Diversity, Adversity, and Inclusiveness: Student Experiences of a Linguistic Landscape

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the display of languages on signs and how this has shaped student experiences of the linguistic landscape on campus. The research site is a Thai University that has conducted English medium of instruction (EMI). As a result of its English policy, the university has attracted students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Two main questions are 'What is the representation of languages on signs on campus?' and 'How have Thai and international students' experiences been shaped by the linguistic landscape? Photos of linguistic tokens and semi-structured interviews were taken to gain insight into student experiences and perspectives. The analysis of 815 linguistic tokens revealed monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs. While Thai was the dominant language, English was indicated as a lingua franca on campus. The displays of different languages showed the diversity of university members. However, an adverse effect on international students was expressed when their language was solely displayed on signs. Although international students expressed opposition when their language was used in negative signs, bilingual and multilingual signs were generally well received by university members.

Keywords: Bilingual, diversity, linguistic landscape, monolingual, multilingual, signs, student experience, university

INTRODUCTION

Research into the linguistic landscape (or LL) has become one of the key areas in sociolinguistics. The most frequently researched locations are generally tourist attractions, capital cities or city centers (Alomoush & Al-Naimat, 2020; Backhaus, 2005; Singhasiri, 2013), and in all public

spaces. Institutional contexts, such as educational settings with a certain unique context, have drawn more LL researchers' attention to their linguistic landscape. For example, Gorter and Cenoz (2015) categorized sign functions in multilingual schools in Spain, while other researchers (e.g., Choi et al., 2019; Hynes, 2012; Jing-Jing, 2015; Siricharoen, 2016; Yavari, 2012) focused on higher education institutions.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) are pioneers in introducing linguistic landscapes as a field of study. They stated that the LL study originally focused on language planning, ethnolinguistic vitality, and vitality perception of language minorities. Regarding the theoretical framework of ethnolinguistic vitality, they define the linguistic landscape as, "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25).

This definition has been extensively acknowledged by key researchers in the field (for example, Backhaus, 2005; Huebner, 2006); however, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) asserted that the definition had overlooked the vibrant nature of LL studies. Accordingly, Ben-Rafael (2009) defined the 'Linguistic Landscape' as a notion referring to the public space marked by linguistic items and the observable languages in a designated area. Shohamy and Gorter (2009) added that LL was the study of languages that appeared in cities, markets, shops, schools, governmental and business buildings, campuses, beaches, and moving vehicles.

Notably, the language choices of higher education institutions worldwide have been influenced by regional or supranational organizations, for example, the G20 grouping, the EU, and ASEAN, and as stated by Ferguson (2012), their easiest path for their working language is English. The Bologna process under the guidance of the EU, aiming to internationalize European academia, has led to more initiatives among the EU country members. EMI was one initiative adopted to facilitate and increase the mobility of students and academicians in main European universities such as Dutch (Klaassen & De Graaff, 2001) and Swedish universities (Airey & Linder, 2006). Asia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea have frequently been used as English as a Medium of Instruction research sites (Kam, 2006; Kim, 2011; Rose & McKinley, 2017).

Implementing English as a Medium of Instruction is nothing new since it has been conducted in universities across Europe and Asia. Kuteeva (2020), however, has stressed that each English as a Medium of Instruction context has its practice and can vary in terms of its language regime, order of discourses, and assessment of linguistic resources. In Europe, EMI drivers include globalization and internationalization, student exchange, the market for international students, teaching and research, and staff mobility (Coleman, 2006). On the other hand, the common driver of EMI, as shared by

universities in Europe and Asia, is the globalization or internationalization of academia, such as in Sweden, Turkey, and Japan (Kuteeva, 2020; Pehlivan, 2018; Rose & McKinley, 2017; Söderlundh, 2013). Nevertheless, this cannot establish that they have had the same English as a Medium of Instruction practices, effects, or results.

For example, Söderlundh's (2013) study showed that in a Swedish university with the English as a Medium of Instruction context, English was not always spoken by students and formed local norms for its use. The linguistic environment was highlighted as a local product in the target university, where most students were Swedish. However, in their earliest attempts to internationalize their faculties, Japanese universities saw their English as a Medium of Instruction courses as criticized for aiming exclusively at international students rather than their own. Only after a more recent initiative by Japan's Ministry of Education-Top Global University Project (2014-2023) EMI courses become more inclusive in supporting Japanese and international students (Rose & McKinley, 2017). Beyond the classroom, some Japanese universities, such as Kyushu University, had a committee to manage university signs by including the English language to foster an international atmosphere and address international students' needs (Jing-Jing, 2015).

