

“สื่อที่เรามองผ่าน” การศึกษาลักษณะทางภาษาศาสตร์ของภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในภูมิทัศน์ ทางภาษาศาสตร์ในย่านธุรกิจของกรุงเทพมหานคร

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บทคัดย่อ

การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษมิได้เกิดขึ้นเฉพาะในห้องเรียนเท่านั้น แต่ยังพบได้ภายในชุมชนหรือย่านที่อยู่อาศัยของผู้เรียนอีกด้วย เราจึงสามารถพัฒนาการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษได้โดยใช้แหล่งข้อมูลต่าง ๆ ผ่านภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาศาสตร์ เช่น ป้ายโฆษณาและป้ายสาธารณะ วิชาการแปลบางวิชาในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ มักใช้ตำราเก่าและเนื้อหาไม่ทันสมัย โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในการแปลโฆษณา ดังนั้น การใช้ภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาศาสตร์จึงเป็นอีกทางหนึ่งสำหรับผู้ศึกษาภาษาอังกฤษจะได้ใช้สื่อการเรียนการสอนที่มาจากภาษาในสถานการณ์จริง อย่างไรก็ตามภาษาที่ใช้ในภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาศาสตร์จะต้องผ่านการวิเคราะห์ก่อนที่จะนำมาใช้สอนในห้องเรียน งานศึกษาชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจลักษณะทางภาษาศาสตร์ของภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาศาสตร์ ได้แก่ รูปแบบการใช้งานของภาษา โครงสร้างทางภาษา ระดับความเป็นทางการของภาษาและภาษาภาพพจน์ ซึ่งใช้ในป้ายโฆษณาต่าง ๆ ในพื้นที่ที่มีความหลากหลายทางภาษาและย่านธุรกิจของกรุงเทพ โดยปรับใช้แนวทางของ แอนดี แชน ค็อก (2555) และทิวพร ธงทอง (2559) ผลการศึกษาพบว่า รูปแบบการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษส่วนใหญ่ที่ปรากฏในภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาศาสตร์ คือ รูปแบบการใช้ภาษาแบบให้ข้อมูล ร้อยละ 81 ขณะที่กลุ่มของโครงสร้างภาษามีการใช้วลีถึงร้อยละ 83 อย่างไรก็ตามการใช้ภาษาภาพพจน์ในป้ายโฆษณามีการใช้ภาษาแสดงจินตภาพ เพียงร้อยละ 8 นอกจากนี้ ระดับความเป็นทางการของภาษาที่ใช้ มีการใช้ภาษาแบบไม่เป็นทางการถึงร้อยละ 66 ภาษาที่ใช้ในการสื่อ มีการใช้ภาษาเดียว คือ ภาษาอังกฤษ มากถึงร้อยละ 95 การศึกษาชิ้นนี้นำเสนอข้อมูลใหม่ในเชิงลึกเกี่ยวกับวิธีการใช้คุณลักษณะทางภาษาศาสตร์ของภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในภูมิทัศน์ทางภาษาศาสตร์ซึ่งจะนำไปใช้เพื่อเป็นสื่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในสถานการณ์จริง

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Hiding in Plain Sight : The Study of English Linguistic Features in Linguistic Landscapes in Business Areas of Bangkok

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Abstract

English language learning does not only occur in the classroom, but it also takes place within learners' communities. Learning English can be enhanced through various resources like available linguistics landscapes (LLs) such as billboard and public signs. In some translation courses, textbooks used in the courses are outdated, especially in advertising translation. Therefore, using LLs could be one way for EFL students to access authentic texts. However, language in LLs must be analyzed before using them as a class material. This study investigates what linguistic features (language functions, language structures, formality scales, and figurative language) in LLs, which were taken from multilingual and business sites of Bangkok. By adapting the frameworks of Hancock (2012) and Thongtong (2016), the results revealed that the highest percentage of language functions use in LLs is the informing function (81%). "Phrase" is used more frequently in language structure at 83% while only 8% in imagery of figurative language. Moreover, the informal scale of language in LLs is used the most (66%) and monolingual (English) is the most commonly used in language displays (95%). This study reveals new insights into how linguistic features of LLs can be used as authentic materials for English language teaching.

