Reflection of Linguistic Landscape on Social Identity, Linguistic Creativity and Language Competence: An Analysis of Signboards in District Swabi

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Abstract

The study's findings indicated a contemporary range of LL encompassing social identity, linguistic originality, and language proficiency. This study was exploratory; I photographed the signboards, presented them to the respondents, and emphasized their perspectives to elucidate how these three features confer distinctiveness to the signboards. The study also examined how the signboards in district Swabi assist to the advancement of the English language. The proliferation of English on signboards may be attributed to translated signs in local languages, which serve as a subtool for comprehending and accessing the English language, hence influencing its growth. Given that viewers' cognitive processes relate to their social comprehension after acquiring sign knowledge for diverse reasons, I analysed the creativity of signboards from a social standpoint. I coined the term "linguistic landscape" to refer to the assessment of language proficiency as evidenced by local signage. To collect information, I employed a qualitative method, conducted interviews with pertinent individuals, and captured images of relevant signboards reflecting these components. The collective utilisation of Urdu, Pashto, and English among the Pathan people is a fundamental aspect of their social identity, alongside their language and culture. The researcher contemplated the signboards, featuring extensive English usage in non-Roman inscriptions, to enhance comprehension of the localisation of English and its creative possibilities. The English language has developed due to its extensive use, possibly stemming from audience attraction and its enhancement of language on signboards. The researcher examined the potential of the linguistic landscape to enhance viewers' English proficiency by examining signboards; numerous signboards were comprehensive and solicited comments in English, which participants found beneficial.

Key words: Linguistic Landscape, Social Identity, Linguistic Creativity and Linguistic Competence

Introduction

The written word is ubiquitous in our daily existence, manifesting on shopfronts, billboards, governmental proclamations, and traffic signs. The linguistic landscape (LL) is frequently neglected in discussions of social phenomena (Gorter & Edelman,

2014). Landry and Bourhis (1997) assert that the domain of "linguistic landscape" concentrates on the utilisation of written language in public contexts. The linguistic landscape of an area can fulfil two main functions: conveying information and acting as a symbol. Linguistic landscape typically originates from linguistics rather than landscape studies.

Context

Any signage within or outside a public or private institution in a specific locale is likely to illustrate the regulatory function of a language, characterized as the employment of a language as a standard dialect, as articulated by Ben Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper (2006). Blackwood contends that the theoretical and methodological frameworks concerning the French cultural and physical landscape are unequivocally attractive (2010, p. 197 and Gul et al., 2022). A current initiative in the linguistic landscape of France's regional languages advocates for a symbiotic approach—where both sides are interdependent—as essential for introducing the subject of language revitalization into public debate. The linguistic landscape of the Swabi area elucidates the residents' social identity, linguistic creativity, and language proficiency. The predominant language spoken by the inhabitants is Pakhthoon, and the region's distinctive language has influenced innovative signage. Details pertaining to culture, society, and many social phenomena are available in the text shown on signboards. This critical analysis of the text utilizes the linguistic landscape framework established by Carter and Nash (1999) to assess social identification and linguistic originality. The linguistic landscape of an area serves as a reflection of its culture, as evidenced by Bolton (2012), who discovered that numerous languages embody this phenomenon. Diverse signboards denote the viewpoint from which a particular context is being examined. The prevailing trend in product marketing strategy is signified by a signboard displayed in a commercial market. According to Ayantayo (2016), the linguistic landscape in the Nigerian city of Ibadan is employed for goods and services.

Social Identity

A social actor attains social identity by acknowledging the necessity of comprehending their cultural heritage, social norms, and values within the dynamic linguistic landscape. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2007) defines "social

identity" as a "consciousness based on the shared experiences of specific social groups," rather than merely an individual's ideas, political affiliations, or distinctive characteristics. Consequently, these language characteristics enable individuals to assimilate novel experiences, including the emergence of new fashions, customs, social values, and trends. The language landscape of a community encapsulates its social structure.