Implementing English as a Medium of Instruction allows students across the globe to study at MFU and makes this campus more diverse in terms of resources brought by the students. Students' linguistic

backgrounds tend to lead to a multilingual community. According to Gorter (2007), multilingualism is not uncommon, and the diversity of languages has vital implications for individuals and societies. Furthermore, diversity and inclusion are mentioned as keywords related to multilingualism. The differences between different languages and people's ways of communication are generally used to describe language diversity. Additionally, McCarty and Chen (2014) define the term as a resource needed to be supported and preserved; it is a vital condition empowering users or speakers of different languages. In educational settings, language diversity is linked to students' linguistic backgrounds. If their diverse backgrounds are recognized and valued, not only will opportunities rise for their educational inclusion or inclusiveness, but ample linguistic and cultural resources for all involved will become greater in these learning contexts. As emphasized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; 2014), one of the key advocates of multilingual education, multilingualism is a source of both human opportunity and strength.

In the LL study, the displays of languages are examined for the representation of linguistic diversity, the diversity of the language speakers, and the status of the different languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). How certain languages are displayed, on which part of signs, and what message is conveyed can be linked to the language ideologies of the sign agents. The display of a certain language can be a blessing for

certain people; however, the same language, surprisingly, can be perceived as something negative. For example, many consider English as an international language, a language of globalization, or a vital tool to gain access to information and services, the opportunity for employability, and world knowledge, but others find it a threat to other languages (Phillipson, 1992) or, the diversity of languages.

Globalization has driven higher education institutions worldwide to develop various initiatives to catch up with technological advancement and the changing world. Like other universities, language education policy is one of the key initiatives of Mae Fah Luang University, the research site of the present study. MFU has conducted English medium of instruction (EMI) to achieve its internationalization mission in 11 schools out of its 15 schools. This policy has established an interesting research site that has attracted students from other countries in the same region and beyond. While EMI is expected to support students' learning, outside the class, languages on signs in the university are meant to support students' daily lives and enrich their learning experience on campus. Hence, the present research aims to explore the influences of the linguistic landscape through student experiences of the displays of languages, the information, the instructions, and the messages provided on campus signs. The understanding of how signs and languages on signs affect students' lives and shape their experiences could provide insight and information for further

support or development of constructive communication through the modification of LL.

METHODS

Research Site

Mae Fah Luang University Chiang Rai campus is in northern Thailand, where three countries, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand, converge. Established in 1998, this comprehensive medium-sized university has six missions, one of which is to promote the university's internationalization (Mae Fah Luang University, 2017). Accordingly, its main language policy, English as the medium of instruction, has been implemented for over two decades. As a result, it has increased staff and students with nationalities other than Thai.

In 11 out of MFU's 15 schools, the medium of instruction is English, while four schools, namely, the School of Health Sciences, the School of Law, the School of Nursing, and the School of Dentistry, offer their instruction mainly in Thai. In 2018, of all 1,818 university staff, 721 were academic staff, and among them, 611 (84.74%) were Thai, and 110 (15.26%) were of other nationalities (see Table 1).

The number of international students between 2014 and 2018 increased from 150 (3.35%) to 229 (6.43%; Division of Registrar, 2018). In 2018, of all 3,560 students, 3,331 were Thai, and 229 were international. Table 2 shows their country of origin, ranging from neighboring countries to those in North America. Of all 229 students, the largest number was 83 (34%) Chinese,

Table 1
Academic staff and country of origin in the year 2018

Continent/country	Lecturers	Volunteers	Visiting scholars	Total
1. Asia	28	46	6	80
Japan	4	-	1	5
Bhutan	1	1	-	2
Malaysia	1	-	-	1
Korea	2	-	2	4
China	10	35	-	45
Philippines	-	1	1	2
Sri Lanka	1	-	1	2
Vietnam	-	-	1	1
Myanmar	1	-	-	2
India	1	-	-	1
Indonesia	6	9	-	1
Uzbekistan	1	-	-	1
2. Europe	6	1	6	13
Norway	1	-	-	1
Belgium	-	-	1	1
Spain	1	-	-	1
Germany	1	-	1	2
UK	2	-	1	3
France	1	-	1	2
Austria	-	-	1	1
Hungary	-	-	1	1
Greece	-	1	-	1
3. Australia and Pacific Islands	-	-	5	5
New Zealand	-	-	3	3
Australia	-	-	2	2
4. North America	6	3	2	11
Canada	1	1	-	2
US	5	2	2	9
5. Africa	-	-	1	1
Mauritius	-	-	1	1
Total	40	50	20	110

