LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AND CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SIGNAGES IN A MULTI CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

This research paper has two main objectives which are 1) to study signages displayed in multicultural environments and 2) to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between two multicultural areas. These two objectives have led to two research questions; (1) What are the languages displayed on signages in the two multicultural areas? And, (2) what are the functions of the signages found in the two multicultural areas? To answer these two questions,

the researchers employed two main frameworks: types of signages by Siwina and Prasithrathsint (2020) and functions of signages by Yanhong and RungRuang (2013). The results show that most languages displayed on signages in the Chinese temple are bilingual, monolingual, and multilingual. On the other hand, most of the languages displayed on signages in the Hinduism temple are monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual languages. Moreover, the functions of signages found in the Chinese temple are namely, mythological (18 signages), informational (12 signages), symbolic (6 signages), requesting (2 signages), invitational (2 signages), and instructional (2 signages). Furthermore, from the Hinduism temple, a total of seven functions were found, namely, requesting (11 signages), invitational (12 signages), mythological (4 signages), ordering (3 signages), informational (2 signages), commercial (2 signages), and instructional (1 signage). This study suggested that linguistic landscape plays an important role in creating understanding among multiculturalism in religious settings.

1. Introduction

Thailand is a multicultural country that is comprised of different cultures located in many areas, such as different races and religions, representing the plurality in its society (Chanarnupap & Tongkachok, 2017). By multiculturalism, Thailand's plurality reflects its welcoming attitude toward differences or cultural diversity (Hayami, 2006). One of the very obvious diversifications in Thailand is its religious plurality. Although 95% of the population in Thailand practices Theravada Buddhism (National Statistical Office, 2015), there still are some other religions, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, its religious plurality can be seen in the variety and number of religious places of worship throughout the country.

However, this diversity is also due to globalization. Yalcin (2018) explains that the term globalization is the way things expand and connect beyond national boundaries. Therefore, the expansion of religions or beliefs is the direct result of globalization. When people move around from one place to another, they bring some particular sets of ideas and values with them. Specifically, the term 'cultural globalization' is relevant here (Thompson, 2020).

As previously stated, most Thai people practice Theravada Buddhism. Nevertheless, the existence of other cultures or religions should not be overlooked. Different cultures may have different sets of beliefs and values embedded in each society, as well as in religious contexts. In this research, 'cultural globalization' will be examined as an issue of religions, as "religion and culture are inseparable, as beliefs and practices are uniquely cultural" (Croucher et al., 2017).

The two main cultures that draw the attention of the researchers are 1) a Chinese temple, representing the practice of Chinese Buddhism, and 2) an Indian temple, representing the practice of Hinduism. These two religious places are famous among Thai people, as a large number of Chinese Buddhist and Hindu temples can be seen throughout the country. Moreover, there are numerous online articles on the internet suggesting that people are interested in visiting these religious places.

However, different cultures have their unique religious practices, values, beliefs, and mindsets (What Is Culture, Anyhow? Values, Customs, and Language, 2012). Therefore, it could be difficult for people from different cultures to understand different religions and behave in the proper righteous manner in another religious context. This is especially true of a language barrier. Language can be a factor that hinders mutual understanding between people in a multicultural environment.

Most studies of Linguistic Landscapes were drawn on types of signages: private and government signages and functions (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). However, most signages were studied in tourist, school settings, business buildings, shops, etc. (Shomahy and Gorter, 2009), but few studies were involved in cultural and multicultural settings. As a result, the researchers found that the study of language on signages displayed around multicultural areas could be helpful for better communication among diverse cultural groups because the purpose of signages is to clearly communicate and breakdown language barriers. This is related to the study of Linguistic Landscape (or LL) which refers to the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To analyze signages in multicultural areas.
2. To compare and contrast the similarities and differences of the Linguistic Landscape in two multicultural environment areas.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the visible languages in the linguistic landscape of temples in the two multicultural areas?

2. What are the functions of signages found in the temples in the two multicultural areas?

1.3. Definitions of Key Terms

Cultural Globalization refers to the "Phenomenon by which the experience of everyday life, as influenced by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, reflects a standardization of cultural expressions around the world" (Watson, 2020).

Linguistic Landscape refers to the "Visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

Multicultural Environments refers to "An ideology that promotes the institutionalization of communities containing multiple cultures. It is generally applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, usually at the organizational level, e.g. schools, businesses, neighborhoods, cities, or nations" (Libretexts, 2021).