Linguistic Creativity

Creative language thinking is the process of formulating a language that enhances cognitive abilities, enabling the reconfiguration of articulated words in alternative forms grounded in real-world linguistic representations. Carter (2004) asserts that creativity involves the intellectual engagement of the social actor in pursuing a perspective for critical examination. A dynamic linguistic environment necessitates that its participants remain attentive to freshly emerging language phenomena. Record the lines that resonate with them after experiencing their epiphany. Their responses exhibit creativity, resulting in the usage of contemporary terminology and structure.

Language Competence

Language competency is defined as the ability to respond effectively in a specific environment, whether in speaking or reading. Nash (2016) asserts that the interpreter engages in abstraction and response when the tangible manifestation of language is present, creating a dynamic interaction between the linguistic environment and its observers. There are occasions when the response is minimal due to the broad appeal. The linguistic landscape addresses this when the social actor devises a strategy to respond with contextually suitable sentences. A social actor requires strategic competency, the ability to navigate a multidirectional landscape, to devise tactics.

Statement of the Problem

The linguistic landscape denotes the language components observable in one's surrounding environment. It is usual procedure for it to captivate the reader's interest. Exposure to it signifies that readers are executing certain informational activities. Upon receiving information from signboards, the social actor is restricted and limited to a specific sphere. Their linguistic abilities are often improved. This language phenomenon enhances linguistic proficiency, amplifies information, and enables readers to utilize it for their individual objectives. The evolution of the English

language is influenced by the intrinsic transferability of both languages. Viewers' social interactions through LL enhance this effect, thereby disrupting the flow of the English language. Distinct ethnic groups possess unique languages, which constitute a vital aspect of social interaction. If the study of English captivates an individual, how many billboards exist that promote its advancement? Perceptive multilingual signage elevates the standard for creativity in the English language. Upon encountering signage in their own languages, individuals of each ethnic group will be able to understand the attraction. This innovatively presents viewers with unfamiliar English vocabulary. One advantage is the enhanced comprehension of content presented in English compared to its translated version.

The diversity, originality, and competency of a society's languages are reflected in its linguistic landscape. The text serves various functions, including enhancing the reader's fluency in the target language by presenting specific tasks to be executed in a particular context. Similar to how written literature conveys certain social occurrences, it necessitates that social actors engage in consistent behavior to generate a sequence of events that discloses their social identity. While observing a signboard, one inevitably replicates the textual patterns encountered in the environment.

Objectives

a. To analyze reflection of linguistic landscape on social identity and language creativity

b. To evaluate factors affecting development of language competence along linguistic landscape

c. To probe the exposure of English language within linguistic landscape on the reader.

Research Questions

a. Does linguistic landscape reflect social identity and linguistic creativity?

b. How do linguistic landscapes reveal language competence?

c. Does linguistic landscape play role in the development of English language?

Literature Review

Signs, billboards, and commercial adverts consistently integrate linguistic components into the "linguistic landscape" (Hult, 2014). It captivates the attention of spectators by meeting certain requirements in distinct circumstances. Upon receiving information from the placard before them, the social actors initiate their production. As per

Akindle (2011), this data encompasses various behaviors that social players may exhibit in particular contexts. In specific locations, a signboard may represent the prevailing social norms. Furthermore, it prompts the reader to contemplate their potential reactions in a comparable scenario. The reader is afforded the ability to utilize the same signboard to build other statements with alternative terms. The reader's social identification, linguistic competence, and creative language skills are facilitated by these three elements. The information may possess multiple layers of significance for its readers.

It may reflect the local practices that align with the people's history and culture (Stroud & Jegels, 2013). The signboard prompted passers-by to reconfigure the same line in several patterns, enabling them to strategically situate it in diverse contexts. The recipient endeavors to contextualize the information obtained from the signboard. According to Backhaus (2007), cities serve as a locus for linguistic interaction. The linguistic landscape is predominantly represented by the signage in the vicinity. Besides identifying one's precise location, it provides a novel perspective on the comparative advantages of various languages. Furthermore, their interactions with each other and the subsequent disruption of the environment.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) assert that the linguistic landscape of a region, area, or urban agglomeration is constituted by linguistic features found on signboards, billboards, and commercial advertisements that signify the location and collectively shape it. The language's symbolic shape, its understanding of social identity representation, and the region's linguistic innovation are all manifested within it.

