Inclusion of the Minority Language on Public Signs:

Multilingualism in the Deep South of Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the linguistic landscape (LL) through signs seen in the southernmost communities of Thailand with a specific focus on Patani-Malay, a minority language, yet a mother tongue of the majority of people in the regions. Six streets of each central city of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat were this study's research locale where a variety of text signs were collected as digital photos and were then coded based on: 1) the number of languages written on the signs (monolingual, bilingual or multilingual); and 2) the types of signs (official or private). The findings revealed that a number of languages (e.g., Thai, English, Chinese, Bahasa Malay, Arabic, French, Japanese, and Patani-Malay) could be detected on the signs on which a single language was most apparent. More specifically, Patani-Malay is inclusively and mainly present on many multilingual public signs along with other languages. Furthermore, through the lens of the trend magnet model proposed by Lee (2015) and some other sociolinguistic aspects, concepts of globalization, regionalization, nationalism and localization should dictate that mentioned languages be placed on signs. This study on multilingualism could shed light on and serve as the foundation for LL studies in Thailand, especially in the southernmost contexts. Significantly, multilingual concepts should also be made to extend the use of Patani-Malay in wider range of domains of language use.

Keywords: linguistic landscape (LL), multilingualism, minority language, linguistic policy

Introduction

With the advent of globalization, most of today's societies in the world are becoming increasingly multilingual (Matras, 2009). More people with different backgrounds and languages live together in a particular community, as immigrants migrate mainly for economic, social or political reasons, or as visitors for traveling. These people bring their own cultural and linguistic practices to

interact within families or communities. Therefore, the use of diverse languages to serve different purposes truly exists. These developments help form and shape the concept of multilingualism, which is broadly referred to as the context where more than one or several languages are used for specific purposes (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015). This concept is particularly evident in the linguistic situation of those living in the deep south of Thailand.

Malays and their Ethnic Language

The deep south of Thailand consists of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. These provinces have been inhabited primarily by ethnic Malays. The Malays are a minority group since they constitute approximately four percent of the entire population of the country, but are the majority within the three southernmost provinces, comprising approximately 1.3 million out of almost 2 million people in the population (Official Statistics Registration Systems, 2018). They are also predominantly Muslims who practice their own culture, beliefs, tradition and ways of life (Boonlong, 2007; Melvin, 2007; Premsrirat, 2008). Importantly, this minority group speaks a dialect of Malay called "Patani-Malay" (Premsrirat, 2008; Premsrirat & Samoh, 2012). This language is considered a minority language, yet the first tongue of approximately 90 percent of the overall population in the southernmost provinces (Premsrirat & Samoh, 2012).

Patani-Malay is powerfully symbolic of the sense of belonging for the Malay minority speakers and is closely connected to their religion, culture and traditions. This language is used as their mother tongue for interaction within the family and their community (Boonlong, 2007; Melvin, 2007; Premsrirat, 2008; Smalley, 1994) whereas in formal communication contexts such as public education or governmental transactions, Malays need to understand the Thai language, regardless of their native tongue. However, in 2009, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) located in Yala begun the inclusion of the adapted Arabic script, the written form of Patani-Malay, besides Thai and English, on the signage of its main buildings. The SBPAC subsequently proposed their language policy, which approved the use of Patani-Malay in formal contexts (SBPAC, 2018). This linguistic policy could be counted as the first official recognition of this ethnic language by the government. Based on this, it can be assumed that written texts seen in this area would be multilingual in nature, in the sense that diverse languages could appear on materials such as pieces of paper, wall writings, advertisements, sign boards and public signs. This use of language(s) on any material in public environment was initially termed as "linguistic landscape" (LL) by Landry and Bourhis in 1997 (p. 23).

In the recent past, there has been a trend to explore LL in Thailand. Pioneers who worked in the Thai context (Backhaus, 2007; Huebner, 2006; Ngampramuan,

2009, 2016a, 2016b) have contributed their empirical work, serving as the basis of LL studies in Thailand. However, LL research that explores the LL in the South, especially the three southernmost provinces is still sparse. This research intends to shed light on and serve as the base of the LL study in the South, specifically in the deep southern communities by focusing on the use of Patani-Malay, a marginalized language in the public environment. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine what languages appear on signs along the streets in the urban areas of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. For this reason, this study's research question is posed to examine the phenomenon of LL in the deep south: what languages are used on signs displayed along the streets in the central cities of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat?