Table 2
Number of international students categorized by country and degree in 2018

Country	Number of students by degree			Total
	Bachelor	Master	Doctorate	
Bhutan	13	1	-	14
Cambodia	-	1	-	1
Cameroon	1	-	-	1
China	76	6	1	83

Table 2 *(continue)*

Country	Number of students by degree			Total
	Bachelor	Master	Doctorate	
Czech Republic	3	-	-	3
France	2	-	-	2
Germany	1	-	-	1
Hungary	1	-	-	1
Indonesia	10	2	1	13
Japan	6	-	-	6
Korea	6	-	-	6
Laos	-	-	1	1
Malaysia	7	10	-	17
Myanmar	54	-	-	54
Nepal	-	3	-	3
Philippines	5	-	-	5
Singapore	1	-	-	1
Slovakia	1	-	-	1
United Kingdom	2	-	-	2
United States of America	2	-	-	2
Vietnam	11	-	-	11
Yemen	1	-	-	1
Total	203	23	3	229

followed by 54 (24%) from Myanmar, 17 (7%) from Malaysia and 14 (6%) from Bhutan. Accordingly, the university needed to be prepared to deal with the increasing number of international students.

Samples of Signage

three areas of consideration were employed to ensure the data collection's validity, as proposed by Backhaus (2007). These included the geographic limits of the target areas, a clear determination of the signage, and the differentiation of various types of signage. In the present study, the target areas represented the living areas (a dormitory, canteens, and buildings that support students' living) and studying areas (a library, building blocks containing classrooms, and offices). In addition, the photos included signage along the roads, pathways, and corridors, for example, inscriptions on the buildings, plate names on the shops, signboards at the parking spaces, buildings names, posters, commercial adverts, notices, or announcements on the bulletin boards.

After the data collection, pictures of signs were printed for area grouping and screening of the photos. Some were excluded because of the quality of the signs, especially when the signs were in a damaged condition. In addition, some signs required a second photograph since the language used on the signs was unclear, out of focus or incomplete. Afterward, 815 signs were kept for further analysis in this project.

Research Instrument

A digital camera and smartphones were employed to gather the data for the research as technical support in obtaining sign data, while semi-structured group interviews collected student experiences.

Digital Camera and Smartphone. Generally, digital cameras are commonly used for photographing signs in specified areas. Although new tools, such as LinguaSnapp, have been developed to document linguistic landscapes (Gaiser & Matras, 2016), cameras are still common support for LL studies. In this study, apart from a digital camera, smartphones were also used because of their capacity and the quality of the photos, which were comparable to those of a digital camera.

Semi-Structured Interview. The present study used the semi-structured group interview since it was considered appropriate for further illustrating the findings of sign data. In addition, it provided a relaxed atmosphere for students, so sharing experiences among participants could remind them of their own experiences.

The interview section of this study was voluntary. After the announcement seeking volunteers, eight students, consisting of seven international students and one Thai student, volunteered to participate in the interviews. Interviewees were from bachelor's and master's degree programs and represented international and local students, with one each from Myanmar, Nepal, and Thailand, three from Cambodia, and two from China. Their fields of study covered the science and social science disciplines.

The content areas and questions of semi-structured interviews were mainly developed from the research objectives and relevant studies (Jing-Jing, 2015; Yavari, 2012). The two main areas of the interview were to determine how the signage influenced (1) the student's lives and (2) the student's studies. Three experts then evaluated the item-objective congruence (IOC) to ensure its validity. Finally, two items with the lowest IOC value (0.66) were revised based on the experts' suggestions. Afterward, a pilot test of the questions was conducted in English with two students, one Thai and one Chinese representing both local and international students so that the ambiguity of the interview questions was reduced. Some examples of the interview questions are as follows:

1. What language is often used on MFU Campus signs or signboards?
2. What language do you think is important or necessary for students studying on the MFU campus? What are the reasons for your answer?
3. What language is important or necessary for the student**'s** daily life on this campus? What are the reasons for your answer?
4. If you get a chance to choose languages used on signs or notices on this campus, what languages will you choose?
5. In what order will you put them

on a sign? Please explain why you think they should be in the proposed order.

