

Siddhajyoti Interdisciplinary Journal (SIJ)

Vol. IV, January, 2023

(A Peer Reviewed Open Access Research Journal)

ISSN: 2645-8381

Published by Research Management Cell, Siddhajyoti Education Campus, Sindhuli

<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/sij>

Interpreting Linguistic Landscape Materials as a Part of Multilingual Education

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Article History: *Received:* 30 June 2022; *Reviewed:* 30 November 2022; *Accepted:* 10 December 2022

Abstract

Landscape materials are the tools for teaching languages and developing awareness to the teachers and students in a linguistically heterogeneous society. Multilingual landscapes can stimulate linguistic and metalinguistic talk about existence of multiple languages in the society among multilingual learners. Pokhara is a highly heterogeneous city with high probability of language diversity, where multilingualism is presented in different stimulated landscapes and discourses which provide resources of linguistic diversity on language learners and teachers. Qualitative visual interpretations of linguistic and nonlinguistic landscapes have been drawn from secondary level public school teachers as an intact cultural group considering the norms of ethnographic design. The findings are that the landscape materials are highly appreciable materials in language teaching in connection to business, local histories and cultures of the people with different linguistic backgrounds in a fragmented society. Awareness about languages in public spaces is indeed retrievable through the interpretations of monolingual and multilingual landscape materials. However, non-text based or non-lingual landscape materials are also helpful in cognitive and linguistic development and for cultural awareness among language learners and teachers.

Keywords: landscape materials, multilingual context, pedagogy, public schools, visual method

Introduction

Landscape materials are the helpful visual materials in teaching a language or languages and in raising awareness among students in the classroom of multilingual society. This article mainly deals with how teachers interpret the linguistic landscape materials to teach English to the learners in Pokhara city where different language speakers stay cooperatively and peacefully. The use of linguistic and multilingual landscape materials in the classroom can be one of the best ways for the provision of multilingual education. They provide the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.32) which can be used in language classroom for teaching learning purpose.

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Siddhajyoti Interdisciplinary Journal (Peer reviewed), Volume 4, January, 2023

Pokhara is a multicultural and multiethnic city. Here, English is taken as a lingua franca while dealing with foreigners. Nepalese English language teachers and learners face multilingualism in Pokhara city and understand how linguistic landscape materials make learners of tourist area multilingual. Linguistic landscape scenes are for different tourists, local establishments and shops such as hotels, clothes shops, pharmacies, coffee shops, bazaars, souvenir shops, restaurants, tourist service offices, bakeries, supermarkets and tourist streets which is quite significant for achieving the objectives of the study adequately in relation to English signs and non-linguistic resources such as materiality and font sizes (Al-Naimat & Alomoush, 2018). The sign boards, hording boards, wall writings of the markets function as the visual aids and help to demonstrate different languages.

Linguistic landscape materials are the tools for rich metasociolinguistic talk about societal multilingualism in a heterogeneous and ethnically fragmented society especially on tourist area like Pokhara, Lakeside. This situation not only creates awareness about language in public spaces, but also makes sociocognitive engagements of a community with its languages and diversity. The use of English and other European languages are for the attraction of businesses and for saving their identity.

Features of Linguistic Landscape Materials

Linguistic landscape materials are socio-economic in nature. The use of such materials seek to find correlations between or among the use of different languages, may be including English, in different parts of a city and related to the general standard of living in those areas. Linguistic landscape materials constitute the scenes of streets, corners, circuses, parks, buildings with society's public life. Such scenes as materials carry crucial sociosymbolic importance as the emblem of societies, communities and regions (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). Linguistic landscape materials provide the culture, geography, custom and languages through linguistic and pictorial forms.