Signages refer to "Any kind of graphic display intended to convey information to an audience" (O, 2019).

2. Review of Literature

This section reviews the literature associated with the main focus of the study. They are key concepts related to linguistic landscape and previous studies.

2.1. Definitions of Key Concepts

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2021), the term "sign" is defined as "a notice giving information, directions, and a warning such as a road sign and a stop sign". Moreover, this links to the study of Linguistic Landscape (or LL) which involves "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings which combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry and Bourhis, 1997, p.25). Each sign can have a variety of languages displayed on it and portray different functions based on what it is to communicate to the audience or readers.

2.2. Previous Studies

Yanhong and Rungruang (2013) have examined the functions of signages displayed in Chiang Mai's Linguistic Landscape in the Tourist Attraction Areas. They examined 262 signages

to answer three main questions which ~~the~~ languages were used on signages, the functions of signages, and types of code-mixing. The results revealed the majority of languages used on signages in Chiang Mai were Thai-Chinese, indicating bilingualism. Furthermore, they classified the functions of signages into 1) informational, 2) symbolic, 3) mythological, and 4) commercial.

Each function can be defined as follows: Landry and Bourhis (1997), defined informational function as "the written words or icons of the linguistic landscape which can transmit the relevant information to the public, i.e. to communicate with them, to inform, direct, guide, or warn them". Moreover, the symbolic function reflects the social status, cultural status, and social power of those who speak the language (Zheng & Luo, 2019). Thirdly, Hicks (2002) added that the mythological function relates to the connection of past knowledge to the present time. Lastly, the commercial function concerns the use of language to promote products, places, or promotions (Hornsby, 2008).

Based on the study from Yanhong and Runruang (2013), the main function of signages found was informational, and the least function found was mythological. Moreover, Siwina and Prasithrathsint (2020), conducted a study of signages from the border areas of Thailand, Tachilek in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and Savannakhet in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The study examined 800 signs collected from both cities altogether. There were three types of languages discovered, 1) monolingual, 2) bilingual, and 3) multilingual. In this research, the highest number of languages on signage was Thai. Moreover, it added that of the two cities, Tachilek has a higher number of multilingual signs observed from the number of languages displayed on signages.

3. Methodology

This section introduces and contains a discussion of, the methodological approach and research design best suited to the research study. A qualitative approach is proposed to arrive at answers to the research questions. An overview of the research design then follows, the data collection and research frameworks employed in the study.

3.1. Introduction

The method of data collection was based on the collected photographs of two designated areas. Moreover, the data were interpreted based on two main frameworks, the types of signages

by Siwina and Prasithrathsint (2020) and the function of signages by Yanhong and Rungruang (2013).

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Data Collection: Upon completing this research, the analysis was based on the collected photographs from the two designated areas that represent the multicultural environment. The two places were selected based on three criteria 1) popularity, 2) convenience, and 3) accessibility. The places must be widely known by a large group of people from around the country. To ensure its popularity, Tai Hong Kong is widely respected among Thai people of Chinese descent for centuries and other worshippers. It is always crowded during Chinese New Year (Explonique, 2021). Also, Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, an over-100-years Hindu Temple is situated on the Silom Road in Bangkok and known as Wat Khaek or Uma Devi temple following the principal Buddha image of the temple. It is very famous among Mariamman or Mother Mari, the goddess of mercy and elegance, believers (Tourism Thailand, 2003). Moreover, the two places must be convenient in terms of transportation for the researcher when collecting the data. Lastly, both places must be accessible for taking photographs for the use of analysis. As a result, the two places that represent the multicultural environment are 1) Tai Hong Kong Shrine, a Chinese temple, and 2) Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, a Hinduism temple.

After deciding on the designated areas, the researcher photographed signages in the two places with a mobile phone and stored the pictures in a google drive for later analysis. To ensure its validity, the signages were all collected on the same day.

3.2.2. Frameworks: After collecting the data, all photographs were analyzed based on the two chosen frameworks.

3.2.2.1. Types of Language on Signages: According to Siwina and Prasithrathsint (2020), the types of signages can be divided into three types; monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. A monolingual sign is a sign with only one language while a bilingual sign is a sign with two languages and a multilingual sign is a sign with more than two languages.

