

MULTILINGUALISM IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF THE FACULTY OF ARTS, CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY, THAILAND

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Abstract

This paper is an examination of multilingual signage in the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, where a number of language courses are offered not only to the university community but also to outsiders who are interested in learning foreign languages. Special attention is given to the distinction between signs made by the university and those by students and outsiders. By focusing on the multilingual signs in public space, the aim of the study is to investigate the extent to which multilingualism is promoted through the linguistic landscape in the common areas of the Faculty of Arts. The study reveals that Thai-English bilingualism is promoted within the Faculty of Arts. A few language departments have made attempts to establish their language in the public space while some languages appeared only on outsiders' signs. The paper contributes to our understanding of linguistic landscape research by investigating the degree to which multilingualism is promoted via the

linguistic landscape within the Faculty of Arts.

1. Introduction

A growing area of investigation into multilingualism is what has been called “linguistic landscape”- or the analysis of language in the public space (Huebner, 2006; Backhaus, 2007; Kasanga, 2012; Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan-Garau, 2015; Manan 2015). Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) first coined the term “linguistic landscape” with the frequently quoted definition as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings and how they combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration”.

Initially Landry and Bourhis examined the linguistic landscape as related to youth's contact with more than one language (1997 cited in Dagenais *et al.*, 2009). More recently, linguistic landscapes have been examined in reference to the commodification of language for the purpose of tourism (Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan-Garau, 2015; Moriarity, 2015), the preservation of minority languages (Lou, 2010), the marginalization or maintenance of ethnic identity (Kasanga, 2012; Manan, 2015), and the hegemony of English (Huebner, 2006), to name a few of its applications. Studies have also focused on pedagogical applications of linguistic landscape. For example, Cenoz and Gorter (2008) investigate the role of linguistic landscape as language input in second language acquisition. They point out the potential use of linguistic landscape as a source of input through the broad functions of English language on commercial signs. A similar point of view

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can be seen in one local small-scale research project in Mexico by Sayer (2009) who suggests ways to use the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical resource for EFL teachers. In his study, English language on signs was analyzed for its social meaning. It can be said that linguistic landscape provides an opportunity for both language teachers and learners to study language in a different way outside classroom.

Dagenais *et al.* (2009) also claims that linguistic landscape serves as “a heuristic” for language learning. In other words, one can learn language as one moves through the linguistic landscape of one’s environment. They focus on young children’s perception of multilingual and multimodal signs in their communities. To sum up, the study of linguistic landscape takes a variety of forms (Cenoz and Gorter, 2008; Dagenais *et al.*, 2009), highlighting the potential use of linguistic landscape as a pedagogical tool.

The place where children encounter linguistic landscapes most frequently is the school. Therefore, some researchers pay attention to the linguistic landscape found in the school. Dressler (2015) examines the promotion of bilingualism of the German bilingual program in one elementary school through the linguistic landscape, using a nexus analysis. In the Thai context, Draper (2010) investigates student attitudes towards multilingual signs at Khon Kaen University located in the Northeast of Thailand. The production of these multilingual signs was motivated by a goal of recognizing, preserving and developing the minority language, Isan, which is the vernacular spoken language of local people in the Northeast.

A common thread in these studies is the recognition of the utility of the linguistic landscape in creating a language learning environment. These and other studies illustrate how linguistic landscape can be used as a pedagogical tool to provide a learning opportunity to language learners any time they see languages on public signs. In this paper, Chulalongkorn University (hereafter CU) is the subject of this study, with the focus on the Faculty of Arts, where one can study a number of foreign languages including English, French, German, Russian, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and Malay. It can therefore be hypothesized that multilingual signs will be abundant in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts, since it is viewed as the main nexus for language instruction at the university.

In this paper, special attention is given to the distinction between signs made by various official University, Faculty and Department authorities on the one hand and by students, and outsiders on the other. The study aims to investigate to what extent the various institutional authorities of the Faculty of Arts, especially the language departments, promote multilingualism in the common areas of the faculty.

Research Questions

- 1) What languages can be found in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts?
- 2) How is information presented in multilingual signs?
- 3) To what extent is multilingualism promoted via the linguistic landscape within the Faculty of Arts and by whom?

This study hopes to draw attention to the linguistic landscape in the Faculty of Arts,

where one expects to find a variety of languages on display. Its contribution to the current trends in the field of applied linguistic is to provide insight into the kinds of input students are exposed to in a typical university language faculty.

