

**Research article**

# Linguistic Landscape (LL): A Theoretical Review

Rahmat Gaho<sup>1\*</sup>, I Nyoman Kardana<sup>2</sup>, Rika Purnama Sari<sup>3</sup>

Master of Linguistics, Universitas Warmadewa, Denpasar, Bali-Indonesia

**ORCID**

I Nyoman Kardana <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6855-0576>

**Abstract.**

Linguistic landscape (LL) is a study of writing in a public area. This study pertained signs, language symbols, labelling of stores, billboards and etcetera. LL offers an issue that relates to language and society or LL is a study that discusses the phenomena of the language environment in the form of writing and drawing.

**Keywords:** language, linguistic landscape, language environment

Corresponding Author: Rahmat

Gaho; email:

rahmatgaho27des@gmail.com

**Dates** Published 04 July 2022

**Publishing services provided by**  
**Knowledge E**

© Rahmat Gaho et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ISCL 2021 Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

What is linguistics? Basically, linguistics is a scientific study of language or language is a sphere of linguistic study. The task of linguistics is to explain the nature of human language, through active involvement in the description of languages-each viewed as an integrated system-together with explanation of why each language is the way it is, allied to the further scientific pursuits of prediction and evaluation (Dixon, 2010). Thus, what is language? Naturally, language is based on the concept of natural sounds (Yule, 2010:2). Language is a species-specific human capacity, that there are very deep and restrictive principles that determine the nature of human language and are rooted in the specific character of the human mind (Chomsky, 2006). However, a central function of language is to enable communication, and the organization of linguistic forms has some relation to the organization of meaning (Fabb, 2006). On the contrary, language is viewed as carrying out a specific communicative function by providing the collective with a presumption of communicability (Sebeok, 2001).

By understanding those language's definitions, we can comprehend that language is a means of a human being to be used in expressing an idea or communicating something such as apologizing, thanksgiving, glorifying, and any other language use, the moreover, language used for various purposes in society. As mentioned by Richardson (2007), language use exists in a kind of dialogue with society: language is produced by


**OPEN ACCESS**

society and (through the effect of language use on people) it goes on to help recreate it. Language first represents social realities and second contributes to the production and reproduction of social reality or social life.

Related to the language use, in the present day, there are so many media and forms how the language are used as a tool of communication by human being both in verbal or non-verbal language, for example graffiti (writing or drawing on the street), label or signboard, and other signs in public area. Unconsciously, those signs can be interpreted its meaning, messages, purposes and contexts. However, language is all around us in textual form as it is displayed on shop windows, commercial signs, posters, official notices, traffic signs, etc (Gorter, 2006). They are discourses that represent or portray a social phenomenon actually, otherwise, they have linguistic features too. It is the attention to language in the environment, words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces, that is the center of attention in this rapidly growing area referred to as linguistic landscape (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009:1).

## 2. What is the Linguistic Landscape?

As already mentioned above, languages in the environment are spheres of linguistic landscape. Yet, aside from obtaining the linguistic landscape's definition, why 'landscape' embodied within this linguistics study? The word 'landscape' as a noun has basically two meanings. Firstly, more literal meaning, as the piece or expanse of scenery that can be seen at one time from one place. Secondly, a picture representing such a view of natural inland scenery, as distinguished from a sea picture or a portrait. In the studies of the linguistic landscape presented here, one can say that both meanings are also used. On the one hand the literal study of the languages as they are used in the signs, and on the other hand also the representation of the languages (Gorter, 2006). Furthermore, landscape, or more generally 'environment', provides an interesting domain of human categorisation and labelling for a number of reasons. Landscape is a linguistic domain of considerable interest in its own right and one that provokes questions of general significance to language science (Burenhult & Levinson, 2008). On the contrary, Jaworski & Thurlow (2010:12) expressed that landscape is the way of seeing. It means that a landscape is a space or view which contains various things surrounding us including activities of human beings like doing conversation, playing game, going shopping, and so on. Similar to Kallen (2010) stated that in areas of the landscape such as portals, where mobility and technology are to the fore.