Literature Review

Linguistic Landscape

For more than a decade, linguistic study has emphasized "the language texts that are present in public space" (Gorter, 2006, p. 1). The public sphere can be an excellent place in which several languages are manifested on purpose. Researchers have been observing languages in the material world from various aspects; for instance, multilingual settings (Backhaus, 2007; Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, & Trumper-Hecht, 2006; Gorter, 2006), government policies (Akindele, 2011; Amos, 2015; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006), the spread of English as a global language (Huebner, 2006; Ngampramuan, 2009, 2016a, 2016b). This public display of languages was first defined by the pioneers Landry and Bourhis (1997), which refers to the use of languages in the material world as:

> The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the   linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (p. 25).

Building on this, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006: p. 14) further defined LL as "any sign announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location." This later definition also encompasses signs seen within buildings. By the same token, Shohamy and Gorter (2009) claimed that LL is concerned with "language in the environment, words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces" (p. 1).

Linguistic Landscape and Multilingualism

To date, the study of LL has been fruitfully carried out in the multilingual contexts as researchers in the field have realized that the use of languages in the public sphere "offers a unique lens on multilingualism" (Shohamy, 2012, p. 538). Cenoz and Gorter (2009) also asserted "the use of different languages in signs in bilingual and multilingual countries or regions can be of great symbolic importance" (p. 56). It can be understood that a language used in the sign domain represents its empowered status, the importance of its speakers and the politics within that specific context.

Linguistic Landscape, Language Policy and Minority Language

Shohamy (2006) indicated that any LL item is a means for a language policy to exercise power over the public environment by maintaining a particularly ideal language, together with giving a specific status to a particular language (specifically a minority one) displayed in the space. Likewise, Aiestaran, Cenoz, and Gorter (2010: p. 220) stated that "language policy can have an impact on the way the linguistic landscape is regulated and arranged." In line with Cenoz and Gorter's (2006) research, the findings revealed that the wider use of minority languages on public and commercial signs was mainly due to the strong effects of a national language policy. Importantly, the main factor underlying ethnic language use on signs seems related to the language policy and its status and role within a particular society (especially a multilingual one).

Sociolinguistic Situation in the Deep South of Thailand

Having considered the status and linguistic use of Patani-Malay above, it is also vital to have a background knowledge of other languages used in order of how widespread they are to fully understand the LL in these areas.

Standard Thai and Southern Thai

Thai inclusively refers to the Standard Thai or the dialect most Thai people use to interact in all communicative modes (Smalley, 1994). The Standard Thai is, therefore, a standard variety that all Thais should know in order to achieve full linguistic competence in both formal and informal communication. All Thais, regardless of race, religion or native tongue have to use this variety in public schools as the language of instruction (Kosonen, 2008). Apart from the Standard Thai, Southern Thai, a dialect of the Standard Thai known as Paktay, plays a major role as a dialect that most Thai Buddhists or non-Malay speakers in the southernmost area use as their mother tongue (Smalley, 1994). It is significant to note that this regional language can only be heard, not seen (Smalley, 1994).

Foreign Languages in Southernmost Context

As can be expected, English is one of the several foreign languages used in the southernmost part of Thailand as local people in the areas, like other Thai citizens, have been taught English at the upper elementary level in public schools and use English in higher education for specialized knowledge (Foley, 2005). Furthermore, the deep south is a neighboring area of the Malaysian state (Melvin, 2007) where most of its citizens have the fundamental skills of English (Kirkpatrick, 2012). The local people in the three southernmost provinces are, thereby, frequently exposed to English as a tool for communicating with a large number of tourists from this neighboring country. Moreover, the deep south also has Chinese inhabitants who have been involved in various kinds of businesses in the areas (Hamilton, 2008). These people still practice their own language, both in spoken and written forms. Besides this, a growing number of Chinese tourists from Malaysia and Singapore also travel to the South each year (Hamilton, 2008). These conditions help maintain the use of Chinese in the deep south as it is used by both internal speakers and external speakers to the area. Aside from English and Chinese, others such as Bahasa Malay, Burmese and Cambodian also increased in use as a result of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, generally known as the ASEAN community.