2. Preliminary Analysis

Before analyzing the data, I conducted a preliminary analysis to examine the language courses offered to the undergraduate students in CU. The Faculty of Arts provides courses in 21 languages, which can be classified into three types: majors, minors, and elective language courses. There are 11 languages offered as majors for students at the Faculty of Arts. It is noted that Thai language courses were excluded from this study, resulting in ten languages offered for major language study. Five languages are offered as minors and the other five as elective language courses. English language is also provided throughout the university by Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI). Therefore, English courses are offered by two separate entities - the Faculty of Arts, where the students within the faculty are required to study English and others can select English as their minor or elective courses, and CULI, where non-Faculty of Arts students are required to study English.

The study collected data on the number of students enrolled in each Faculty of Arts language course via the university's register website (<http://www.reg.chula.ac.th>) on 20th October, 2015. The data revealed the number of courses available in each language and the number of students enrolled in each course. The study focused on the top five ranked languages based on the rank of highest number of courses

available and highest number of students enrolled in the course.

In terms of number of courses available in the first semester of academic year 2015, Japanese language was offered with the highest number, 29 courses, followed by English offering 26 courses, Chinese offering 20 courses, French and Spanish each offering 15 courses, and German offering 13 courses. However, the number of available courses was not an indicator of the number of enrolled students studying each language. English language courses unsurprisingly turned out to have the highest number of enrolled students as 1,358 students registered at that time. Japanese ranked second with 1,161 students enrolled. The third rank was Chinese (786 students), followed by Spanish (383 students) and Korean (258 students). All of these languages are offered as majors except Korean, which is offered only as minor language to the students at the Faculty of Arts.

3. Methodology

Drawing on Backhaus's (2007) description of multilingualism in Tokyo, the paper will cover three issues that were considered important in assuring the validity of data collection: (1) the geographic limits of the target area; (2) the unit of analysis; and (3) the definition of multilingual signs.

The linguistic landscape in this paper is the Faculty of Arts at CU in Thailand. There are two main buildings located in the territory of the faculty. As geographical location marker for the determination of study areas, the paper focused on the common areas in and outside the buildings which students are presumed to move through while studying

language courses of the faculty. For the inside of the buildings, only signs that appear on the first and second floors of Boromrajakumari (hereafter BRK) building and on the first floor of Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (hereafter MCS) building, in which the Faculty's cafeteria is located, are included in the data collection. In terms of the territory of the Faculty of Arts, the study limited scope to the area between the BRK and MCS buildings and the main road. See the map of the study areas in the Appendix 1.

Huebner (2009) has pointed out that in the early linguistic landscape studies, the unit of analysis was problematic since there was no clear criteria applied to determine what constituted a sign. To prevent ambiguity with respect to unit of analysis, a sign analyzed in the study can be "any piece of written text within spatially definable frame" (Backhaus, 2007: 55). Therefore, a metallic plate attached to poles, a poster, a banner, or a sticker will be counted as one item in the linguistic landscape, regardless of its size and material.

Regarding data collection procedures, I used my I-phone 4s as a tool to take photographs of each sign. Since more than half of the signs in my study areas were temporary, I photographed all the signs in the common areas of the Faculty of Arts as they appeared on the October, 1st and again on October 29th 2015. Posters and banners appear for a short period of time. Less than one month later, most of them were removed and replaced by new ones. To optimize the representation of the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts, in the second visit, I only photographed the temporary signs as part of my data collection. Despite the fact that some languages might not appear in the corpus

due to the time constraints of the study, I feel that the data collected on the two occasions is fairly representative of the linguistic landscape of the Faculty on any given day of the academic year. Over the two days of data collection, a total of 191 signs were counted within the territory of the Faculty of Arts.

Apart from the quantitative analysis, two interviews were conducted to elicit information about some of the signs from the sign agents. One interview was conducted face to face while the other was via telephone.

4. Linguistic Landscape of the Faculty of Arts

To determine the extent to which multilingualism is promoted through signage within the common areas of the Faculty and by whom, two distinctions were made with regard to the 195 signs found. First, the data were sorted into official versus non-official signs. An official sign is any sign produced or sponsored by an administrative unit of the university, including the Faculty of Arts, the various departments within the Faculty, and the units under the employ of the university, such as the cooperative shop, the food stalls in the canteen and the janitorial company hired or contracted by the university. All other signs have been counted as non-official signs. These included signs produced or sponsored by student groups, private businesses, and cultural and non-profit organizations.

Second, the signs were classified as either monolingual or multilingual, even if only one language appeared. The results are presented in Table 1.