Therefore, a basic question, what is linguistic landscape? Linguistic landscape, this term, firstly coined by Landry & Bourhis (1997) as the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. In line with another expert's opinion pointed out that linguistic landscape is the study of writing on display in the public sphere (Coulmas, 2009; Gorter, 2017). In addition, linguistic landscape focuses on the representations of language(s) in public space. It can be understood that the linguistic landscape discussed all writings in a public area such as a banner and the name of a certain store. As pointed out by Mensel, Vandenbroucke, & Blackwo (1997) that its object of LL study can be any visible display of written language (a "sign") as well as people's interactions with these signs. In addition, linguistic landscape, which refers to linguistic objects that mark the public space, i.e. inscriptions? or LL items? includes any written sign found outside private homes, from road signs to names of streets, shops and schools (Shohamy, Ben-Rafael, & Barni, 2010 ; Kallen, 2010).

At first glance it can be seen that study is similar to semiotics, but study of the linguistic landscape is concerned with language in its written form, in the public sphere; language that is visible to all through texts such as billboards and other public signs (Torkington, 2009). The following researches, related to the current issue, told us how Language Landscape influences people, student's mind, and also its effect on language teaching. Firstly, Przymus & Kohler (2017) revealed in their research that "hidden agendas" and "implicit messages" are commonly used to describe the influence of linguistic landscape on language ideologies and subsequent pedagogical decisions in schoolscapes. If we viewed the research result above, it was similar to critical discourse analysis that preferred hiding the ideology beyond the word within. Likewise, Alsaif & Starks (2018) argued that the meaning of the LL arises from the languages present, their content, whether the languages on the signs are represented monolingually or multilingually, the medium of the signs and the domains in which they occur.

In other case, Pakarinen & Björklund, (2017) in his research about 'multiple language signage in linguistic landscapes and students' language practices: A case study from a language immersion setting' pointed out that linguistic landscape of the main staircase showed a preference for coexistence of Finnish and Swedish. The two languages appeared both separately in monolingual inscriptions and together in bilingual inscriptions. The last, but not least, Aristova (2016) in his research revealed that there is an alternation in usage Russian language due to linguistic landscape and English languages reflect the transition from a strictly bilingual linguistic environment to a more global multilingual one. Simply, the existence of linguistic landscape cannot be ignored, otherwise, it will immerse the minor language.

### 3. What is the difference between Linguistic Landscape (LL) and other studies?

In a critical question, how do we distinguish linguistic landscape with other studies? Does LL look like a linguistic sign or a semiotics study? It might be, but still different. According to Saussure (in Chandler, 2017), linguistic sign as part of the language system (langue) is not based on the notion of reference to extra linguistic reality. The linguistic sign does not represent reality. Meanwhile, semiotics is both a science and a technique for studying anything that produces signs (Sebeok, 2001). It means that semiotics is the analysis of codes and structures that lie at the root of all meaningful exchanges (Lorusso, 2015). Through the definition, it can be said that semiotics purely discusses signs (icons and symbols) that are unhinged from the general linguistic system (Grote & Linz, 2003:26). So, back to the topic, linguistic landscape is more than semiotics study because LL is not only explain the sign as semiotic does but it tends discussing the language and society; it influences people's languages, even the language on the linguistic signs impacts tourism on the host community (Lu, Li, & Xu, 2020).

Furthermore, the linguistic landscape is also different with sign language study which discusses the natural way for deaf people to express themselves (Brentari, 2010; Sutton-Spence, 2005:140; McBurney, 2006). In fact, sign languages are fundamentally different from spoken languages because of their different modalities, as spoken languages are sound based and sign languages are based on visually perceived signs (Sutton-Spence, 2005). However, if compared with the studies such as mentioned above, they are very different. The linguistic landscape is close to language and Society", which reveals social character of development and functional use of languages or another word Linguistic landscape is a kind of a crossroad of professional and social interests (Grishaeva, 2015).

### 4. Conclusion

Based on the linguistic landscape review, it can be concluded that LL tends to occur in massive people such as in metropolitan cities because LL is identical with commercial signs so people are required to be influenced. Typical linguistic landscape can be called as a marker of the progress of the city, just look at the writings or posters surrounding us about product advertising that always covers the road space, and some symbols in public area. Notwithstanding the foregoing linguistic landscape is a fertile tool for research into grassroots socio-cognitive engagement with multilingualism (Albury, 2018).

On this occasion, the linguistic landscape constitutes a space to be analysed by scholars particularly. Through LL studies we can pertain to any aspects such as cross-cultural understanding, language education development and tourism, such as in the study conducted by (Strandberg, 2020) stating that Nordic words and graphemes can be used to evoke positive associations that the consumer may have relating to the region. Yet, it is also possible that the features of the linguistic landscape are present in small cities that were considered primitive. Likewise, this is because all 'linguaging', through the nature and necessity of the spatiality of language, happens in a specific place; spaces become places through language, through being named and through being signed. Named places in space constitute a linguistic and language landscape (Nash, 2016).

