are welcome and recognized
- The linguistic landscape reflects history and politics
- It influences how people value their own languages

# Next Step – Linguistic Landscaping Activities

## School-limited exploration - Schoolscaping

- Divide students into small groups
- Have each group explore different areas of the school (hallways, library, cafeteria, kitchen, laboratories etc.) and document visible signs and languages using cameras, drawing, writing
- Record details: language(s) , context, intended audience, significance
- It's better if each group has an experienced person who can guide the reflection process and help with observations.

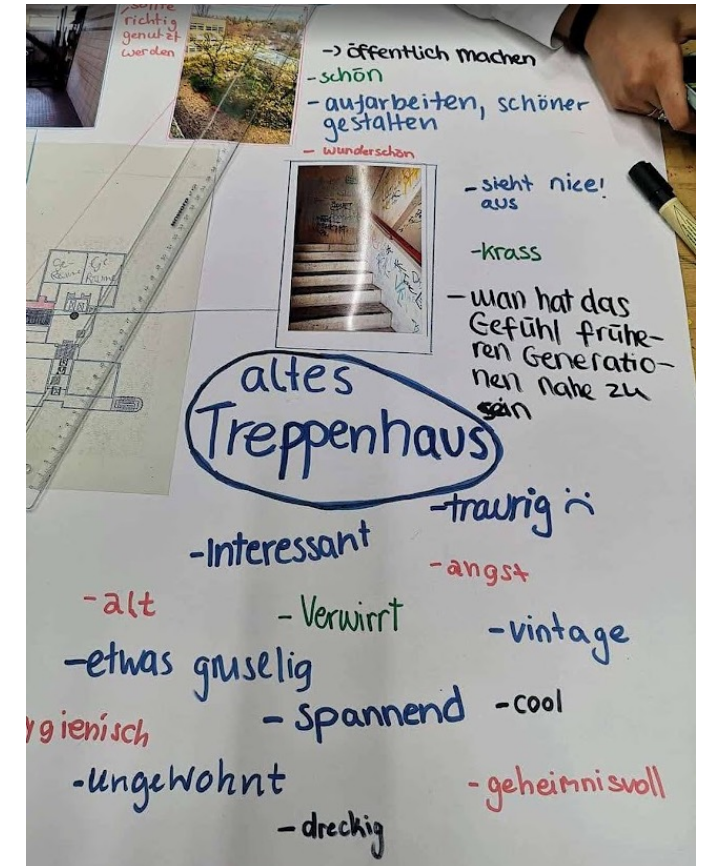


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# Introduction to Linguistic Landscaping

*We would now like to try out the Linguistic Landscaping method with you.*

*This approach originates from the fields of linguistics and cultural studies, and is used to explore how languages and communication present themselves in our surroundings, such as in schools, on the streets, in shops, and in other public spaces.*

*It helps us to observe how language becomes visible in public spaces, such as on signs, doors, posters and labels.*

*However, we won't only focus on written or spoken language. We'll also pay attention to images, colours, symbols and sounds, and explore how these convey meanings and emotions without the use of words.*

*Together, we want to discover how your school expresses itself and the stories, values and relationships hidden in its everyday signs and spaces.*

## Group Instructions

Before you start exploring:

- Each group can take up to five photos during the walk.
- Choose one person to be the photographer and another to keep track of time (you have 20 min to explore your area).
- Everyone else can take notes or draw.

# Card 1: Written Languages

*As you explore, make small notes or drawings..*

Write down or copy any **words or sentences** that catch your attention. You can also make a note of or sketch anything else that interests or surprises you.

- Look around: **Where can you see writing, texts, letters?**
- Look at signs, doors, posters, notices, boards, etc.

## Ask yourself:

- In which languages is it written?
- Are there any texts that you don't understand, find interesting, or find strange? If so, what do they look like?
- What do they look like?
- What do you think they might mean?
- How does the text make you feel - Friendly? Strict? Calm? Loud?
- Who is it intended for, and who might not understand it?