Keywords : Linguistic landscapes, Linguistic features, English language teaching

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1. INTRODUCTION

English surrounds Bangkok citizens, especially those who reside in downtown areas of Bangkok. We can see the use of English language on billboards, street signs, and advertising boards, in the city. The use of English language in public is called Linguistic Landscapes (LLs) which is the use of language in public areas such as billboards, road and safety signs, shop signs, graffiti and all sorts of other inscriptions in the public space (Landry, R. & Bourhis, R. Y., 1997). It is observed that the use of English on LLs for advertisements as well as on public signs especially in the spells of high season will be varied. The focus of this study is to examine the linguistics features of LLs before using them as pedagogical resources in teaching and learning English.

During the high seasons like Songkran festival and New Year eve, varieties of language use are updated in LLs in order to topically advertise and promote their selling products or to inform the customers about upcoming events. The linguistic landscape of a community reflects the people's cultures and identities. Road signs and LLs provide clear visual aids in promoting language and culture and can be used as excellent authentic material for language learning in real-life situations. This also shows that English language envelops learners in their community. Before applying LLs in the language classroom, it is necessary to investigate the linguistic features contained in those signs.

In this research, the linguistic landscapes (LLs) the in the three business districts: Siam Square area, Silom Road, and Sukhumvit Road were the focus. It was because they are business and entertainment areas in Bangkok where there are a lot of foreign workers and travelers and in which the areas deploy more advertising boards or signs than other areas in Bangkok do. The LLs investigated would include linguistic features, i.e. figurative language, language functions, language structures, language displays and formality scales of language. The researcher collected LLs data, consisting of 100 photos on New Year's Eve (2020) and during Songkran Festival (April 2021) since the most up-to-date advertisements and information in LLs were available during these times. Moreover, linguistic landscape research has produced numerous vivid descriptions of the linguistic features of contemporary cityscapes so this study investigates linguistic features used in linguistic landscapes (LLs) in Bangkok business districts in Thailand.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to investigate linguistic features used in linguistic landscapes (LLs) in Bangkok business area in Thailand.

3. RELATED RESEARCH

3.1 Linguistic landscapes (LLs) to enhance language skills

Landry and Bourhis (1997) stated that linguistic landscapes (LLs) referred to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. They also posited that LLs serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory. Therefore, the result showed that the language of LLs can be used in language teaching.

In 2012, Handcock used camera safari to investigate how student teachers responded to LLs in Edinburgh. The study revealed that LLs were characterized into three areas of language use in LLs including avoidance, acceptance, and awareness. The result also showed that the language teacher can use LLs as a pedagogical tool.

Gorter and Cenoz (2014) supported the idea that those language displays in public space can also be useful for learning second languages as they concluded in a study of possibilities of signage for SLA, when they (2007, 2014) focused on the potential use of LLs as a source of input in SLA.

Chesnut, Lee and Schulte (2013) conducted an investigation into the language lessons focusing on undergraduate English pedagogy and linguistic landscape. They analyzed three Korean undergraduate students' experiences conducting a linguistic landscape research project. The results showed that this project led to a greater awareness of the complex and contradictory relationships between one language and another language in bilingual or multilingual LLs and aided their development as language learners. The study also found that the different perspectives of these three students and their Canadian instructor shaped how they viewed these multilingual signs, creating both tension, and opportunities for learning.

Rowland (2013) studied the pedagogical benefits of a linguistic landscape project in Japan. This article examined the claims made by various scholars regarding the use of the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical resource within multilingual educational contexts. The study of publicly displayed texts, such as advertisements and road signs, is now beginning to find favor in L2 classrooms, particularly in ESL contexts. The study supports the idea that pedagogical linguistic landscape projects can be valuable to EFL students in a variety of ways, particularly in the development of students' symbolic competence and literacy skills in the sense of multiliteracies.