Data Collection Procedures

Photos of campus signs were collected in both living and study areas in the second semester of 2018 after permission was granted. The analysis of the sign data and the emergence of some key issues were employed to develop interview questions further. Subsequently, semi-structured group interviews were conducted, and student volunteers chose the date that they were free to join two separate group interviews. The interviewer gave a brief, casual introduction to the study, showed appreciation for the interviewees' participation, and ensured anonymity. Volunteers were also informed of their rights; for example, they were not required to if they did not feel comfortable answering certain questions.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a script-based approach, i.e., the signs were first categorized by script, which refers to the languages displayed on the signs. Then, as suggested by Gorter (2006), a sign coding scheme covers the investigation of how a language appears on the sign, where it is placed, what size and how many languages are included, and the order of languages displayed on bilingual or multilingual signs, and the importance of languages. In this study, the data were categorized into three groups: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Monolingual signs refer to a sign containing one language, and bilingual signs are signs containing two languages. On multilingual signs, more than two languages are included.

The analysis of the interview data involved organizing the data into manageable units, identifying themes, and drawing a conclusion. In identifying themes, the researcher adopted the steps of thematic analysis as offered by Braun and Clarke (2006), which included familiarizing with the interview data, specifying preliminary codes to the data, seeking patterns or themes in the codes, reviewing themes concerning the research questions, naming themes and quoting relevant data before writing up a conclusion.

RESULTS

Display of Languages

The analysis of 815 pictures, including signs, posters, notices, and documents posted around selected areas on the campus, was conducted to answer research question 1, "What is the representation of languages on signs on the campus?" It was revealed that the most frequently found signs were monolingual (n=446, 54.72%), followed by bilingual signs (n=349, 42.82%), and multilingual signs (n=20, 2.45%; Table 3).

Table 3
Type of signs based on the display of languages

Type of signs	Number of signs	Percentage (%)
Monolingual signs	446	54.72
Bilingual signs	349	42.82
Multilingual signs	20	2.45
Total	815	100

As seen in Table 4, of the 446 monolingual signs, Thai was used on monolingual signs the most (n=248, 55.73%), followed by English (n=194, 43.37%), and Chinese (n=3, 0.67%). It is likely to reflect the key status of the national and official language, while the status of English was also well observed since it is the second most frequently used language on campus signs. Regarding bilingual signage, of all 349 bilingual tokens, the majority were Thai-English (238, 67.44%), followed by English-Thai (98, 28.48%) and Chinese-English (6, 1.71%). Just as in the monolingual signs, pairing the display of English with other languages such as Thai and Chinese showed its vital status on campus. Besides, an analysis of 20 multilingual signs revealed that the Thai-

Table 4

Types and languages displayed on campus signs

Types of signs	Languages	Number of signs	Percentage (%)	Grand total (%)
Monolingual signs	Thai	248	55.73	
	English	194	43.37	
	Chinese	3	0.67	
	French	1	0.22	
Total		446	100	446 (54.72)
Bilingual signs	Thai-English	238	67.44	
	English-Thai	98	28.48	
	Chinese-English	6	1.71	
	Thai-Chinese	3	0.85	
	English-Chinese	2	0.57	
	English-French	2	0.57	
Total		349	100	349 (42.82)
Multilingual signs	Thai-Chinese-English	7	35	
	Thai-English-Chinese	5	25	
	Chinese-Thai-English	2	10	
	English-Spanish-French	2	10	
	English- Burmese -Thai	1	5	
	English-Chinese-Thai	1	5	
	English-Thai-Chinese	1	5	
	Chinese-English-Thai	1	5	
Total		20	100	20 (2.45)
Grand total				815 (100)

Chinese-English sequence was found the most (7, 35%), followed by Thai-English-Chinese (5, 25%) and Chinese-Thai-English (2, 10%). Regarding the combination of languages that appeared on the tokens, Thai, English, and Chinese shared their parts as the top three on multilingual signs.

In Figure 1, examples of monolingual signs are displayed: (a), (b), and (c) are Thai, while (d), (e), and (f) are English and Chinese, respectively.

Figure 2 shows five bilingual signs or five language pairs, including (a) Chinese-English, (b) Thai-English, (c) Thai-Chinese,

Figure 1. Examples of monolingual signs

(d) English-Burmese, and (e) English-French, respectively.