Social Identity

The presentation of language on signboards exemplifies how the linguistic landscape mirrors social identity by reflecting the area's social values and cultural norms through public opinion and trends. Gorter (2006) asserts a close relationship between the language landscape and the sociolinguistic context. This link is reciprocal. The linguistic landscape reflects the sociolinguistic status and power dynamics of certain languages. Similar to consensus, polls, and interviews, it is a result of its temporal and spatial context and serves as an ancillary source of insight into the sociolinguistic environment. The linguistic landscape influences the establishment of new sociolinguistic contexts, as humans perceive visual information and the language

employed in signage affects their perception of the relative significance of languages and their own speech patterns. Signage indicates an individual's social standing, while multilingual signs denote diverse ethnic affiliations. The inside of any signboard serves as a metaphor for the re-creation of a location or object, aiding individuals in enhancing their social competence by clarifying their personal standards, values, and status.

Numerous immigrants in Buffalo, New York, lack proficiency in English; yet, they substantially enhance the city's cultural and economic fabric, as indicated by Armeda's (2015) study on the city's linguistic landscape. Armeda (2015) examined how these immigrants mirror the community and the message they provide to local English speakers. Individualism and the embrace of contemporary social norms are defining characteristics of urban residents.

To fulfil their responsibilities, social agents engage in evaluations of the language environment, which Bloomaert (2013) contends is both descriptive and analytical. To achieve complete integration into a specific social or ethnic group, the residents of this space immerse themselves within it. According to Stroud and Mpendukana (2009), space remains fundamentally unsemiotized unless individuals engage in scheming inside it. Locals depict the location according to their social norms and values, so reflecting their social identity. Agents and responders are both mobile; signboards symbolize the agents, whereas respondents are the persons who establish a connection to create a linguistically appropriate location that meets their needs. To influence the area, social actors create a communication mobility connection. Gorter (2006) asserts that LL is the language employed by individuals in the public domain to delineate a space through their observable interactions.

Linguistic landscape (LL) is a concept predominantly linked to social reality, as noted by Shohamy and Ben Rafael (2010). It consists of power dynamics among categories of participants within a specific domain of social phenomena. Each discipline possesses unique dynamics that both affect and are affected by adjacent fields. Conduct is a continuous interaction between an individual and the system in which they exist; power relations refer to the extent to which certain actors can enforce behavioral patterns on others, regardless of their willingness. Matron, 2008. In specific instances, these assets contradict the intentions of social players,

particularly allowing the more dominant party to constrain the less powerful party through the utilisation of particular linguistic resources. This method is useful to linguistic landscape study as it emphasizes both top-down and bottom-up flows of LL elements. The top-down flow of LL items signifies the information distribution initiatives of governmental agencies, whereas the bottom-up flow reflects the efforts of public entities to distribute information. The stronger side drives the top-down flow, whereas the weaker group is linguistically influenced upon receiving the information. The self-imposed rules guided by public interest reflect the grassroots flow of LL items, whereas the socially built norms enforced by state institutions signify the top-down flow.

Linguistic Creativity

Carter (2004) posits that creativity constitutes an intellectual engagement enabling the expression of critical perspectives, the formulation of novel viewpoints, the amusement at absurdities, and the generation of innovative ideas. The capacity for readers to interact closely enhances the statements or adds expressive depth, so increasing our emotional engagement and effectiveness. It possesses the capacity to provoke attitude expression and evaluation. The impact of creativity on its conceptual classifications and archetypal worldview is what attracts individuals to this cognitive phenomenon. This social phenomenon is distinguished by the linguistic landscape of advertisements, which are products of specific social contexts.

Bloomaert and Maly (2014) assert that the signs of a language's evolution demonstrate its transformation within a specific ethnic group. To derive social significance from a specific linguistic landscape, one must evaluate three factors: the historical and contemporary influence of the signs, their appeal to respondents, and the sociolinguistic assessment of the location in issue. The linguistic landscape, as noted by Shohamy and Wakesman (2009), consists of text exhibited and situated in a public space that is ever changing. An apparently infinite array of text types can thrive in this public domain. Some paragraphs not only provide information but also reference cultural norms and aspirations, while others symbolize deeper meaning for social actors.