Linguistic landscape materials can be used as pedagogical tools for teaching and learning about multilingualism with its opportunities for multimodal learning experiences and the realization of text-to world connections. Metalinguistic talk is also possible by its sociocognitive dimensions about societal multilingualism. Flourishing tourism and urbanization especially in Pokhara, Nepal made the society multilingual where linguistic diversity is continually supporting the language and culture of the ethnic people in Pokhara. Language is largely synonymous with ethnicity in Nepal where linguistic diversity is embedded within histories and discourses of race-relations, nation-building, and religion. Ethnic groups of students were tasked to reflect and discuss on a number of photographs of multilingual linguistic landscape of Pokhara.

English is taken as a driving force toward better tourism and English adds a great deal of prestige to the businesses in the commercial streets (Al-Naimat & Alomoush, 2018). Linguistic landscape materials also help to highlight why sign designers select particular linguistic resources, English in particular, and nonlinguistic devices, especially materiality. This has been evident in applying the approach of "translanguaging" to language learners (Canagarajah, 2013 ; Pennycook, 2017). Thus, on the basis of what has been stated by Alomoush and Al-Naimat (2018), the generation and promotion of tourism play a vital role in the economy of nation in general and city

in particular. English texts on the wooden board make the tourists get the idea of selling some simple and traditional gifts like rags, carpets, wooden animals and other tokens of love to attract the attention of the international tourists.

Language Teaching in Multilingual Context

Multilingual education is the present day need of any society. But different types of multilingual schools have different goals and needs; and employ at least three different kinds of teachers: teachers who actively draw on children's multilingualism to educate; bilingual teachers using one of two languages in instruction, either in the same classroom or in a side-by-side model; and bilingual teachers using two languages to educate. Such teachers need specialized knowledge of languages of the bilingual and multilingual societies where students live and do social practices for producing certain discourses (Gracia, 2008, p.388). Nepal is a multilingual and multiethnic country where public schools in the urban areas also consist of teachers and learners of more or less bilingual or multilingual proficiency.

Language teachers not only teach language but also cultures that are reserved in the text, literature and landscape materials. However, culture becomes an issue when the language is taught by native speakers of the language. Where bilingual or multilingual schools have been organized, teachers may teach only in one language though the schools are bilingual or multilingual. Teachers are individuals with bilingual proficiency but may serve as monolingual teachers in the classroom. Bilingual schools employ only one teacher with the knowledge of two languages, that is, bilingualism and biliteracy which is an absolute necessity. The teacher serves as both the content teacher and the language teacher. These schools use two languages in instruction, sometimes with the goal of developing the children's bilingualism and biliteracy (Gracia, 2008, p.390).

Textual Landscapes

The textual landscape materials consist of words and phrases displayed on shop windows, commercial signs, posters, official notices, and traffic signs. Such materials are the remarkable authentic sources for the language learners in the classroom. The language items that are visible in the public spaces (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008) make linguistic landscapes the important and attractive teaching materials from the linguistic, and particularly sociolinguistic point of view. Linguistic landscapes are the public signs (Akindele, 2011) that provide alternative resources to field study.

The languages used in public spaces highly influence on the elementary learners in their learning. Linguistic landscape materials provide the scene of symbolically constructed public spaces (Shohamy & Gorter, 2008). The languages used in public signs indicate and give evidence of what languages are locally relevant (Shohamy, 2010; Kasanga, 2012) in an urban space.

Non-textual Landscapes

Landscape materials provide insight into how people and communities create, appropriate, negotiate and resist particular language items and discourses and what they mean. Our urban places are regulated with heavy semiotics. The visual and material landscapes of our city centres are full of corporate signage and spatial/material composition of shops and shopping centres, the designed public signage and urban décor with public bodies that shape the image of a city, specific places (Adami, 2018, p. 91), and thus the villages and scenes of activities are the landscape materials.

The landmark of the city presents the market's authentic, local and traditional flavor by inserting it into a heritage discourse. Further the increased presence of institutional signage of the place, semiotics of visual resources, and traders' self-styling aesthetics are helpful to have social practices and activities of that place (Adami, 2018, p. 109). Such non-textual public signs also appear in commercial contexts like marketing and advertising, where their function is to draw attention to a business or product between commercial and non-commercial signs. Graphics and pictures have played a crucial role in communicating information which has occasionally been undermined compared with that taken by the written word, however, the absence of texts that could provide ready explanation of the shape and meaning of the art in the region can be interpreted through exclusive iconographic identifications and isolated textual canons.

