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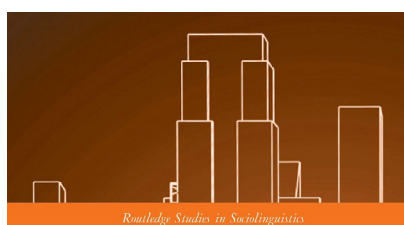
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**THE COMMUNICATIVE
LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE**

PRODUCTION FORMATS AND DESIGNED
ENVIRONMENTS

Lionel Wee



This work investigates how linguistic landscapes can communicate information in multilingual and multimodal settings. The main sources of the linguistic landscapes investigated in this work are drawn upon from Singapore where multiple languages and ethnic groups coexist. There are also considerable examples collected from other multilingual regions. The analysis was done with Goffman's (1981) conceptual framework of production format and Bakhtin's (1981) work on heteroglossia and the dialogicity of communication. Goffman (1981) categorizes entities involved in production format as principle, author and animator. The principal is the entity whose ideas and views are being conveyed via the language that is being used; the author is the composer of the text and the designer of the message; and the animator is the entity through which the message is conveyed. Wee investigates their roles in communicative linguistic landscapes. In so doing, he elucidates how signs in the multilingual landscapes convey information. The constructed signs and their intended placement combine to constitute different kinds of animator complexes. According to Wee, signs in the specific location and their message conveyed being relevant are parented animators; signs in the designated location but their message no longer being relevant or current are abandoned animators; signs having been dislodged or moved are orphaned animators; and signs no longer in the designated location but having instead been dislodged are adopted animators.

In Chapter 1, Wee draws on Blommaert's (2018) observation that linguistic landscapes exist as sites of social interaction, they "talk", and people "talk back" to them (p.1) with multiple languages and modes of communication. Various codes of languages and signs are investigated regarding the information they convey; multiple types of affects embodied in them; the indexicalities and underlying ideological assumptions that motivate or legitimize the choices of languages; and the semiotic landscapes which have long been enquired in sociolinguistics (see Gorter, 2013; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Shang & Zhao, 2014; Wee & Goh 2019). Wee argues that the validity of Blommaert's observation has to take two issues into account. For one thing, the landscape communicates with people much more than the other way around given the widespread use of static signs; the information therein is simply presented and meant to be read. For another, the signs and messages that populate the landscape are typically present even when there may not be anyone around. These two aspects are termed as "communicative asymmetry" and "communicative implacability" (p.5). He then construes why linguistic landscapes communicate and how they are able to achieve their various communicative effects.

Chapter 2 introduces the conceptual framework of this work. According to Goffman, to simply view language production in terms of a speaker is inadequate, as the agentive responsibility for what is being said or produced does not always reside within the speaker; instead, it is usually distributed elsewhere. In his concept of production format (Goffman, 1981), he proposes to distinguish between the animator, the author and the principal. Wee argues that the linguistic landscape should be treated as an animator complex that involves the signs themselves, multiple codes and their interrelationship, and their specific placements within the landscape, because it is the combination of the signs, codes, and their particular locations that communicates. And given that landscapes tend to be populated by a host of signs and various types of languages, people are typically confronted with multiple animator complexes. Afterwards he adds that a general characteristic of the animator complex is that the author and principal need not be present at the scene.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to distinguishing between various types of animators: parented animators, abandoned animators, orphaned animators and adopted animators. The justification for distinguishing between these four types of animators arises from the different conditions under which the integrity of the animator complex may be maintained or destroyed. Wee uses the bills advertising apartments for rent as an example; they were written in a mixture of Chinese and English and were posted on the wall of a building located in the remote neighborhood of Geylang in Singapore. They are both analyzed in terms of parented animators since they have been placed in locations designated by their principals and authors in order to draw the attention of potential tenants possessing literacy in either or both language(s). Among the four animators identified, Wee proposes that the first three are more central to the study of linguistic landscapes than the fourth. Adopted animators are hence discussed in passing simply because they can be observed in the linguistic landscapes. By contrast, the parented animator is seen as the default; it is the most commonly encountered type and represents an intact animator complex.