To sum up, the linguistic landscape can be used to enhance language skills of language learners. LLs can develop not only literacy skills but also pragmatic skills and language creative form. To support this idea, Verhelst et al. (2009) posited that applying LLs in the language teaching materials did not only provide language knowledge, but included pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects as an integral part of the formal language learning curriculum. From the related studies above, we can see that many research studies focused only on the pragmatics, syntax, and semantics in LLs. However, the studies on language features and functions in LLs are still required.

3.2 Linguistic Features in LLs

This research study divided linguistic features in LLs into five areas including: (1) figurative language, (2) language functions, (3) language structures, (4) formality scales of language, and (5) language displays. When we use LLs as a language teaching material, teachers should understand the linguistic information applied in LLs. For example, the teachers are required to study the language functions and structures used in LLs for the application of grammar or syntax in linguistics classrooms. Therefore, understanding linguistic features is the first task of language teachers when dealing with the application of LLs.

In terms of figurative language in LLs, Lakoff and Johnson (2008) illustrated that metaphors is pervasive in everyday life, not only just in language but also in thought and action. It is our ordinary conceptual system when we think and act.

Boers and Lindstormberg (2008) explained that figurative language can be used in English as a foreign language classroom in many ways. For instance, some focused on the use of literature as an authentic material to search for figurative meanings. However, figurative language can be found in the form of a sentence, phrase, and vocabulary.

From the above theories, we can see that figurative language can be seen in all language forms including LLs around us. However, the study of figurative language and language functions in LLs is still needed to provide an overview of the linguistic features of LLs in Bangkok business areas.

There are 4 main sentence structures in English language, i.e. simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. By applying LLs in EFL class, the students are exposed to differentiate types of sentences before translation. Thus, this will be another way for students to understand more about language structure. Guffey and Seefer (2013) found that sentences referred to groups of words that express complete thoughts, and the students must learn to recognize sentence patterns and types as well as learn how to differentiate among phrases and clauses. This knowledge will be especially helpful in punctuating sentences and avoiding common sentence faults.

It is important to know the level of formality in English language for the correct and appropriate use. Sawant and Hingoli (n.d.) stated that stylistics, simply defined as the study of style in linguistics. The study is rarely undertaken for its own sake, but is used simply as an exercise in describing language use in particular contexts. We normally study style because we want to explain literary stylistics implicitly or explicitly.

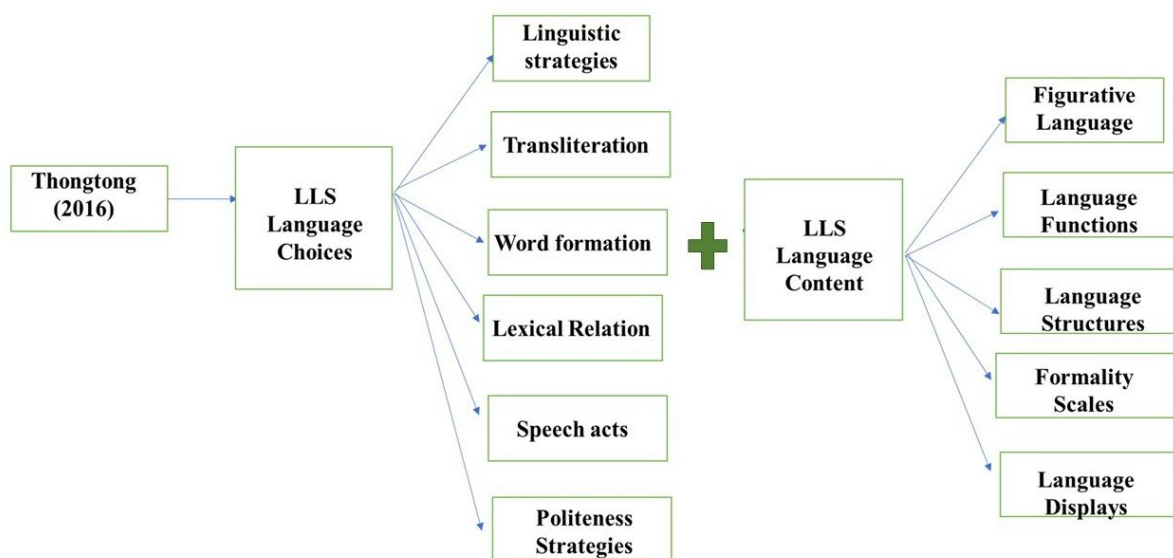
Thongtong (2016) found that LLs both created and reflected a tourist space on language choices in the creation of signs on Nimmanhemmin Road in Chiang Mai, Thailand and explored how linguistic features are used in creating signs on the road. The study illustrated that tourism in Chiang Mai has influences on language choices in sign creation. Monolingual, bilingual and trilingual signs can be found on the road. LLs in Chiang Mai were studied in terms of code mixing, language choices, and linguistic devices among traveling destinies in this province such as Nimmanhemmin Road, Central Airport Plaza, etc.