Figure 3 shows multilingual signs or signs that contain more than two languages. The first one, (a), contains Thai, Burmese, and English. The other three, (b), (c), and (d), contain the same languages, although the order of languages in (b) is different from (c) and (d), which begin with Thai.

Figure 2. Examples of bilingual signs

Figure 3. Examples of multilingual signs

Language Issues

Two language issues were indicated. Firstly, it was found that some signs contained errors or typing mistakes. For example, when two languages were displayed on a sign and were meant to deliver the same message, typographical errors sometimes occurred, distorting the intended message. Secondly, it was also revealed that there were attempts to address people from different linguistic backgrounds by using different languages on the signs; for example, Pinyin or Chinese Romanization was also used on signs. It was an example of how the pronunciation of a Chinese word was written using the Roman or English alphabet. In Figure 4, the English script was used to write the phrase "Thank you" and "Xìexie," which also means "Thank you" in Chinese.

Figure 4. Use of *pinyin* or Chinese romanization

Student Experiences of the Linguistic Landscape

The interview account, based on student experiences and their viewpoint toward signs on campus, revealed five key issues.

Student Navigation on Campus. In their first year at the university, local and international students were assisted in navigating the campus using a basic map provided by the university. They had no problem understanding the directional signs because they were in English, and many included universal symbols. However, due to the hilly grounds of the university, some students suggested that the map of the university should provide more details. For example, the map should have specific wording such as 'You are here.' Along the way, signposts should display where different routes converge or link as a shortcut.

Apart from directional signs, students' experiences revealed that additional information is needed, for example, availability, accessibility, and the price of transportation, as reflected below:

> *I can read Thai, but I did not know there was a green bus that could pick us up to go around campus because there was no information. And I even tried to pay for the university's free bus the first time.* (Bachelor in English, Myanmar)

Hence, during the first year on campus, students, especially those whose first language was not Thai, needed sufficient English information to help them through the initial transitional stage on campus. Though the university has prepared an orientation pack for newcomers, some students may not get it until they join the orientation opening ceremony.

Inclusiveness or Exclusiveness: Language Choices on Signage. Sign language choices were indicated as a factor in including or excluding students from joining university activities. Some international students stated that they missed many of the university activities in their first year because the English version of the activities' announcement was not seen. They suggested that both Thai and English versions of the activities that first-year students are required to attend should be provided. An English majored student said that she normally found both Thai and English versions in her department. However, she assumed that some announcements were in Thai only due to a small number of international students in certain fields. It was consistent for two students who shared their frustration because they belonged to smaller groups of university members. One of them stated:

> *I am the only (international student) in my batch… If it is in Thai, everyone is shocked. We would be like, … What happened? Could you translate that for us?* (Bachelor in Food Technology, Nepalese)

Thus, apart from the Thai version, English was considered the most important in accommodating international students.

While official announcements were available in both Thai and English versions, those produced by individual members of the university, such as staff or students involved with student activities, were mainly in Thai.

Language and Order of Significance. Regarding what languages should be displayed on signage, all interviewees agreed on the significant role of English as a lingua franca; thus, apart from Thai, English is the second most important language on campus signage. However, they consider Chinese as the third ranked language due to the increasing number of Chinese students and teachers studying and working on campus.

> *I think English is enough because it is used worldwide. If it is in English, we can check our dictionary…All children currently can read English.* (Bachelor in Cosmetic Science, Chinese)

Concerning the order of the languages to be shown, some students thought the presentation order did not matter if all key languages were present. However, other participants thought Thai should be the first language, followed by English and Chinese. This order is determined according to the status of each language, Thai for its national status, and English for its international status. However, Chinese is included to address the largest number of foreign members of the university.

> *Thai first, but English should be second because I think English*

is more well-known. Chinese is important, but I think it should be the third. Many foreigners can read Chinese, but I think more Chinese can read English. (Master in English, Chinese)

Diversity or Adversity. Seeing one's language in another country can lead to a negative feeling for some students when the message prohibits them from doing something on campus. However, two participants stated that the appearance and order of languages did matter due to the message conveyed by the signs or notices. For example, a Myanmar student and a Chinese student stated that if the message shown on a sign carried a prohibition message, it was more likely that the sign would be perceived as offensive by the speaker of that language.