Through this research, we can explore how text based and non-text based landscape materials are important in raising language awareness and developing creating thinking capacity and habits on secondary level learners and how fruitful they are among multilingual learners. Trumper-Hecht (2010) sees linguistic landscape as a sociolinguistic spatial phenomenon and puts forward that linguistic landscape research can explore three dimensions of multilingual context on how languages used in signs are regulated or planned, how linguistic landscape is constructed and how the sign readers view the multilingual context they are living in.

Methods and Procedures

In this research I employed interpretative approach and an ethnographic design as a part of qualitative study. Interpretative approach helps to conduct interpretative ethnographies in which beliefs, interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings of an intact cultural group become the primary sources of data and uses interview with visual landscapes as the methods of data collection with the aim of exploring people's individual and collective understanding, reasoning processes and social norms (Cresswell, 2009, p. 13; Mason, 2002, p.56). Four secondary level English teachers of the public school of Pokhara metropolitan city have been interviewed purposively. Three categories of camera captured photographs of visual landscape materials: multilingual with English text based visuals, monolingual with English text based visuals and non-text based visuals have been shown to the participants. Interpretivism is often combined with social constructivist world view in which individual's experiences and meanings are directed towards certain objects and things in which meanings are varied and multiple. And the constructivist researcher addresses the processes of interaction among individuals (Cresswell, 2009, p.8) and occupies the idea that meanings are constructed with human beings engaging the world they are interpreting (Crooty, 1998).

The collected ideas have been presented thematically on three major themes: multilingual landscape materials with English, monolingual landscape materials with English and non-text based landscape materials. Data were coded and presented in the horizontal thematic networks in the form of basic themes, organizing themes and global themes in separate sheets of paper. The themes were then clustered into core themes and analyzed in the form of thematic analysis. Any repetitive or vague statements found in the transcript of different interviewees were omitted. Then they were rendered into statements using the participants' own words and the structural description of

each is made. Then, the composite descriptions were made with analysis, interpretation and reactions from the side of the researcher.

Results and Discussion

This article explored how teachers interpret the landscape materials: consisting text-based landscapes, multilingual and monolingual texts with English and non-text based landscapes. Interpretation is mainly based on this research question:

-How do text-based multilinguistic and monolingual, and nontext-based landscape materials help in English language teaching in a multilingual society?

Collected data were analyzed qualitatively and the findings were interpreted along with pre-established theories. The results are the interpretation of the teachers' voices as people living in multilingual societies hold beliefs, knowledge, prejudices, ideas, and attitudes not only in respect to specific languages, but also in respect to multilingualism as a societal phenomenon. In this research I mainly used five theories such as social constructivist theory of Vygotsky, Cultural Capital theory of Bourdieu, collective identity theory, and communicative action theory of Habermas implicitly and explicitly.

The first theory I used in this research is social constructivism of Vygotsky that emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of language and culture in cognitive development suggesting, "Language and culture play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world" (p. 57). Language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand the reality. Vygotsky places language at the core of learning and considers social interaction as an essential to cognitive development. So, this theory helps in my research to interpret how teachers and students construct the knowledge.

The responses of four participants on three different categories of landscape materials have been presented on three headings.

Multilingual Landscape Materials with English

As I asked them, showing the multilingual landscapes, the questions on how multilingual landscape materials are interpreted and how helpful they are in classroom language teaching, the numerous responses have been assembled. First required thing is, the teacher must be bilingual or multilingual as P1 stated:

To teach English to second language learners, teachers need to have deep understandings about the language system in which they are teaching and be familiar with pedagogical practices surrounding bilingual and multilingual contexts. Such materials are important because they show which language is dominant and which other languages are peripherally used in the society. And by showing such materials, students can interpret the target language materials through the known languages. Further they, provide our day-to-day lives as valuable language learning resources.