Chapters 4 to 7 are devoted to in-depth case studies of the four types of animators. Chapter 4, entitled “Epigraphs and the Emotional Labor of Linguistic Landscapes”, deals with the use of quotations in linguistic landscapes. Both the linguistic landscapes and the quotations therein are regarded as animator complexes. Wee discusses how materiality contributes to the stances towards the quotations and how these in turn influence the atmospherics of the landscapes. Specifically concerning the issue of multilingualism in linguistic landscapes, Wee takes the signage at the frontage of a stationery shop in Florence as an example. The signage is composed of three languages: English, French and Italian, demonstrating polyphonic voices. The statement in each language was printed on a separate piece of paper, hence further signaling the polyphony with the intricate design of materiality. Thematically related to each other and also to the shop, the multilingual and multimodal signs foster an affect of whimsy or playfulness (p.76) in the multilingual commercial settings in Singapore (see also Shang, 2016; Shang & Guo, 2017).

Chapter 5, “Graffiti and the Ratification of Animators”, shows how approaching graffiti from a production format perspective can help understand the changing and contested notion of graffiti. Wee holds that graffiti can refer to both illegitimate or unauthorized scribbling or painting, and sanctioned murals. As an illustration, Wee analyzes the unratiated graffiti by pedestrians on the internal wall of a tunnel in the town of Kemi, Finland. The graffiti include several languages including Finnish, French, English and Chinese. The transgressive nature of the graffiti is signaled by the multitude of names and codes being used, as well as the different forms of writing adopted by the producers (p.91). Graffiti performs emotional function. Authorized graffiti tend to be concerned with the beautification of urban spaces; whereas illegitimate graffiti are prone to challenging established mores.

Chapter 6 focuses on the contrasts of various production formats. A characteristic affordance of signage in linguistic landscapes is the physical absence of the principals and authors responsible for the signs; whereas social movement is marked by the necessary presence of principals and authors. Centering on cases in Occupy Movement in Hong Kong, Wee uses a figure of a footbridge laden with banners as an example. The banners are written in both English and Chinese and the presence of the protesters at the site ensures that the slogans in the banners are parented (p.118). In this regard, social movements involve affect mobilized via group activities, in which people gather together for multiple reasons, for instance, appealing to political change, resisting an impending event or demonstrating support for the status quo (see p.111).

Chapter 7 centers on intelligent landscapes. Linguistic landscapes have become increasingly interactive with the increasing use of digital technologies and burgeoning development of artificial intelligence. This chapter shows how the perspective of production format opens up interesting lines between the automation of communication, and the communicative efficacy of intelligent linguistic landscapes. With animators becoming increasingly intelligent, they also have the capacity to act as principals and authors of the message they transmit. As Wee shows, in the Ion Orchard shopping mall in Singapore, there is a bilingual touchscreen capable of providing information that is specifically required by an individual reader, which includes information about the kinds of products and services available in the mall, along with the location of particular shops and directions that facilitate to lead the reader to a chosen retail outlet (p.134).

In general, this is a cutting-edge, thought-provoking and innovative work. As noted by the author, linguistic landscapes, especially animators therein, become increasingly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. With lockdowns, quarantines and safe distancing taking place frequently, communication in linguistic landscapes largely hinges on different kinds of signs, along with their intended placement. By basing the analysis in Goffman's and Bakhtin's ideas and coining new conceptualizations, the author not only presents the argument and theoretical implications in a systematic manner, but also raises momentous questions about the significance of talking about animators in general. All these make this book a good recommendation to those interested in signs and semiotics in linguistic landscapes. In particular, the work centers on semiotic landscapes in various multilingual settings to demonstrate the communicative affordances of an assemblage of multiple languages and modes (see also Jaworski, 2020, Pennycook, 2017). In this respect, it will especially intrigue researchers in multilingualism at large.

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