In conclusion, from the above related studies, the research study on LLs can shed light onto new areas of academic interest and English language study.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Conceptual Framework

In conducting the study of LLs, a “camera safari” framework by Hancock (2012) was adopted because his study aimed at investigating LLs as a pedagogical tool to arouse students’ interest. The conceptual framework for data analysis was developed based on Thongtong (2016) and the researcher’s own approach. The study on language choices focused on code mixing in sign creation such as monolingual, bilingual and trilingual use in LLs. However, in this research, the author applied this framework by adding the analysis of figurative language, language functions, language structures, formality scales of language and language displays in LLs. The diagram below represents the conceptual framework of this study.



Picture 1 Conceptual Framework Diagram

4.2 Data Collection Method

The study method of LL includes: 1) use of a camera to capture photos of linguistic signs and then, 2) storage the data in a computer for later analysis. In data collection, the author took photographs of linguistic landscapes at random by adopting the camera safari approach of Hancock (2012). The author visited the focused areas of Bangkok and took photos of LLs to collect data on language signs in the public. Then, the qualitative method was employed in the step of data analysis by applying Dancygier and Sweetser's (2014) approach for analyzing figurative language and Hill and Miller's (2013) approach for language functions in LLs.

4.3 Scope of Data Collection and Data Collection Period

The data in this research involved the collection of the linguistics landscapes in three urban areas of Bangkok which were Siam Square, Silom Road and Sukhumvit Road. The target areas included (1) Business Areas, (2) Department Stores, (3) Tourist areas, and (4) Ethnic societies. All data were collected during two periods, i.e. New Year Festival (December 2019 and January 2020) and Thai Traditional New Year Festival (April to June 2021). The author decided to collect data in these two periods because they were famous festivals, and the linguistic landscapes had been up dated especially in terms of business discourse.

Thongtong (2016) suggested that scoping down the types of signs is needed for data collection. Therefore, around 100 randomly selected signs which included the big signs and easy-to-notice signs had been chosen.

5. FINDINGS AND DISSCUSION

In this part, the findings of the investigation on linguistic features used in linguistic landscapes (LLs) in Bangkok business districts in Thailand are presented. The results are explained in terms of linguistic features categorizations and divided according to each area's study in descriptive statistics. The table below represents LLs content analysis in accordance with five focused areas. The reported percentage reflects the frequency of each type of linguistic features found from 100 signs.

Table 1 LLs Data Analysis

Focused Areas	Percent (%)
1. Figurative language	
Imagery	8
Imperative	7
Hyperbole	6
Others (rhyme, tagline, etc.)	14
No figurative language	65
2. Language Functions	
Informing	81
Imperative	9
Suggesting	6
Others (questioning, denying, etc.)	4
3. Language Structures	
Phrase	83
Simple Sentence	14
Others (complex sentence, single word)	3
4. Formality Scales of Language	
Informal	66
Neutral	31
Formal	3
5. Language Displays	
Business Content (Monolingual)	95
Bilingual	4
Multilingual	1