## References

- [1] Albury NJ. Linguistic landscape and metalinguistic talk about societal multilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 2018;0(0):1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1452894>
- [2] Alsaif RAS, Starks D. Medium and domains in the linguistic landscapes of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. 2018;0(0):1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2018.1461874>
- [3] Aristova N. English translations in the urban linguistic landscape as a marker of an emerging global city: The case of Kazan, Russia. In *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2016;231 (2016):216–222. The Author(s). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.09.094>
- [4] Brentari D. *Sign languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2010.
- [5] Burenhult N, Levinson SC. Language and landscape: A cross-linguistic perspective. *Language Sciences*. 2008;30:135–150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2006.12.028>
- [6] Chandler D. *Semiotics: The basic*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group; 2017.
- [7] Chomsky N. *Language and mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2006.
- [8] Coulmas F. *Linguistic landscape: Expanding the scenery*. Shohamy E, Gorter D, editors. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis; 2009.
- [9] Dixon RMW. *Basic linguistic theory: Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2010. <http://books.google.fr/books?id=lo5qPgAACAAJ>
- [10] Fabb N. *Linguistics: Approaches*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd; 2006.

- [11] Gorter D. Linguistic landscape: A new approach to multilingualism. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.; 2006.
- [12] Gorter D. Linguistic landscapes and trends in the study of schoolsapes. *Linguistics and Education*, Vol. 44 (April) (80-85). 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2017.10.001>
- [13] Grishaeva EB. Linguistic landscape of the City of Krasnoyarsk. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2015;200(October):210–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.08.054>
- [14] Grote K, Linz E. From sign to signing: Iconicity in language and literature 3. Müller WG, Fischer O, editors. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company; 2003.
- [15] Kallen JL. Semiotic landscapes: Language, image, space. Jaworski A, Thurlow C, editors. London: Continuum International Publishing Group; 2010.
- [16] Landry R, Bourhis R. Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality. *Psychology, Journal of Language and Social*. 1997;16(1):23–49.
- [17] Lorusso AM. Cultural semiotics: For a cultural perspective in semiotics. *Cultural semiotics*. London: Palgrave macmillan; 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137546999>
- [18] Lu S, Li G, Xu M. The linguistic landscape in rural destinations: A case study of Hongcun Village in China. *Tourism Management*. 2020;77(August 2019) (p.1-9). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104005>
- [19] McBurney SL. Sign language: History of research. *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*. 2006; (p.310–318). <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/01332-8>
- [20] Mensel L, Vandenbroucke M, Blackwood R. Linguistic landscapes. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1997.
- [21] Nash J. Is linguistic landscape necessary? *Landscape Research*, Vol 4 Issue 3. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2016.1152356>
- [22] Pakarinen S, Björklund S. Multiple language signage in linguistic landscapes and students' language practices: A case study from a language immersion setting. *Linguistics and Education*, vol. 44 (p.4-14). 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2017.10.005>
- [23] Przymus SD, Kohler AT. SIGNS: Uncovering the mechanisms by which messages in the linguistic landscape influence language/race ideologies and educational opportunities: *Linguistics and education*. *Linguistics and Education* Vol. 4 (p. 58-68). 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2017.10.002>
- [24] Richardson JE. Analysing newspaper: An approach from critical discourse analysis. *Analysing newspapers*. Millan: Palgrave macmillan; 2007. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-20968-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-20968-8_5)
- [25] Sebeok TA. Signs: An introduction to semiotics. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2001;26(2) (p. 567-569). [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(96\)82062-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(96)82062-5)

- [26] Shohamy E, Ben-Rafael E, Barni M. Linguistic landscape in the city. Bristol: Multilingual Matters; 2010.
- [27] Strandberg JAE. “Nordic Cool” and writing system mimicry in global linguistic landscapes. *Lingua*. 2020;235 (February) 102783:1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2019.102783>
- [28] Sutton-Spence R. Analysing sign language poetry. London: Palgrave macmillan; 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230513907>
- [29] Torkington K. Exploring the linguistic landscape: the case of the ‘Golden Triangle’ in the Algarve, Portugal. Lancaster University Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics & Language Teaching. Vol. 3: Papers from LAEL PG 2008 Edited by Steve Disney, Bernhard Forchtner, Wesam Ibrahim & Neil Miller; 2009.
- [30] Yule G. The study of language. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Cambridge University Press; 2010.