Such materials show how people interact in the society reflecting their identity. And they are found everywhere and freely open to everyone. In the present day society of urban areas like Pokhara where many tourists come every day make the community multilingual. Students speak different languages, often languages different from those spoken by the classroom teacher. Thus, classrooms teachers most often teach content in languages other than those the children speak at home and in communities.

Multilingual wordplay and pun are used especially in slogans and headlines (Gracia, 2008) that show how people interact in the society.

In this context, P2 stated:

English for tourism is one of the English for specific of purposes of learning English at schools and universities as one of the subjects for English for specific purposes on which students of tourism can be taught practical English conversation used in hotels and restaurants, public places, markets and other various issues concerning tourism industry, treks, travels and trips, cultural shows, tips on job interviews and writing resumes, reading and understanding articles concerning such issues of tourism. Every year tourists from different countries who speak different languages come to Pokhara to see its beauty and culture of the people. This trend has been established since long ago.

Pokhara is the tourist city of Nepal. Every year foreign tourists come from different countries. Tourist area is a fertile ground for contesting identities, demanding or denying minority rights, and advancing political economy. Along with indigenous ethnic groups of people, Tibetan immigrants and tourists from different countries are the actual population of Lakeside in Pokhara city. And now we see the influence of foreign cultures as well here in Pokhara. Foreign tourists prefer normally English users in the forms of guides, porters, waiters of hotels and restaurants, business owners, communicators, service providers, laymen and children in the locality and as well as services and landscape signs in the locality. And people involved in these areas are highly influenced by the native and nonnative English speakers' tongues. Such linguistic landscapes not only expose children to learn English language and interpret the landscapes better into English language, but also provide awareness on different languages used and spoken in the locality.

Reminding the situation of multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual community learners dwelling in Pokhara, P3 stated:

Learners of different religions stay here in Pokhara. Most of the people speak Nepali as mother tongue as well as lingua franca among different mother tongue speakers, which is the national as well as official language and people with foreign tourists speak English as the contact language. Especially in Lakeside area of Pokhara valley, people speak English with foreign customers for business purpose.

Languages in different forms of signs such as marble board signs, flex board signs, glass board signs, sand board signs, wooden board signs, lightening board signs (Al-Naimat & Alomoush, 2018, p.96) reflect the varieties of languages as well as the arts, artifacts and the cultures and languages spoken or used in that society. Teachers and students interpret such materials through translanguaging that includes doing translations and code-switching. Furthermore, students who grow up in tourist and urban area are exposed with multilingual landscapes from the early age. And they are capable of interpreting the landscapes in their locality.

On the use and interpretations of multilingual landscape materials P4 stated: Sometimes I take help of the students. Students of the locality frequently face and interpret the languages of the landscapes. Linguistic landscape signs describe the identity of a city presenting the language of its inhabitants. So, by

using such materials, teachers and students both become aware of existing multiple languages in the society. They can discuss on languages contained; combinations of languages; geographic locality, use of translation and transliteration; order of the languages; visibility; linguistic idiosyncrasies; older and newer versions of signs.

Languages spoken or used in the particular locality are trapped into the linguistic landscapes (Gorter, 2006). Migrant communities in urban areas present their cultures, customs and languages used in the linguistic landscape of that city along with language choices, hierarchies of languages, contact-phenomena, regulations, and aspects of literacy. The examples of multilingual signage could access rich metasociolinguistic awareness through rich metasociolinguistic talk. Because of their richer experience with languages, bilingual and multilingual teachers and students of a language can also manifest creativity and language playfulness of the same language. Such materials are helpful and interesting in comparing the differences between using multimodal and multilingual texts in second or foreign language teaching in comparison to traditional monolingual printed texts (Gorter, 2013, p.191). The linguistic landscape can be included in studies of language attitudes and identity as related to SLA in different contexts.