5.1 Figurative language

According to the analysis table, the results revealed that there is only a small amount of the usage of figurative language in LLs in the business and tourist areas of Bangkok especially the advertisement boards used to encourage or attract the readers to buy their products or services. This research study analyzed the use of figurative language for 100 advertisement boards and found that only 35 out of 100 applied figurative language in the outside advertising sites. The highest percentage of figurative language is imagery, 8% followed by imperative, 7% and hyperbole, 6%, for example “Choose your world” which can be described as hyperbole in figurative language in order to open the readers’ mind or to encourage them to try something

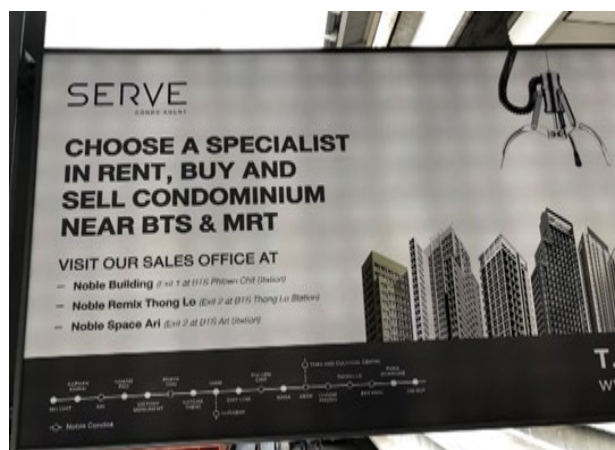
new. The author found that some types of figurative language were applied in LLs such as the use of rhyme, 3%, superlative, 2 % and pun, 1%. As the figurative examples are so few in number, the author did not include the rest into the table above. The reason for so little usage of figurative language in advertisement boards can be surmised because the board size or space is limited, or the advertising detail is too short for figurative language. This is opposed to the study of Boers and Lindstormberg (2008) who insisted that figurative language can be used in English as a foreign language classroom, and many teachers used literature as an authentic material to search for the meaning figuratively. The finding on a small number of figurative languages demonstrates the stylistic function on written language for advertisement boards.



Pictures 2 Figurative Language in LLs

5.2 Language functions

On the side of language functions, there are seven types of language functions used in LLs in the Bangkok districts. The highest percentage is informing (81%) for example, “Fully-Furnished Condos” and “One Step to BTS”. This is common because the purpose of the advertisement is to inform their promotions to the readers. Some examples of imperative (9%), including “Must try”, which was created to encourage the readers to act on the advice of the advertisement. However, the percentage of using imperative was really lower than informing. The reason is that, the main purpose of environmental printed advertisements is to inform readers about products or services. Also, with the limited writing space on billboards or signs, this caused a low variety of language functions in LLs. The language functions found in LLs in this study related to the study of Gorter and Cenoz (2008). They insisted that not only pragmatic competence can be developed, but also second language literacy skills can benefit from LLs. They stated that the development of communication channels and media has provided access to multimodal literacy based on the affordances provided by gesture, sound, visuals and other semiotic symbols including language. Therefore, in this case, LLs is determined as multimodal because it combines visual and printed texts.



Picture 3 Language Function in LLs

5.3 Language structure

The highest percentage of language structures in LLs is the use of phrases in advertising boards (83%). There were very few using complex sentence (2%) and only word (1%). This reason is that LLs in public areas contained a limited space to describe their information. Some advertisements are on billboards on highways, therefore, long sentences are not practical for drivers. Simple sentences and compound-complex sentences are too long for billboard advertisements. Another reason is that the use of phrases is shorter and clearer than full sentences. This is related to the study by Guffey and Seefer (2013) stating that sentences referred to groups of words that express complete thoughts. Students must learn to recognize sentence patterns and types as well as learn how to differentiate among phrases and clauses.



Picture 5 Language Structure in LLs for Phrase and Complex Sentence

5.4 Formality scale of language

The study divided the formality scales into seven scales, but the result revealed that there were only three scales used in the LLs data. The highest percentage is the use of the informal scale (66%). This is because most of advertisements want to get closer to the readers, and using a lot of formal scales may

demonstrate more serious expression. The study of Sawant and Hingoli (n.d.) supported that stylistic issues in advertisement boards tended to use informal style.