	Monolingual	Multilingual	Totals
Official	66 (33.9%)	80 (41%)	146 (74.9%)
Non-official	2 (1%)	47 (24.1%)	49 (25.1%)
Totals	68 (34.9%)	127 (65.1%)	195 (100%)

Table 1: Official and Non-official Monolingual and Multilingual Signs in the Faculty of Arts

Language	Official		Nonofficial		Total	
	# of multilingual signs containing this language	% of multilingual signs containing this language	# of multilingual signs containing this language	% of multilingual signs containing this language	Total # of signs official & non-official / 127	%
English	74 / 80*	92.5	47 / 47*	100	121 / 127	95.3
Thai	62 / 80	77.5	28 / 47	59.6	90 / 127	70.9
Japanese	5 / 80	6.25	2 / 47	4.25	7 / 127	5.5
Korean	1 / 80	1.25	2 / 47	4.25	3 / 127	2.4
Chinese	1 / 80	1.25			1 / 127	0.8
Italian	2 / 80	2.5			2 / 127	1.6
German	2 / 80	2.5			2 / 127	1.6
Latin	2 / 80	2.5			2 / 127	1.6
French	1 / 80	1.25			1 / 127	0.8
Spanish	1 / 80	1.25			1 / 127	0.8
Lao			1 / 47	2	1 / 127	0.8

*These figures include those signs written entirely in English.

Table 2: Distribution of Languages Found in Multilingual Signs in the Linguistic Landscape of the Faculty of Arts Common Areas

Using these working definitions of official vs. non-official and monolingual vs. multilingual, the data show that the vast majority of signs in the Faculty common areas are official (146 or 74.9%). Of those, over half (80 out of 146, or 54.8%) were multilingual. While only a little over 25% of the signs found were from non-official sources, over 95% of them (47 of 49) were classified as multilingual. Many of these non-official signs were announcements of special events or academic conferences

sponsored by international organizations or other institutions. An initial conclusion, then, might be that multilingualism is being encouraged within the Faculty of Arts through its public signage from both the official and non-official sectors.

A closer look at the languages represented in the official and non-official signage, however, suggests that the languages found are not representative of all those

taught in the Faculty. Table 2 displays the languages found in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts common areas.

	1. Duplicating	2. Fragmentary	3. Overlapping	4. Complementary
Official signs	22	9	6	23
Nonofficial signs	2	12	1	17
In Total	24	21	7	40

Table 3: Distribution of Multilingual Signs According to Reh's Taxonomy

The data show that the range of languages found reflects neither the range of languages taught nor the relative number of courses offered nor the number of students enrolled in these language courses. Two official signs were written entirely in Japanese, reflecting the fact that Japanese is offered as a major and enrollments in Japanese courses are second only to English. But the language most often appearing in multilingual signs is English. It appears in 121 of the 127 multilingual signs in the corpus, or in 95.3% of the multilingual signs examined, followed by Thai found on 70.9% of the multilingual signs. Nine other foreign languages can be found in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts, two of which appeared in both official and nonofficial signs, six only in official signs and one found only in a nonofficial sign. Surprisingly, given the number of courses offered and students enrolled in Japanese and Chinese, those languages were found in only 5.5% and 0.8% of the signs in the linguistic landscape. Spanish and Korean, the third and fourth most popular language courses based on enrollment, were represented in only 0.8% and 2.4% of the signs respectively. Finally, of the total of ten foreign languages found in the signage of the Faculty, three (Chinese, French,

Spanish) were found on a single sign (discussed below).

5. Arrangement of Bilingual Information

While the data discussed in the previous section reveal that eleven foreign languages were found in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts, they shed no light on the ways the various languages are used in those signs. Of the 127 signs classified as multilingual under the operational definition of the term used here, only 92 contain more than one language. Sorting the corpus according to Reh's (2004) taxonomy of bilingual organization of information reveals that most of the duplicating signs are from official sources (See Table 3).

Most of these duplicating signs displaying exactly the same information in two languages, usually in Thai and English, are intended for two separate audiences.



Picture 1: “No Internet”

For example in Picture 1, a sign in front of the copy shop in the MCS building, the English phrase “No Internet” is a verbatim translation of the Thai text. The sign is most likely intended for two separate audiences, one audience of Thai students and staff at the university and the other of foreign students and faculty who might not be able to read Thai. But most if not all of the intended Thai audience are likely literate in both languages and can read both the English and the Thai portions of this sign. Therefore, if the sole function of this sign were to inform, there would be no need to repeat the message in Thai. The presence of Thai here serves the symbolic function of recognizing the fact that Thai is the first language, the national language, and the preferred language of identity of most Thai readers.