The social actor requires a strategy to comprehend the LL and stimulate their imagination for an effective response. Stroud and Jagels (2013) recognized creative

text as a domain within the linguistic landscape following interviews and observations. They discovered that LL text is not solely reliant on signals; it is also profoundly subjective, intended to be reconstructed and recast according to the reader's interpretation. The phrase "linguistic landscape" denotes a location's formal understanding of semiotic theory. Studying linguistic landscapes enhances readers' creativity. To articulate the given space into language, they formally represent LL.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) assert that the linguistic landscape serves both informative and symbolic purposes, reflecting the diverse ethnic groups within a specific area. The existence of one entity, characteristic, or occurrence indicates that another entity is probable; this is referred to as a sign. A notice is publicly available that contains certain details. Individuals' vocabulary in a non-native language expands over time. Signboards are visual messages that encourage readers to think creatively.

Language Competence

Language competence refers to the ability to accurately and adequately comprehend and articulate statements in respect to specific situations and contexts. Nash (2016) posits that linguistic landscape is indispensable, as language necessitates landscape and landscape craves words. The interplay between language and landscape constitutes a nexus for mobility. According to Nash, signs in the linguistic landscape are illustrative texts that illuminate the interactions between spatially abstract notions such as language, cultural priorities, power, and politics. A roadside sign may denote a breaker or an approaching bridge, as well as signal a curve in the road, all of which the observer may interpret based on their individual context. The reader contextualizes the information according to his own distinct perspective.

Linguistic landscapes, as articulated by Blommaert (2005), provide multilingual resources that enable individuals to effectively achieve their sociocultural and identity objectives. Semiotic resources fulfil a range of derivational aims. Kress (2010) asserts that creativity underpins the design cycle, production, and understanding of signs. As the recipient integrates the content into his own communicative framework, its meaning might be augmented and resemiotized, rather than remaining absolute. This facet is reflected in LL, which requires social actors to have strategic competence. To assess written material and the linguistic context in a multilingual setting, Reh (2004) devised a four-step process. 1. Pertinent 2.

Replicating 3. Incremental and Fourthly, overlapping. By "complementary text," we refer to the positive association between textual content and the extensive acceptance of specific social norms.

The secondary function of a text can be shown to the reader through textual duplication. A solitary text posted on a signboard exemplifies a fragmentary text that fulfils many functions within the linguistic landscape. Each item demonstrates unique linguistic patterns. The notion of overlapping refers to text wherein the execution of one function triggers the execution of another function. In her investigation of these four facets of the linguistic environment, Reh (2004) employed a mixed-method approach. To achieve fluency in a language, individuals must employ these four processes to obtain pertinent information from the linguistic environment, adapt it to their requirements, and subsequently respond to the written content on signboards.

An individual's strategic insight is enhanced by the linguistic landscape; the reader's response is directly proportionate to the text presented in the LL context. To fulfil their obligations, social actors must possess competence; hence, they formulate tactics tailored to certain settings. According to Marconi (1997) and (Ali et al., 2022) the effective use of words in a certain context is essential for complete linguistic communication. The terminology and the situations are interconnected. The reader acquires strategic competence through the interaction formed by the linguistic landscape. The linguistic landscape of the location is manifested within it. The performance of the social actor facilitates a suitable reaction contingent upon the conditions.