Picture 6 Formality Scale of Language in LLs

5.5 Language display

Finally, language displays presented in LLs can be divided into three categories including business content, bilingual, and multilingual. Since the areas from which the researcher collected the data was a commercial zone in Bangkok, it can be noticed that there were many foreigners in this area. The result illustrated that the highest language display is business content coming along with monolingual (English) in LLs (95%) while bilingual display accounts for only 4% and 1% for multilingual displays account for only 1% of displays. This finding showed that the pattern of language display was English reflecting the increased importance of its popularity in Thailand. This indicated that English takes place as a lingual franca in Bangkok business areas and causes the use of English in monolingual displays in business content display. As seen in, Gorter and Cenoz (2014), they posited that those language displays in public space can also be useful for learning second languages. The language displays and their messages do not only convey language meaning, but also reveal the diversity of language and culture underlying them.

6. CONCLUSION

LLs has been studied for decades starting from sociolinguistic perspective to English learning resources. Through the use of LLs as learning materials, learners are engaged in language activities outside classroom contexts. Therefore, LLs can be applied as a teaching material especially for the lessons of vocative translation or advertising translation. Not only language knowledge that the students can gain from LLs, but also their critical thinking skills can be improved by using this material. Gorter and Cenoz (2014) and Thongtong (2016) also stated that LLs can be used in SLA classroom as an authentic material to represent the fact of language use in the public area for the students. Using LLs as a teaching material required teachers to work critically on LLs language analysis before applying them in the class because not all advertisement boards contain correct use of language. The use of figurative language, language functions, language structures, formality scales of language, and language displays will encourage students in language awareness when they have to communicate in public. Therefore, if the teachers employ such available resources in class, English language learning can be more practical, interesting and authentic. This study showed that public signs present language teachers' opportunity to maximize the potential of using real-life, popular language in context particularly for vocative translation. LLs can be a very useful tool to help learners see authentic advertising genres which is not available in existing translation textbooks. Language features in LLs provide specific types

of language use in a practical way. Moreover, the use of LLs encourages learners to be aware of their local community and invites them to actively participate in a linguistic environment.

7. RECOMMENDATION

One of the problems of English language teaching and learning in Thailand is the lack of motivation due to scant exposure to the target language. However, when English becomes visible through LLs, it makes the learning of English more meaningful and enjoyable. With the use of LLs, English can be more authentic and create more functions for learners, thus, motivating their interest. Moreover, the messages on the signs not only convey meaning, but also reveal linguistic features and diversity of language including the culture underlying them. The findings from the linguistic features can be used as a guideline for English classroom application. The researcher employed 5 types of linguistic features to design a translation course consisting of 8 lessons. The content of each lesson is based on each type of linguistic feature. For example, Unit 1 is the foundation of translation process with the main linguistic feature on the formality scales of language. The LL signs will be used for several purposes, i.e. motivation, discussion, explanation, and practice. The students, for instance, consider the formality levels of the language in the signs including the discussion on any error in translation. Later, they are assigned to practice translation from LL signs. The discussion part will yield pedagogical benefits not only linguistic awareness but also critical skill and creativity.

The study of LLs not only represents the use of language, but also reflects the power, status, and importance of particular language in a specific area. Using LLs as a teaching tool allows learners to locally learn a global language in a more lively and vivid way. LLs raises learners' awareness of English for communication and allows them to see the language in real context. This can indicate that linguistic landscapes consist of both an informative function for pedagogical value and a symbolic function of economy, culture, and identity of the community. Finally, as pointed out by Sayer (2010), the use of LLs as learners' resources develops learners' language awareness and communication in their communities. Future studies on LLs should focus on examining how LLs facilitates teaching and learning English. Moreover, further investigation could focus on students' perspectives and their linguistic awareness on the employment of LLs in English Language learning.

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