> *I saw a sign in Burmese. It says, "Do not smoke." The language used would be considered informal in Myanmar. It is very strong, very harsh. Not suitable to use… So the idea in making the sign, I think, all languages should be put on the same sign…like Chinese, Thai, and Burmese in the same place.* (Bachelor in English, Myanmar)

Students explained that their attitudes towards seeing their language displayed on signs were more positive if the message was aimed at giving general information such as giving directions or providing information or notifications. Thus, the message provided

on signage should be considered when determining what order the languages should be presented. For example, when messages conveyed a warning or prohibition, Thai and English were considered appropriate, as the first was the national language, while the latter was the lingua franca.

Errors on Signs. Students indicated that they found some errors on signs in their English, Chinese, and Burmese versions. One observation was that signs with errors were not official and were produced by some university members, such as individual staff or students, to address certain issues or problems. A student was concerned that other students might take that as the correct way to use a foreign language and would repeat the same mistake.

> *... I think they were not official... I am afraid some students with a limited understanding of English may keep that in mind and practice using it.* (Master in English, Cambodian)

According to this student, mistakes and errors should be avoided by having someone check the language used so that students in the university would have correct examples of different languages. For example, students' experience of errors or mistakes found on signs followed the analysis of signs on campus. Additionally, student experiences indicated that mistakes are found not only in English but also in Chinese.

DISCUSSIONS

The Display of Languages on Campus Signs

The display of languages on campus signs was identified as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. The findings showed that the dominant language in specified areas was Thai, and Thai-only signs were common on the MFU campus, emphasizing the national and official status of the language. The same case was also found in a Japanese university in the LL study by Jing-Jing (2015), who surveyed the linguistic landscape on the Ito campus of Kyushu University, Japan, and found Japanese-only signs to be the most common. To a certain extent, the use of national or official languages on the two campuses could reflect the identities of the universities in monolingual countries such as Japan and Thailand.

Thai-English bilingual signs were the most frequently found, followed by English-Thai and Chinese-English signs. Likewise, Yavari (2012) found that English was the most visible language on campus signs apart from the official language of each university under study. Cenoz and Gorter (2012) stated that this resulted partly from an increased intake of international students at these universities. However, it also reflects the same situation in the university under study, accommodating increasing numbers of international students and lecturers.

Elsewhere, regional or international cooperation is a driving force for adopting certain languages on campus signs. In Europe, for example, to achieve the objectives of the Bologna process, English

was adopted in academia among European country members (Ferguson, 2012). Similarly, in Asia, English is a working language of ASEAN country members; thus, it has been adopted as the language of interaction. Accordingly, English language courses are required at MFU, and the prominent policy that allows opportunities for contact and the mobility of students and staff members with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds is that English is the medium of instruction.

As noted in Yavari's (2012) comparative study of a Swedish university and a Swiss university, the dominant languages found were the national languages, Swedish and German, respectively; English was indicated as having priority over other foreign languages. Its high visibility in these two universities has portrayed the widespread use of English in academia, which is also true at MFU.

Regarding multilingual signs, Thai-Chinese-English signs were found the most (7, 35% signs), followed by Thai-English-Chinese (5, 25%) and Chinese-Thai-English signs (2, 10%). Of all the signs that were examined, the lowest quantity was multilingual signs; it was evident that these three languages, Thai, English, and Chinese, are vital for their roles as the national language, the lingua franca, and the language of the largest group of foreign university members. Similarly, the interview account revealed that, apart from Thai and English, Chinese was the next most important language to be displayed on the signs.

Language Issues

Errors and mistakes could frequently occur when a language other than the native language was used on signs in countries whose native language was not English (Al-Athwary, 2014; Guo & Li, 2015). Guo and Li (2015) studied errors in Chinese-English public signs in Changchun, an economic and cultural spot in China, and argued that mistranslation in public signs needed immediate attention. They stressed that public signs accommodated people's daily lives and foreign visitors during their stay in China. It can be the case for a campus where not only local students but also international students will need a smooth transition into university life. Hence, linguistic tokens can play a key role in this regard.

Student Experiences of Signs on Campus

First, signs with the informational function needed to be in English, as they were vital for the first-year students' transition into campus life. Student interviewees mainly agreed that an English version for all signs is necessary. Regarding the MFU case, to provide more support to all students, the English version of signs is essential, as it is recognized as the dominant world language (Huebner, 2006), and its prestigious and international status is recognized all over the world (Ricento, 2015).