If only one language appears on the signages, it is classified as a 'monolingual sign'. Moreover, when two languages occur together on the signages, they are 'bilingual signs'. Lastly, if more than two languages appear on signages, they are called 'multilingual signs'.

3.2.2.2. Functions of Signages: Yanhong and Rungruang (2013) divided the function of signages into four types which are informational, symbolic, mythological, and commercial. The first two

functions were based on Landry and Bourhis (1997), who defined the informational function as "the written words or icons of the linguistic landscape which can transmit the relevant information to the public, i.e. to communicate with them, to inform, direct, guide, or warn them". Moreover, the symbolic function reflects the social status, cultural status, and social power of those who speak the language (Zheng & Luo, 2019). Thirdly, Hicks (2002) added that the mythological function relates to the connection of past knowledge to the present time. Lastly, the commercial function concerns the use of language to promote products, places, or promotions (Hornsby, 2008).

4. Results and Discussion

An analysis of research data gathered from signages from two research sites is presented in this section. The research questions are reiterated and addressed. The types of languages in the linguistic landscape and its functions in the designated multicultural areas are discussed in this section.

4.1. Introduction

The data of analysis were obtained from 73 signages from both places, 42 signages from a Chinese temple, and 31 signages from a Hindu temple. Additionally, the outcome was presented in the form of tables containing the percentage and numbers of types and functions of signages. Moreover, the similarities and differences in signages between the two designated areas were discussed.

4.2. What Are the Visible Languages in The Linguistic Landscape of Temples in The Two Multicultural Areas?

To answer this research question, the researcher focused primarily on the languages that appear on the collected signages from the two designated areas. The analysis was based on the framework adapted from Siwina and Prasithrathsint (2020), concerning the three types of languages appearing on signages, monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual.

Table 1: *Types of Signages*

Types of Signages	Chinese Temple (42 Signages)		Hindu Temple (31 Signages)	
	Number of Signages	Percentage	Number of Signages	Percentage
Monolingual	15	35.72 %	19	61.29 %

| Bilingual | 24 | 57.14 % | 11 | 35.48 % |
| Multilingual | 3 | 7.14 % | 1 | 3.23 % |

(Source: Author's Own Illustration)

Table 1 shows the comparison of languages from both Chinese and Hindu temples. From the Chinese temple, the majority of signages were bilingual consisting of 24 signages (57.14 %). Secondly, the second most found type of language was monolingual, for 15 signages (35.72 %). Lastly, the least found language type was multilingual, for 3 signages (7.14%).

For the Hindu temple, the majority of signages found were 19 multilingual signages accounting for 61.29 percent. Secondly, the second most found type of language was bilingual, for 11 signages, and it accounted for 35.48 percent. Lastly, the least found language type was multilingual, for 1 signage, accounting for 3.23 percent.

Table 2: *The Language on Signages*

Chinese Temple (42 Signages)						Hindu Temple (31 Signages)					
Monolingual		Bilingual		Multilingual		Monolingual		Bilingual		Multilingual	
L	No	L	No	L	No	L	No	L	No	L	No
CH	11	TH - CH	23	TH - CH - EN	3	TH	18	TH - EN	11	TH - EN - HIN	1
TH	3	TH - EN	1			EN	1				
EN	1										

(Source: Author's Own Illustration)

Table 2 shows the languages appearing on the signages of the two designated areas. In the Chinese temple, there were three languages displayed in the monolingual category which include Chinese (11 signages), Thai (3 signages), and English (1 signage), respectively. Secondly, two pairs of languages were in the bilingual category, Thai and Chinese (23 signages) and Thai and English (1 signage). Thirdly, there was one sign that belonged to the multilingual category and had three languages: Thai, Chinese, and English (1 signage).

On the other hand, in the Hindu temple, there were two languages classified in the monolingual category, Thai (18 signages) and English (1 signage). Moreover, there was one set of languages in the bilingual category, Thai and English (11 signages). Lastly, there was one signage in the multilingual category which was written in Thai, Hindi, and English.

4.3. What Are the Functions of Signages Found in The Temples in The Two Multicultural Areas?

In this second research question, the researcher investigated the functions of the collected signages from the two temples based on the framework by Yanhong and Rungruang (2013). However, when analyzing the functions of all the data, ~~there were~~ some signages ~~that~~ can be further analyzed into new functions that more precisely fit their purpose. The researcher divided the newly discovered functions into four groups, based on the main purpose of the signages which request are, ordering, invitational, and instructional.