Concepts and Advantages of Multilingualism

The sociolinguistic situation of the deep south is congruent with the concept of multilingualism, which is generally regarded as a situation where an individual can perform his or her linguistic competence in more than one language in appropriate contexts (Okal, 2014). Stavans and Hoffman (2015) pointed out that the concept of multilingualism also includes the simultaneous use of more than two languages in a particular community by a large number of its speakers. Importantly, these languages can be official, national or native languages; at the same time, they can also be unofficial or foreign languages (Okal, 2014). Furthermore, there are numerous benefits that come with being multilingual. Firstly, multilingualism enhances intellectual flexibility and creativity, and provides room for individuals to learn several languages from different learning contexts (Okal, 2014; Stavans & Hoffman, 2015). In addition, it can also help people understand other cultures, ideas and ways of thinking (Stavans & Hoffman, 2015).

Language Policy Launched by Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre

The language policy imposed by the SBPAC should be included in this study as it might play an important role in languages displayed on signs in the deep south. The SBPAC is the official government section located in Yala province; it is directly under the Royal Thai government. Its main duty is to govern the Southern

Border provinces and to fight against separatism and the ongoing violence in the affected areas (SBPAC, 2018). In 2013, the SBPAC launched its linguistic policy, which included the use of Patani-Malay in official contexts. With regards to this point, "The Action Plan of the Southern Border Provinces Development for 2013-2014" (SBPAC, 2018) has been examined in relation to language use on signs in the surveyed areas, since the new version for 2018 has not been available according to the SBPAC's official website (SBPAC, 2018). One significant aspect of the SBPAC's linguistic policy (SBPAC, 2018) related to this study is its promotion and encouragement of Patani-Malay on public signs.

> 14) To promote and encourage villages and government sections such as schools, hospitals, public health stations, police stations, and local administrative organizations to produce their place names or street signs with at least three languages; namely, Thai, local Malay, English and other languages (according to the cabinet resolution on March 13, 2012) (p. 11).

Research Methodology

Data Collection

In answering this study's research question, several signs and sign boards in the three southernmost provinces were photographed by a digital camera and a smartphone during daytime for analysis. It is of note that the criteria for collecting photographs of signs were also established to ensure research feasibility.

Criteria for Selecting Signs

Two sets of criteria for sign collection, following Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) and Ngampramuan (2016a), were established: 1) Signs that were collected include: a) all signs along the streets which are visible to pedestrians or any sign that is salient to people, and b) text signs such as public signs, public announcements, street names and place-names of the buildings developed by the government sectors and all types of signs produced by the private sectors such as shop signs, business signs and private announcements; and 2) Signs that were omitted, which include: a) signs inside buildings and private accommodations; b) moving signs on light emitting diodes (LEDs), texts on digital billboards and mobile signs (e.g., commercial signs on buses); c) graffiti, paintings or drawings; and d) large billboards.

Surveyed Areas

The central city of the three southernmost provinces, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, were chosen as the research locale, since Backhaus (2007, p. 1) states that "The city is a place of language contact". Thus, the central city would be an excellent place where several languages, both spoken and written, are practiced in the environment on purpose.

To be specific, six streets where most government buildings, business offices, shops, and markets are located in each province's central city were chosen as the research fields: 1) *Nong Chik*, 2) *Charoen Pradit*, 3) *Yarang-Nakluea*, 4) *Poon Sawat*, 5) *Sarit* and 6) *Sararom* streets were selected to collect signs in Pattani. For Yala, these following streets were included: 1) *Wongwienrop 1, 2, 3, 2) Sukhayang, 3) Sirorot, 4) Thonwithi 1, 5) Santisuk* and 6) *Phang Mueang 2*. Six streets: 1) *Phuphaphakdi,* 2) *Suriya Pradit*, 3) *Rangaemakkha,* 4) *Panason,* 5) *Chan Uthit* and 6) *Na Nakhon,* were chosen for collecting signs in Narathiwat. Thus, 18 streets in total were selected as this study's field sites to represent the overview of LL in the southernmost areas.

Coding of Signs

A coding scheme was set up and developed from previous studies, namely, Backhaus (2006), Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), Ben Said (2010), Edelman (2010), and Ngampramuan (2009, 2016a). Based on these scholarly work, two main classifications of signs were derived:

     1) Occurrence of language on signs (degrees of multilingualism): a) Monolingual sign (written in one language), b) Bilingual sign (written in two languages), and c) Multilingual sign (written in more than two languages);

     2) Types of signs: a) Official signs (signs created by the government such as public signs, street signs, or public announcements from governmental organizations), and b) Private signs (signs written by individuals or companies; e.g., shop signs or commercial signs).