Coulmas (2009) and (Ishtiaq et al.,2021) found that the linguistic environment precedes writing, and the social actor becomes involved in significant actions through its continuous enhancement. The linguistic landscape generally reflects multimodal language utilisation. Diverse modalities of text production, including visual, graphical, and written forms, are present. The linguistic landscape text has various uses. Some are explanatory, while others elicit powerful emotions and promote engagement (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). Carter and Nash (1999) offered three criteria for assessing linguistic texts as depicted in linguistic landscapes. Specifically, re-registration, disrupted interactions, and reliance on mediums. The phrase "medium of dependence" refers to the extent to which one media is essential for the understanding of another. A

text is deemed more literal when it depends less on external texts. The social actor chooses pertinent knowledge for subsequent creation and responds to the present utilizing his own linguistic medium. To enhance the message's vividness and impact, re-registration entails shifting terminology from one language to another where it is hardly employed. An instance of misplaced interaction occurs when meaning arises indirectly from a text. Numerous advertisements commonly employ an authoritative voice at the conclusion to convey their message, as noted by Carter and Nash (1999) and (Habib et al.,2024). This occurs due to the text becoming more deeply embedded or displaced within a context-dependent interaction between the author and the reader. The symbolic power, significance, and relevance of a language can be demonstrated by its presence or absence in public domains.

Methodology

The research process requires implementing the proposed roadmap to achieve the desired objectives. The researcher use creativity to establish a framework and methodologies that are pertinent to the issue and yield authentic results. The research approach determines the researcher's whole focus. This section delineates the procedures employed to collect data for this investigation.

Qualitative Approach

Words collected from field notes and recordings, subsequently synthesized, constitute the cornerstone of a qualitative methodology. Complex cultural, literary, contextual, and other challenges are examined within a social framework. Quantitative research evolved in the late 1980s as a credible methodology in applied linguistics, while the qualitative approach is fundamentally opposed to it.

Analysis and Discussion

Following the application of the methodologies outlined in Chapter 3, I analysed the gathered data about the influence of the linguistic environment on social identity, linguistic creativity, and language proficiency. This chapter aims to present the researcher's personal observations. In response to the current issue, each referenced work is assessed. Additionally, the researcher intended to partition this chapter into sections addressing each aspect of the subject.

Social Identity

The signboards reflect the Pashto language, social position, and geographical region,

offering insight into the linguistic landscape and, consequently, social identity. All elements here represent Pathan culture, and the Pashto language serves as a representation of the Pathan people. Sunman and Naude (2003), Beukes (2006),Naude (2008), and (Gul et al., 2023) all demonstrated a correlation between linguistic landscape and social identity. The utilisation of many languages within a community, together with translation, is a fundamental component of that culture. Details regarding the Pakhthoon community are shown on signboards in Pashto. Certain signboards have a blend of Pashto and English, signifying an inclination towards adopting foreign culture. The minimalist depiction of wagmy ba paki ye in figure 4.1 illustrates the culture of the Pathans. Gorter (2006) asserts that signboard language functions as a reciprocal exchange. It embodies both a culture and the authority and status of a language. According to Armeda (2015) and (Gul et al.,2024), exhibiting the immigrant's language on signboards signifies linguistic dominance and power dynamics. The incorporation of English words with Pashto and Urdu in the signage aims to enhance its appeal to the educated demographic or to confer further prestige onto the product being advertised.

Linguistic Creativity

Social actors comprehend the appeal of signboards and their impact, enabling them to formulate additional sentences beyond those shown on the signboards. This process is referred to as creativity within the language landscape. Creativity necessitates a cognitive process that requires a psychomotor response. This study examines the social interactions of actors in response to a signboard, alongside objective criteria defined from the framework of Carter (2004) Sajjad et al., 2023) and Gul et al., 2022(c) posit that creative thinking transpires when individuals critically analyse a societal issue and use that understanding to propose novel viewpoints. The pervasive presence of publicly displayed writing is both instructive and intricate, as noted by Shohamy and Wakesman (2009). The signboard's allure can be comprehended and replicated in diverse terms by employing colloquial language while concurrently incorporating many languages. Figure 4 illustrates that the non-Romanized rendition of the English lexicon, when transcribed in Urdu, facilitates a more frequent comprehension of English terms. Four, the text of the joyous domain Foreign schools influence students' perceptions, enabling them to rethink traditional issues and

formulate innovative arguments. According to their research, Bloomaert and Maly (2014) and (Gul et al.,2022(b)) determined that signs can be interpreted by examining both historical and contemporary elements. The social actor selectively chooses meanings for personal purposes, which are subsequently understood and reinterpreted through perception after a performance. It stimulates curiosity and prompts contemplation, as the interviewee noted regarding signboards. According to the statistics, examining the offered signboards enhances the sense of comprehension.