Table 3: *The Functions of Signages Found in the Chinese Temple*

Functions based on Yanhong and Rungruang (2013)				Newly Found Functions			
Information al	Symboli c	Mythologic al	Commerci al	Reque st	Orde r	Invitation al	Instruction al
12	6	18	0	2	0	2	2

(Source: Author's Own Illustration)

As shown in Table 3, the two highest numbers of signages at the Chinese were categorized into informational and mythological functions, 18 and 12 signages, respectively. Moreover, the three lowest numbers of signages were categorized into request, invitational, and instructional functions. Each of these functions contained two signages. Lastly, there were no signages that belonged to the commercial and ordering functions.

Table 4: *The Functions of Signages Found in the Hindu Temple*

Functions based on Yanhong and Rungruang (2013)				Newly Found Functions			
Information al	Symboli c	Mythologic al	Commerci al	Reque st	Orde r	Invitation al	Instruction al
2	0	4	2	11	3	9	1

(Source: Author's Own Illustration)

From Table 4, the two highest numbers of signages were categorized into request and invitational functions, 11 and 9 signages, respectively. Moreover, the four lowest numbers of signages were categorized into ordering (3), informational (2), commercial (2), and instructional (1) functions. Lastly, there were no signages that belonged to the symbolic function.

Figure 1: *Examples of Commercial Function*   **Figure 2**: *Examples of Symbolic Functions*
(Source: Author's Own Illustration)

From these two temples, there were similarities and differences to be observed. Firstly, focusing on the languages displayed on the signages in these two designated areas, it was fascinating that the opposite of language use was shown. In the Chinese temple, Chinese, as the native language, was used as the primary language, appearing in 35 signages of 42 signages. Contrariwise, in the Hindu temple, the native language, Hindi, was found as the least used language, appearing in only one signage. These two temples were on the opposite side of the continuum in terms of the use of the native language in their own culture.

It seems that the use of the Chinese language emphasizes the strong status of the Chinese language via the usage of the Chinese language that appeared on signages around its area. Unlike the Hindu temple where the dominant language is Thai, the Chinese language is used as the dominant language in the Chinese temple.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to investigate two areas concerning the linguistic landscape of the two chosen locations, namely, the Tai Hong Kong Shrine and the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple. First, it aims to discover the language used in signages from those two places. The results show that the majority of signages in the Chinese temple were bilingual, monolingual, and multilingual, respectively. Moreover, from 42 signages, the Chinese language appears in 35 signages, showing

its dominant status as a native language, whereas the English language was used in only four signages out of 42, being the least-used language in the Chinese temple.

The Hinduism temple, the results shows almost the opposite results from the Chinese temple. The Hindi language one may assume to be the dominant language in this place appears to be the least used, appearing only in one signage from all 31 signages. However, the dominant language in this temple is Thai, appearing in a total of 30 signs.

As for the second research question aims to classify the functions of these signages based on Yanhong and Rungruang (2013) which consists of four functions, informational, symbolic, mythological, and commercial. However, four more functions were added to the list when analyzing the data. The four new functions are request, ordering, invitational, and instructional.

In the Chinese temple, there is a total of six functions found, namely, mythological (18 signages), informational (12 signages), symbolic (6 signages), requestive (2 signages), invitational (2 signages), and instructional (2 signages). Furthermore, in the Hindu temple, there are a total of seven functions found, namely, request (11 signages), invitational (12 signages), mythological (4 signages), ordering (3 signages), informational (2 signages), commercial (2 signages), and instructional (1 signage).

5.1. Suggestions for The Display of Signages

The findings of this study could directly benefit the organizations, and the temples as its results could be used as a guideline for improvement in terms of languages used. Moreover, it suggests a way for temples to adapt themselves to cultural globalization through the use of languages, such as the English language, to aid people from different cultures to have a mutual understanding of the message conveyed in the signage.

5.2. Limitations of The Study

The number of signages was also limited. As a result, the findings could only represent the small number of signages in multicultural areas.

5.3. Further Research

There are some possibilities that this research could be expanded to obtain different perspectives and results in the related fields. Firstly, the translation strategy is plausible to further investigate the signages. Especially, when the two languages are presented on the same signage, it

would be interesting to see how the message from the source language was translated into the target language, and whether or not they still share the same meaning or in which way they differ.

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