Second, providing the English version of signs on campus enhanced students' inclusiveness. International students have stated a desire and expectation to interact with their domestic peers (Deakins, 2009;

James & Watt, 1992). Therefore, it was essential to encourage international students' participation in university activities. In addition, it can show that universities are aware of students' needs, especially those with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Kyushu University, for example, attempted to be responsive to international students' needs by setting up a committee to include English in all university signs (Jing-Jing, 2015). It is one strategy this university employed to internationalize its campus.

Third, Thai, English, and Chinese were indicated as having key roles in signage as a national language, a lingua franca, and the language of the largest group of foreign residents, respectively. It reflects that the campus has become more diverse and must meet the needs of existing students. Not limited to the educational setting, many scholars consider language diversity essential. For example, Phillips (2011) stressed that language diversity is entwined in life's biological and cultural diversity, while Crystal (2000) highlighted that language needed to be promoted due to its relation to ecological diversity, identity, history, and human knowledge. As stated by Maffi (2005), a lack of language richness is related to a lack of cultural richness. Thus, linguistic diversity probably benefits an educational setting such as MFU. From an ecological perspective, people's views of bilingualism, multilingualism, and linguistic diversity can be either enhanced or inhibited by the display of languages in the LL (Phillips, 2011). Hence, the university may need to consider this when deciding on

signage management concerning key issues such as language choice, emplacement, and information.

Fourth, messages on signs could lead to students' negative attitudes towards the sign author, specifically, the university. It depends on language choices and other factors, such as the placement of signs, which Scollon and Wong Scollon (as cited in Mautner, 2014) highlighted as a phenomenon where the texts and their immediate physical setting are regarded as a whole in processing the message. Mautner (2014) stated that texts are unusual because their meaning and performative potential are partly drawn from exophoric references to their physical setting. It indicates how all components need to be thoughtfully designed and constructed. As reflected by Chinese and Myanmar students, the texts with prohibition messages displayed solely in their languages on campus signs seemed to target them negatively; hence, they perceived a prohibition sign written in their languages as offensive. Therefore, language choices and placement of signs needed to be vigilantly decided. Since English is generally considered neutral for in-group relations where people from different linguistic backgrounds come into contact (Rubdy, 2001), it can be a suitable choice of language to avoid triggering readers' negative attitudes.

Finally, the languages used in the signs need proofreading before posting to promote the accurate use of languages on campus. The interview results raised concerns about linguistic items with mistakes and errors that could lead to misunderstandings and

misuse of languages. According to Guo and Li (2015), when language errors occur, they potentially affect the international image of the sign's author. Therefore, in educational institutions, errors and mistakes should be reduced as much as possible on signs. As Ferguson (2016) put it, "English is perceived as a gatekeeper to accessing education and employment; thus, competence in English and English medium education is greatly valued by educational stakeholders such as parents -to build linguistic capital" (p. 185).

CONCLUSION

Future research might wish to extend the existing scope by including other stakeholders. Educational settings are generally viewed as small; however, their unique environment can be a rich source for a research study. Thus, it is recommended that more studies be conducted regarding the university's language policy, the functions of signage, and the perceptions of all people involved in educational contexts. Accordingly, more insights can be gained from research in higher education institutions or educational contexts influenced by internationalization or globalization.

Recommendations

This study has highlighted the importance of the visibility and distribution of languages on campus signage. By adding the experiences of students or sign readers to the study, critical issues were revealed and triangulated. As a synchronic study, it was expected that the findings could be used as a basis for further comparative studies.

In terms of pedagogical applications, signs displayed in different languages are a valuable source for teaching and learning. Due to its authenticity, teachers must be selective in choosing signs or texts displayed as cases for study in class. Moreover, teachers can raise students' awareness of diversity regarding linguistic and cultural resources observed on campus. Students are encouraged to draw understanding and awareness from school settings where their members with diverse backgrounds come into contact (Gorter & Cenoz, 2006). Teachers, students, and researchers are encouraged to use this linguistic and culturally rich environment as an opportunity to foster intercultural awareness and skills.

For policymakers or policy planners, the findings in the present study suggest that formal written regulations detailing language choices, production, and usage of signs on campus is key in addressing critical issues such as students' transition, inclusiveness, and attitudes. Mistakes and errors in using foreign languages in both English and Chinese were evident on signs. Hence, policymakers need to consider the extent to which these might affect students' experiences, image, and the internationalization or globalization process of the university. The findings were expected to provide useful information for policymakers in examining or planning a language policy and its implementation on campus so that students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are well addressed and supported.

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