Language Competence

The linguistic environment reveals the information-gathering abilities of social actors through the cues they encounter. Nash (2016) posits that the analysis of language landscapes involves investigating the dynamics and progression of interactions among social actors and their settings. Respondents must focus on the contextual information. The information presented on signboards is contingent upon the medium employed; for instance, at specific locations, Pashto words are comprehensible to Pashto speakers. Enquiries like "how does it pertain to the situation?" compel replies to meticulously assess the current appeal of the signboard.

Conclusion

The current study focused on the linguistic landscape as a multidimensional social and linguistic informative instrument. Individuals are motivated by three main factors: to enhance their social identities, to augment their verbal originality, and to refine their language proficiency. The foremost priority is the establishment of one's social identity. It pertains to the interests of the populace, dress, language, and clan affiliations. The language employed renders almost all signboards culturally orientated. Language is a fundamental component of any civilization. Subsequent to the interviewee's description, the interviewers examine the Pakhtoon's interests in their fashion selections, their inclination towards education, and the extent of collaboration and comprehension across different clans. Upon concluding our discussion regarding the innovation of signboards, we may proceed to the second objective. The introduction of new vocabulary and translated expressions in Urdu is achieved through social context in English linguistic creativity.

Results

The three dimensions of linguistic landscape—social identification, linguistic

creativity, and language proficiency—are demonstrated. The Pakhthoon language signifies their social identity; the adoption of additional languages has expanded their community's influence; presently, the incorporation of English language features has led to a tendency towards English communication. Indicators of socioeconomic stratification have been established; the Pakhthoon populace, characterized by their profound religiosity and commitment to their language, generally espouses the principle of human equality. The social boundaries of the Pakhthoon were shaped by geographical factors and the prevalence of Pashto nomenclature. The Pakhtoon's constitute a unique ethnic group characterized by specific regional appellations that function as identifiers. The Yousafzai constitute the largest tribe in Swabi, comprising subgroups such as the Thenol and the Uthmanzai. The Sayeds constitute a notably privileged demographic, recognized for their strong religious convictions. The language shown on signboards illustrated these Pakhthoon characteristics in the linguistic environment.

Following the social actor's focus and visual examination, along with the appeal of the LL, the cognitive process commenced, revealing creativity to be remarkably informal. The employment of visually beautiful terminology, attractive colors, and the use of local phrases in signboards enhanced creativity. Given that respondents were significantly distracted by non-English elements on signboards, it would be more efficacious for them to be exclusively in English. Participants deemed numerous translated signboards to be more accessible in their home languages than in English, which they saw as less creative. Translated signs facilitated the assessment of respondents' English skills using visual analysis. There has been a recent increase in the utilisation of English in educational settings. Respondents reported mistakenly employing English vocabulary when discussing their experiences with the automatic generation of creative sentences in English. Posters adorned with voices appeared to engage in a brainstorming session to develop supplementary ideas. To include extensive facts, it stimulates the interest to generalize the appeal and formulate dependable assertions. The creative process constitutes the social actor's cognitive understanding of the context.

Skill and competence are demonstrated by the viewers' active engagement in reaction to the situation and the fundamental information they receive. It pertains to

the current appeal. This study evaluates proficiency in three domains: situational awareness, reactivity, and comprehensiveness. The viewer's English proficiency was indicated by the signboards. The respondent exhibited a lack of engagement due to the unappealing nature of certain signboards. When signboards were comprehensive and appealing, LL proved its capacity to enhance mental abilities.

In other cases, the respondent's response was considered insufficient due to their inability to understand the signboards. Situational phenomena were derivational, indicating that they were grounded in the social actors' ideas on the link between signals and their quotidian English language practices, which served as a medium for verbal subsidiary acts. The respondents' realistic subjective allure accounts for the social actors' informal language, which is both deeply significant and designed to stimulate interest sufficient to provoke a reaction.

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