Not all duplicating signs, however, are intended for separate and distinct audiences. In a poster attached to the glass door of the cooperative shop in the BRK building (Picture 2), the word “Welcome” is repeated in six languages. It is unlikely that native speakers of all of these

languages will see this sign. And it is certainly not the case that the services provided in the co-op are offered in any more than a couple of these languages at most. But the six foreign languages in the sign represent the most heavily enrolled language courses offered in the Faculty, and most customers or potential customers can understand or guess the meaning of each of these words. This sign serves the symbolic function of offering token support and perhaps minimal input for the most popular languages and cultures taught in the Faculty.



Picture 2: A “Welcome” poster of the co-operative shop contained six languages (Thai, English, Chinese, French, Korean, and Spanish)

Although the majority of duplicating signs are from official sources, 74% of the multilingual signs and about 95% of the non-official signs in the Faculty common areas are what Reh calls “fragmentary” (in which only selected parts of information given in one language while the entire informational content appears only on one language), “overlapping” (in which two or more languages share information partially but each contains information not found in

the other), or “complementary” (in which two or more languages convey completely different information). This classification, however, sheds no light on the kinds and amount of information conveyed in each sign and tends to overstate the presence of languages other than Thai and English in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty of Arts.

This point is illustrated in the examples from one of two English-Italian signs made by the Italian language department to announce an upcoming event promoting Italian culture, music and cuisine (See Picture 3). This sign displays a complementary arrangement of bilingual information since the entire poster is written in English except for the words “MERCATINO D’AUTUNNO” (“Market in Autumn”; my translation using Google), which appears only in Italian. The phrase is the title of the demonstration announced in the line immediately preceding it. To some, it may suggest that the demonstration might be performed in Italian. Whether or not it will be, the Italian phrase is not necessary for readers not literate in Italian to understand the details of the message as a whole and the sign provides little language learning opportunity for students of Italian. Rather it serves a symbolic function of providing a sense of authenticity, rather than to convey any information vital to understanding.

A second example can be found in a poster promoting a “Movie Seminar on the Occasion of 25 Years of Germany Reunification 2015” sponsored by three organizations. I categorized the poster as official sign since the Faculty of Arts was among the three event organizers. Three languages, English, Thai and German, appear on the poster. Although the

occasion advertises a seminar about German culture, the German language appears only in the names the institutions and a phrase written as “Eintritt Frei”, which directed translates as “Free of charge.” Again, all of the critical information is presented in the two languages most commonly understood by students and faculty in the Faculty of Arts. The use of German here provides little input for students of that language. It is just a bilingual flash or “wink.”

Yet another example involves a poster announcing the Fifth International Conference on Lao Studies. This would be considered a fragmentary organization of information, since the only use of Lao on this poster is limited to the very small print in the bilingual (English-Lao) logo for the Center for Lao Studies based in San Francisco, one of the sponsoring organizations (Picture 4). The Lao here serves no informational function. Rather it is a kind of “bilingual flash,”ⁱ playing token homage to the focus of the conference. The irony here is that many if not most interested readers of the sign would be literate in Lao, yet the language is all but absent from the announcement.

Apart from its informational value and its symbolic values of globalization, modernity high status, etc., the motivation for using English might also be for its perceived aesthetic value. This perspective was found during an interview with one of students who organized a photography camp in Khao Yai. The student-made poster advertising the camp was written mostly in English. Only the organizers names were provided in Thai. When questioned, the interviewee said the use of English was mainly because of its font, which, in his opinion, is considered a minimalist style.



Picture 3: An Italian event sign made by the Italian language department of the Faculty of Arts



Picture 4: Conference on Lao Studies

There were no other particular reasons such as to attract foreign exchange students to join or to use English during the stay in the camp. This observation raises the question, well beyond the scope of this paper, of the perceived aesthetics of not just fonts but also of languages in the linguistic landscape.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has examined the linguistic landscape in the common areas of the

Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University to determine the extent to which and how official and nonofficial signs promote multilingualism. Eleven languages were found, among which English and Thai were most frequently used on two types of signs. It is apparent that Thai-English bilingualism is strongly supported within the faculty, both officially and non-officially, a recognition of the importance of English globally and in the more immediate context of ASEAN. On the other hand, other ASEAN

languages are virtually invisible in the Faculty's linguistic landscape (exceptions are the minimal use of Lao and Chinese). Other languages taught in the Faculty are only slightly less invisible.