# Card 2: Images and Symbols

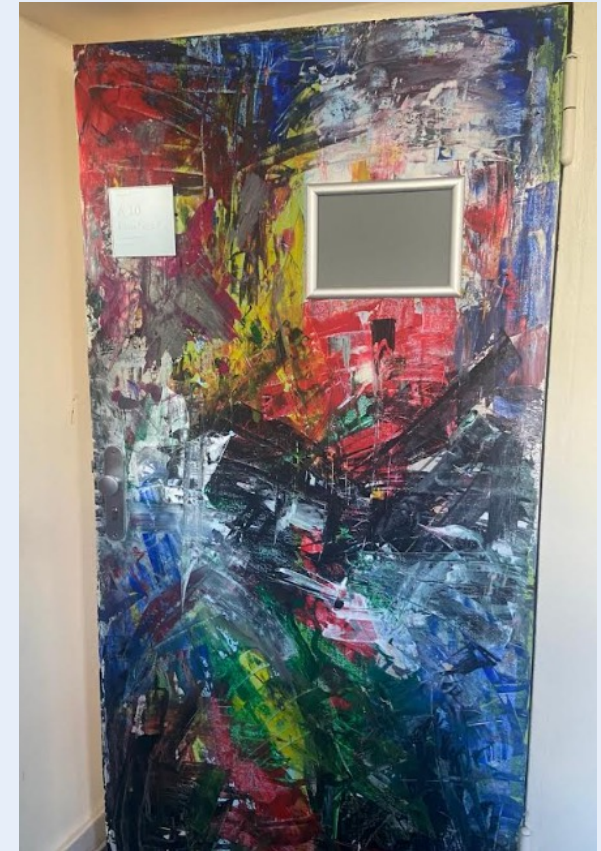
*As you explore, draw or take photos of any images or symbols that catch your eye.*

Make notes or sketches to help you remember what you see or how it feels.

- Look around: **Where can you see images, symbols, emojis, flags, logos or colours?**
- Look at signs, stickers, doors, posters, notices, boards, etc.

## **Ask yourself:**

- What do they show? (People, animals, objects, etc.)
- What do they say or mean? For example, do they suggest danger, happiness, diversity or rules or anything else?
- Are there any empty walls or spaces with no images?  
How do they make you feel?



# Card 3: Language Traces

*As you explore, look closely for small signs or traces of language.*

Draw them, take photos or write short notes about what you notice or imagine.

- Look carefully: **Are there small words, numbers, stickers, names, doodles or pieces of old writing that most people don't see?**
- Look at signs, stickers, doors, notices, boards, walls, furniture etc.

## Ask yourself:

- In which language or form are they written?
- Who do you think made them, and why?
- Do they feel personal, secret or official?
- What can you learn about the people who are or were here from these traces?

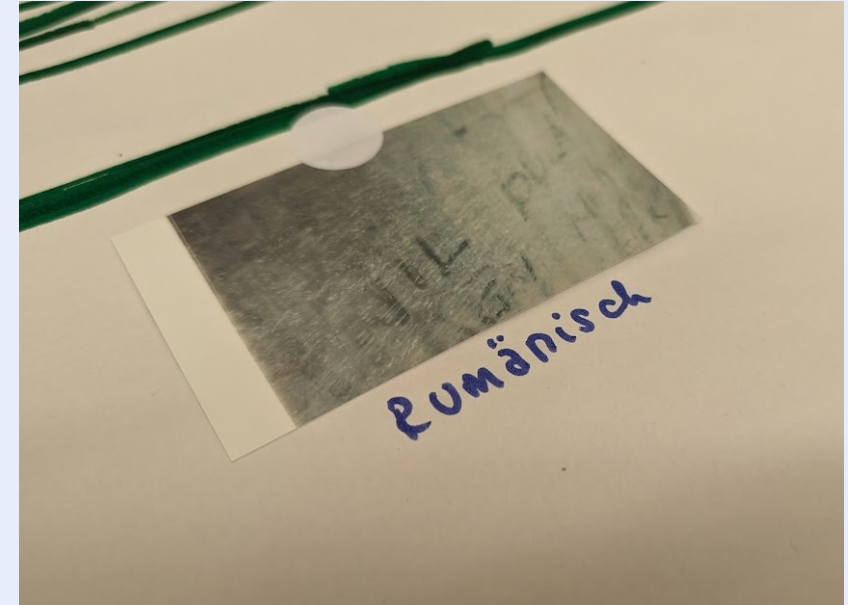


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# Next Step – Linguistic Landscaping Activities

## Analysis and discussion

- Each group has a round of internal reflection
- The collected signs and observations are classified by language, purpose and target audience
- Each group can also create a presentation or display with their findings
- Groups share findings with others
- Group discussion on what languages are most/least represented and why
- Critical reflections (if the group is ready):
  - Why are some languages more visible?
  - What does this tell us about our community and its values?
  - How can we make other languages more visible?