Frameworks for Data Interpretation

In his study of language use and language contact in Thailand, Lee (2015) proposed an integrated model called "Trend Magnet Model" which seeks to deeply understand the language contact phenomenon, specifically regarding that of the minority ethnic groups. As shown in this model (Figure 1), the relationship between a language, especially a minority language and social factors influencing the use of particular languages in Thailand are described through concepts such as globalization, regionalization, nationalism and localization (Lee, 2015). These

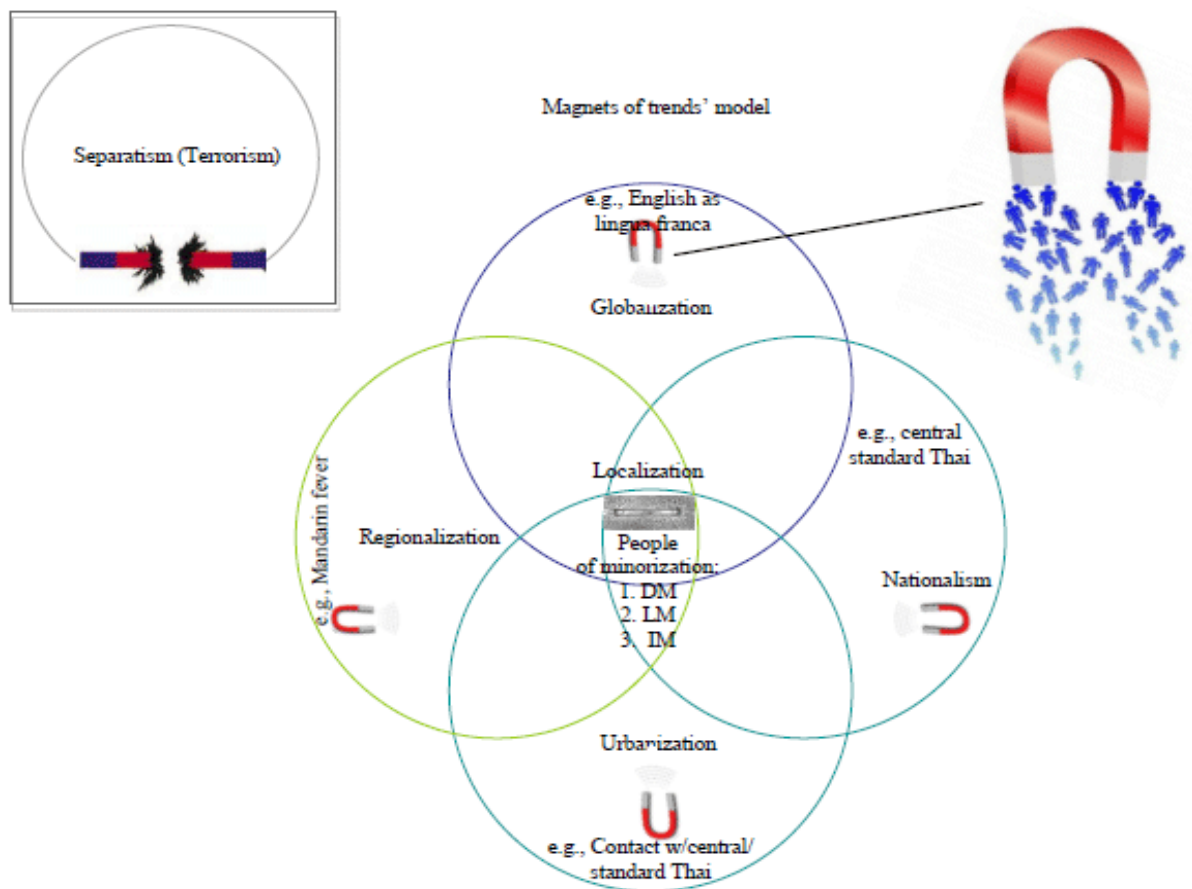trends and their attached languages overlap in particular communities, especially in the minority communities.

