Women’s Breasts in Colombia: A Linguistic Landscape Analysis over Time and Space.

Elana Shohamy¹, Doris Correa²

¹Tel Aviv University, Israel
²Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia

Shaping the bodies of women by powerful industries has been a sweeping phenomenon in the past few decades. In Colombia, there has been a rich history and culture of breast’s enlargement and shaping which has become a major mark of women’s identity and a frequent topic in daily conversations. Thus, a proportionally huge number of women go through surgery at a relatively young age, often sponsored by male partners and parents. This phenomenon is manifested in the linguistic landscape which is filled with pictures of women showing their breasts and cleavages on billboard in major highways, popular newspapers, and the internet.

This research will show how enlarged breasts have become the norm that women strive for and how the public space perpetuates these ideal images. Using a multi-modal approach, the study will examine the above phenomenon, trace its historical development as well as the multiple agents that participate in the engineering of women’s breasts. In addition, it will analyze the spread of the phenomenon over trans-national markets through tourist packs that include breast enlargement operations and a number of other cosmetic surgeries and through billboards displayed in major city roads. The multi-modal analysis of these images will be aided by women’s insights and reflections about the role that public spaces have played in shaping the representations of beauty. It will also be aided by media reports on Colombian models who are now protesting this commodification and adopting a trend for ‘going natural’. All in all, this research will show how linguistic landscape displayed in the public space can play a most influential role in the commodification of women as major instruments in creating women’s identities and imagery.

Keywords: commodification, linguistic landscape.