However, a mere count of languages found in the linguistic landscape does not reflect, and even distorts their relative informational or symbolic value. A classification of bilingual organization of information *a la* Reh (2004) has limited value in understanding the intended goal(s) and audience (e.g., "No Internet"). In non-duplicating multilingual signs, the foreign language is used minimally and for such symbolic functions as to acknowledge a culture or to create an air of authenticity.

Although well beyond the scope of this paper, a more informative approach to the analysis of language use in multilingual signs might be a componential analysis of language use *a la* Toolan's (1988) analysis of components of print advertisements or Swales and Feak's (2012) move analysis in academic writing. In one such an analysis of multilingual language mixing in Hindi advertising, Bhatia (1987) found, for example that English tended to be used in headlines and product naming. The body copy tended to be in Hindi. Such an approach can reveal how to use the various languages in multilingual signs to most effectively achieve one's goal.

It is clear that other than English, foreign languages are not promoted in the linguistic landscape of the Faculty. It may be that language departments are not aware of the potential of using the linguistic landscape to provide comprehensible input. Because these languages are not seen in the public sphere outside the university that English is, that

is all the more reason why the university might provide as many opportunities for language input in its linguistic signage.

The fact that texts in landscape are visible does not mean that students always see them, pay attention to them, read them, or understand how they work. To raise language awareness by letting students be exposed to authentic contexts in foreign languages can make them conscious of linguistic strategies of their landscape that they may have previously taken for granted. An important part of the process is a pedagogical approach that allows students to recognize public space as an arena in which different players, such as advertisers and business persons, exercise influence in ways that are often hidden or covert such as the use of speech acts or politeness strategies. Linguistic landscapes is therefore useful to develop students' critical thinking skill as well as their pragmatic competence, so that they are able to read between lines in authentic contexts.

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Appendix

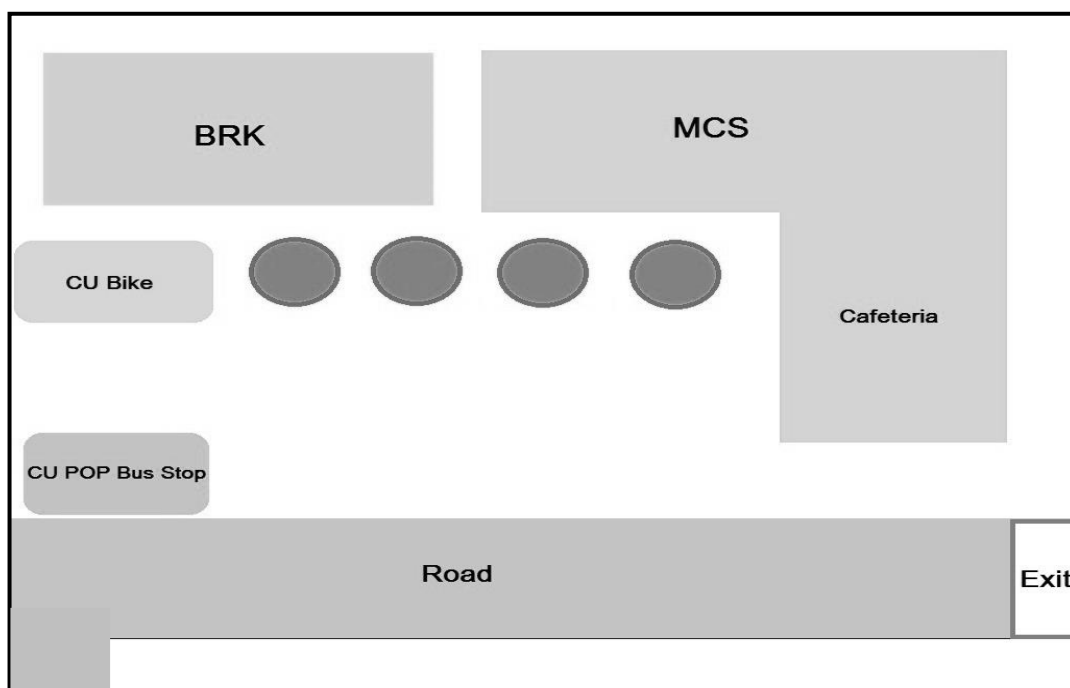


Figure 1: A map illustrating the territory of Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University

ⁱ The term “bilingual winks” has been used by Lamarre (2014) to refer to bilingual puns and other bilingual wordplay, often to circumvent some bit of language legislation. Here I use it to refer to the minimal use of a second language for symbolic purposes with no informational value.