



## Supporting Students' Understanding of How Young Children's Language and Communication are Entangled with Place

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### Abstract

The places and spaces which we create for children can support them to use their full communicative repertoire through engaging multiple resources which can be culturally, materially and historically situated (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011; Hackett & Shannon, 2026). Spaces for play and learning further carry the discourses and lifeways of the communities which they welcome and connect (Paris, 2012). Such connections are strongly felt in the Meadows Nursery and community centre, a partnership between Save the Children and Sheffield Hallam University. Through engaging our first-year students in an in situ semiotic landscaping task at Meadows Nursery we firstly encouraged a deeper understanding of how the work of the community centre shapes the discourses and practices which operate in the early years setting. Secondly, in the broader context of learning about the community centre, students were invited to reflect on how the children's spaces (the nursery rooms, outdoor space, hallways, signs, climbing frames, sensory toys) are materially, culturally and discursively situated and the affordances (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) which they offer for children's use of their full communicative repertoire. The pedagogical approach developed for this the project was grounded in three interconnected aspects: 1) exposing learners to critical and research informed teaching on how children's communication is entangled with space, 2) providing them with opportunities to learn in authentic environments and 3) employing creative learning methods through using instant cameras to create semiotic landscapes (Pesch, 2021). This offered unique opportunities for learner engagement and deeper and situated understanding of the ways in which children's communication is entangled with place. This presentation will report on some of the initial findings of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) funded project of the students' perceptions of the project and the perceived benefits of these forms of critical engagement.

### Keywords

Semiotic landscaping, early language, children, place, creative methods

### References

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