Monolingual Landscape Materials with English

Linguistic landscapes are interpreted with semiotic contentions. In social semiotics theory, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) focus on the visual meanings of signs through color divergence, the use of uppercase and lowercase letters, and font types in written texts. Equally important, the sign meanings are largely confined to their modes of writing, including the capitalized and lower-case letters, typefaces, spellings, punctuations, directions, typography, amongst others.

On the question, how monolingual landscape materials give meaning and how helpful they are in classroom language teaching, the various responses have been assembled as P1 stated:

Monolingual materials may be subordinate in comparison with multilingual materials, however, the landscapes along with text gives the way or direction of interpretation. It specifies the context for interpretation and provides a focal point towards a particular target language and highlights only the monolingual context of teaching. Most of the teaching practices in the context of Nepal are with monolingual materials, however, more or less useful for multilingual context. English is language for tourism as well in Nepal. So monolingual English landscapes are found mostly.

The policy of monolingualism by a country or one state, one language is now obsolete and overtaken by policy of use of many languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). Truly monolingual countries were always an exception due to globalization and flows of migration spread the linguistic and cultural production in different communities. So monolingual teaching is the narrow provision. However, monolingual landscapes consisting the competing scripts for a single language, road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, signboards of the shops, and public signs of a given territory or locality (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) are the helpful landscape materials for teaching the target language.

The language, words and images displayed in the landscapes is not only the center of attention to the public for business (Shohamy & Gorter, 2008), but also to the students in the classroom on how languages are visually used in multilingual societies (Sebba, 2010). Hand-written texts on paper serve as a means of informing tourists some commercial notices concerning the prices of items, offers, or general information about opening and closing times.

Monolingual landscape materials are the most widely used materials as P2 stated:

Language with visuals is like a cartoon with captions. They function as input to the students, as they perceive the visuals, they strongly memorize them, and easily recall them. Students become aware of the landscapes and its significance. They understand how attractive writing and the attraction of the landscapes are used for the purpose of business. However, the different shapes, size, arts, designs of the landscapes and the writing styles, and the monolingual landscapes of different pieces in different languages can fulfil the aim of multilingual teaching.

Pictures of the linguistic landscapes can be used as teaching material in order to test the specific effects of this type of input on the development of pragmatic competence as compared to other types of input (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008, p.28). Languages are used in different ways, conveying different meanings and with different aims in mind. Not only the teaching of subject content and language, the development of an intercultural awareness, the teaching of values, or establishing behavioral rules, have been interpreted, but also they provide practical guidance and commercial information.

In addition to the earlier participants' ideas, P3 further stated on the role of such materials like visual aids:

These materials are for guided reading and writing activities and are the reminders of different cultures present among the students and on the teachers' periphery. They provide daily messages on how to educate children to behave in specific ways. Though the single language is used, the further signs used give directions or inform about the selling of a product or service. The do's and don'ts in the school life, library rules, repairing a bicycle type of instructions, instructions are provided through monolingual landscape materials. We also observed signs that tell the students the do's and don'ts of their school life.

Signs can be monolingual or multilingual and that there are differences between signs in the public space and inside schools. Teachers generally demonstrate the linguistic landscapes at the beginning and during the lessons in the classroom.

Highlighting English as a Lingua Franca in public communication and recognizing English as medium of instruction, P4 stated:

English is the medium of instruction among different language speakers. Our course also offers on how to teach English and how to teach other general subjects in English and may not appeal to address different mother tongue speakers. So, the policy itself is discouraging the monolingual education. Not only this, textbook is also solely monolingual and no other language landscape materials are used. In such cases, interpretation also comes in monolingual form.

English is used as a lingua franca in most of the parts of the world and adopt the norms of British or American English (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). Many school systems prefer to hire native speakers (NSs) as language teachers because of their authentic relationship to the target language and culture, but native speakers don't necessarily know the home culture of their students nor the intellectual tradition of their school system (Kramersch, 2013, pp. 58-59). So, English medium policy is better to be broken and seeking monolingual native speaker is not the solution for interpretation, but better is the appointment of non-native teachers to the TESOL learners.