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# Card 4: Reflecting and Connecting

Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have seen, written or drawn.  
You can talk in pairs or take some notes on your own.

## Questions:

- What did you notice most often, and what was missing?
- Were there places that felt open and welcoming, or closed and strict?
- Who seems visible in this school, and who does not?
- What signs or images evoked strong feelings in you?  
Which ones and why?
- If you could change one thing, what would you add or remove?

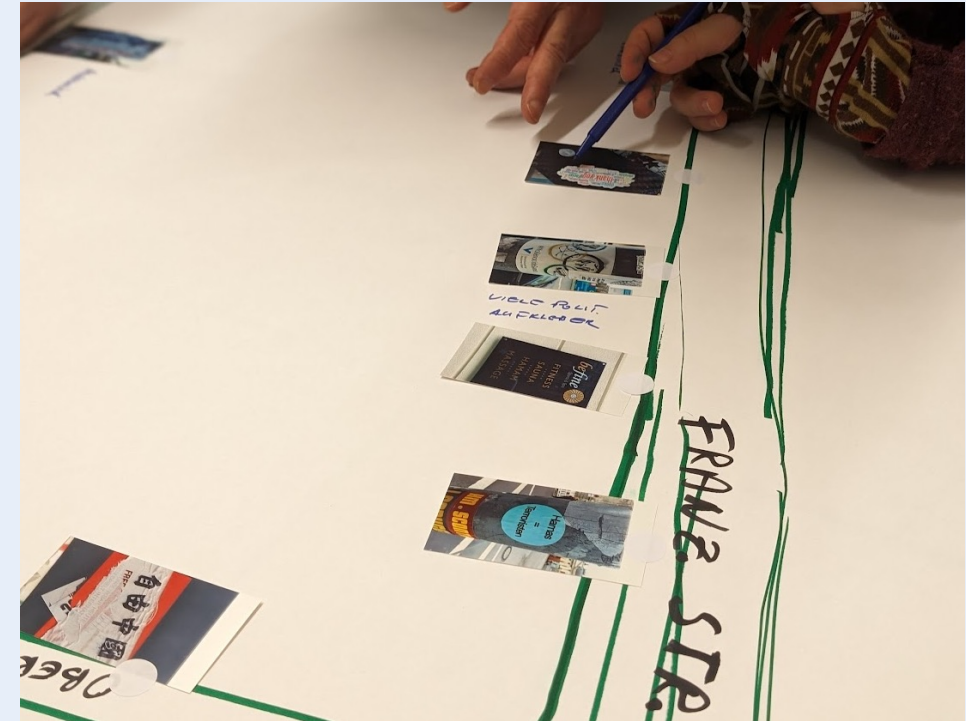


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# Next Step – Linguistic Landscaping Activities

## Linguistic Landscaping Activities (optional extensions):

- Action and advocacy - changes to make school linguistic landscape more
- Expanding to neighborhood/city, can be part of the school trip as well
- Comparative analysis



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# Wrap-Up and Reflection

- What did these activities help me to notice about language and communication in my learning space?
- What would I need to adapt for my group, timeframe or setting?
- What is one small, achievable change that could increase language visibility in my classroom or learning space?
- Where could I easily start - with one area, routine or moment?



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# List of references and useful resources:

Wedin, Åsa (2021). Schoolscaping in the third space: The case of the Language Introduction Programme in Sweden. *Apples - Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 15(2), 151-168. <https://doi.org/10.47862/apples.110860>.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X51H-u6l41o>

Working with linguistic landscapes inside and outside the classroom: the LoCALL modules. Locall project on Youtube  
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Brigitta R Schvarcz, Amber N Warren, Creating multilingual schoolscapes in restrictive ELT contexts, *ELT Journal*, Volume 79, Issue 3, July 2025, Pages 395–403, <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaf028>

Schoolscapes Aren't Neutral: Language Teaching for Inclusion blog post by Achilleas Kostoulas, 2025. Applied Linguistics & Language Teacher Education personal website.  
<https://achilleaskostoulas.com/2025/06/24/schoolscapes-arent-neutral-language-teaching-for-inclusion>

# Thank you for watching!

Visit the PLURI project website to find more activities, links and inspiration.