Figure 1. Trend Magnet Model (Lee, 2015, p. 331)

Besides the Trend Magnet Model, aspects of sociolinguistics were also employed for interpreting data. Sociolinguistics involves an investigation of the relation between language and a place or a society where the language is used (Spolsky, 1998; Van Herk, 2012). Additionally, Van Herk (2012) points out that sociolinguistics is also concerned with the study of the relationship between different languages used within a given speech community, specifically a multilingual one where several languages come into contact. Moreover, Spolsky (1998) proposed that the study of language and society can also reveal the power of politics that underlies certain use of a language/languages in a specific community.

Findings

Signs in the Deep South of Thailand

The total number of samples in this study's data collection comprises of 1,746 photos of signs. A total of 518 signs were taken from the given streets in Pattani, 605 signs from Yala, and 623 signs, which constitutes the highest number, from Narathiwat.

In regard to this study's research question, eight languages in total, namely: 1) Thai; 2) English; 3) Chinese; 4) Bahasa Malay; 5) Arabic; 6) Japanese; 7) French; and 8) Patani-Malay were found on signs in the filed sites. These languages on signs can be categorized according to the degrees of multilingualism, types of signs and the order of languages as presented in the tables. It is of note that the shortened forms were used in Table 1, 2 and 3: T = Thai, E = English, C = Chinese, BM = Bahasa Malay, A = Arabic, J = Japanese, F = French, PM = Patani-Malay, O = Official, P = Private, and To. = Total.

Monolingual Signs

For the monolingual signs, it is apparent that Thai had the strongest presence, which was detected on 835 signs out of 875 signs of its types, followed by English (35 signs), Patani-Malay (3 signs), and Arabic (2 signs). It is interesting to note that every single language in this category can be found more on private signs as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of monolingual signs in the deep south

Provinces	Types of Sign	Monolingual				To.
		T	E	PM	A	
Pattani	O	78	1	-	-	79
	P	187	8	-	-	195
Yala	O	88	1	-	-	89
	P	185	23	3	-	211
Narathiwat	O	124	-	-	1	125
	P	173	2	-	1	176
To.		835	35	3	2	**875**

Examples of monolingual signs in the deep south

Figure 3: An official 'PM' sign

Figure 2. An official 'T' sign   **Figure 3. A private 'E' sign**

Bilingual Signs

Based on the data of bilingual signs (Table 2), varieties of language combinations on signs can be seen in this category with the inclusion of other foreign languages such as Bahasa Malay, French and Japanese. Among these combinations, the Thai-English combination was apparently found the most, which accounts for 520 signs out of the 663 signs. The second rank went to the combination of Thai and Patani-Malay, which accounts for 60 signs, followed by Thai-Arabic, accounting for 34 signs. It might be revealing to note that not only was Thai present as the first language code on signs, but also other languages such as English-Thai, Bahasa Malay-Thai, French-Thai or even Patani-Malay, which can be seen first and then followed by Thai on private signs. It is, however, obbious that these diverse combinations and different orders of language codes were found more in the private category.

Table 2. Overview of bilingual signs in the deep south

Provinces	Types of Sign	Bilingual														To.
		T + E	T + P M	T + A	E + T	T + C	T + B M	P M + T	E + P M	P M + E	C + T	B M + T	A + T	A + P M	J + E	F + T	
Pattani	O	76	3	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	87
	P	72	31	5	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	113

Yala	O	89	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	93
	P	72	20	4	5	7	4	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	116
Narathiwat	O	130	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	135
	P	81	2	16	15	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	119
To.		520	60	34	22	11	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**663**

Examples of bilingual signs in the deep south

Figure 4. An official 'T+PM' sign

Figure 6. An official 'PM+T' sign

Figure 5. A private 'T+C' sign

Figure 7. A private 'E+PM' sign

Multilingual Signs

It can be seen from the multilingual category (Table 3) that Patani-Malay was included in the first three rankings: 1) Thai, English and Patani-Malay (63 signs); 2) Thai, English, Patani-Malay and Chinese (55 signs); and 3) Thai, Patani-Malay and English (45 signs), which were apparently more visible on official signs. We can still see Thai as the first in order, while English was second in the order of languages in almost all combinations, especially the official signs, which is congruent with the bilingual signs as discussed above. In addition, one informative feature to be noted is that even if signs were written with quite a similar set of languages, they were placed in different orders, with different number of languages (three to four languages), which has been seen considerably more in the private category signs.