Non-text Based Landscape Materials in English

Non-text based landscape materials are like the visual aids which can be brought in the classroom. Skillful teachers can also design the landscapes on their own as well. On the question, how nonlinguistic landscape materials are interpreted and how helpful they are in classroom language teaching, different responses have been gathered. The first thing was that they were alike the visual aids as P1 stated:

Learning with visual landscapes makes the memory stronger as it brings near to what is far. It functions as bringing outside world into the classroom and provides the chances of cognitive interpretations and chances of multiple interpretations and discussions. Opportunity of guessing meaning and describing picture or landscapes can be done. The signs and symbols can give different cultural meaning and identity of People or locality.

The visual landscape materials of our urban environments have semiotic and social significance. They provide multimodal composition of urban landscapes and the aesthetics of the environments in which people live (Adami, 2018, p.89). A sign system makes use of four functionally distinct types of signs: direction signs, location signs, guiding diagrams, and regulation marks.

In this context of designing landscape materials, P2 also had similar opinion as he stated:

Teacher painted materials, matchsticks, cartoon pictures can also be impressive and attractive to the learners. Sometimes they can be different from the teacher and students' cultures. While painting and designing landscapes, teacher can reflect his own model of landscapes and reflect his habit, culture and attitudes.

Through such materials teacher and students can both develop critical thinking and sound judgment through reflection as advertising poster boards are often hand-painted and present a unique and impressionistic style (Al-Naimat & Alomoush, 2018, p. 97). Such materials not only raise awareness, but also develop creative thinking capacity of learners.

Students have different interpretations up on the same landscape materials. Social political identity and the attitudes of the learners represent the norms of the particular society or locality as P3 stated:

Students in the groups do different activities and actions looking into the visuals or landscapes. Our secondary level English textbooks mostly consist of non-textbased landscapes. So, students and the teachers seek the connections. Most of the photos, or the camera pictures that are easily available are frequently brought in the classroom. Such items provide opportunity to express answers with collective feelings and attitudes.

The group phenomenon is always interactive in their behaviour with collective or social identity (Melucci, 1989). Different groups of students interpret the meaning of the materials differently. Collective identity theory uses the notion of space in its formation and it is particularly relevant to the study of linguistic landscape. Identity is static and never changing, but, men's attitudes and beliefs can be influenced by their relationship with groups.

Highlighting the possibility of sufficient interaction and communication with help of landscape materials, P4 stated that the non-textual landscapes were the means of communication for content, guessing meaning and for conducting information gap activities. With the help of then interaction, discussions, describing activities and information gaps activities can be conducted.

Non-textual landscapes are the means of engaging learners in social cognitive interaction and communication. An action is called communicative when actors reach to the understanding of the objective, social and subjective worlds and be able to take part in the argumentation and interpretation of events, goals, values and norms by sharing their subjective experiences, desires and feelings. Communication of the meaning always involves interaction with agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation (Jenkins, 2004). Thus, non-text based landscape materials provide ample spaces for argumentation, understandings, interpretation and conveying meaning.

Conclusion

Bilingual and multilingual landscape materials are the necessary materials for English language teaching in the secondary schools with bilingual or multilingual students. Multilingual landscape materials increase cognitive engagement and provide concepts to students more meaningfully; enable learners to interpret new information in relation to what they already know; and provide ample opportunities for raising awareness of how their languages work and how languages are used for presenting meaning. Multilingual landscape materials help in providing multilingual education by promoting intercultural education which is the need of the present day society. They develop multilingual competence and foster interaction in the L2 among the learners who are native and non-native speakers of the particular target language.

Monolingual and non-text based landscapes have their own practical use for language teaching, but may have very limited roles in teaching to the multilingual classroom. Monolingual text-based landscapes provide guided ways to interpret the scenes, however, non-text based landscapes provide spaces for free speculation of the situation. Non-text based landscape materials engage learners on higher level cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical thinking.

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