Table 3. Overview of multilingual signs in the deep south

Provinces	Types of Sign	T+E+PM+C	T+E+PM	T+PM+E	T+C+E	T+E+C+PM	T+C+A+PM	T+A+E	T+C+E+PM	T+BM+E+PM	EM+T	PM+T+E	T+BM+E	T+A+BM	T+PM+E	T+PM+C	T+C+BM	T+C+E	T+A+E	T+PM+A+E	PM+A+T	A+PM+T	To.
Pattani	O	15	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	32
Pattani	P	2	-	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	11
Yala	O	4	50	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	60
Yala	P	15	4	-	4	4	3	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	37
Narathiwat	O	25	1	25	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55
Narathiwat	P	2	-	2	2	-	-	4	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
To.		63	55	45	9	8	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**208**

Examples of multilingual signs in the deep south

Figure 8: An official 'T+E+PM+C' sign

Figure 9: An official 'T+E+BM+PM' sign

Figure 10: An official 'T+PM+E+C' sign

Figure 11: An official 'T+PM+E' sign

Figure 12: An official 'T+C+E+PM' sign

Discussion

The data of each language on signs can be used to reflect the multilingual situation in the deep south, especially the relationship between languages and the factors underlying the use of particular languages on signs in the southernmost community. As Blommaert (2013) states, "Messages in the public space are never neutral, they always display connections to social structure, power and hierarchies" (p. 40). In this light, the Trend Magnet Model proposed by Lee (2015) and the sociolinguistic aspects are used to help describe the language phenomenon on signs from the research sites, along with other sign data and information from previous studies.

Thai Comes First

As is evident in the result section, Thai is present as the first language code on almost all official and private signs, even if such signs are produced by the private sector or individuals in the ethnic communities where Patani-Malay is the mother tongue of its major population. The reason behind this would be the fact that Thai maintains the status of "…national symbol, the official language, the language of the government, education, media and high culture." (Smalley, 1994, p. 25). It is evident that Thai serves as the forefront for almost all aspects of communicative purposes in both formal and informal contexts, which in this case are official and private signs. According to the Trend Magnet Model (Lee, 2015), this phenomenon possibly comes from the concept of nationalism, which underlies the use of Thai as the one and only national and official language of the country. This prestigious status of Standard Thai originates from: 1) the national language policies maintaining Standard Thai in all modes of public and official communications (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011); and 2) a dialect used in the central region where the capital city is located, and accordingly, employed by the highest ranking people and the elites in Thai society (Smalley, 1994). This situation is also apparent in the linguistic policy imposed by the SBPAC, stating Thai is to be the first language to be used on signs. Clearly, the deep south community is inevitably under the shadow of this concept as Thai holds the strongest presence in almost every single sign found in the research sites. Similarly, one of the salient finding of Huebner's (2006) study showed that more than a half of LL in Bangkok and its metropolitan area were in monolingual Thai. It is clear from the statistics that the predominant use of Thai on signs results from and is maintained by both national linguistic policies launched by the central Thai government and the language policy launched by the SBPAC. The data show how the political institution exercises their power through government policy on language, which is able to manipulate more or less the use of a particular language in a specific domain of language use.

English Comes Second

As expected, signs in the deep south are a place where the most influential foreign languages such as English expands its power and identity as the second most seen language on signs. The magnet of globalization (Lee, 2015) would be revealing to the situation of this de facto foreign language of Thailand. English has been brought to this country through economy, trade, education and almost all aspects of human transaction as the dominant world language for communication (Foley, 2005; Huebner, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Ngampramuan, 2016b). From the lens of regionalization, English is also proposed as the medium of communication of the ASEAN community where Thailand has been a member (Kirkpatrick, 2012). A higher use of English as the second language observed on signs would be a welcoming and communicating platform from related parties to people around the world, specifically to this incorporation among 10 ASEAN member countries. With this significant status at both universal and regional levels, English would undeniably be visible on signs in the deep south as we can see from the wide acknowledgement of "Thai comes first, English comes second". It is more interesting to indicate that even though this phenomenon of 'T+E' has been more common on both official and private signs in the field sites or even throughout the country, Warotamasikkhadit and Person (2011) asserted that there is no legal mention about a standard language in the Contemporary Thai Constitution, while Thai and English have been perceived as the most crucial languages by Thai policymakers for public communication. This would emphasize the roles of globalization and nationalism as shown in the Trend Magnet Model by Lee (2015) when these concepts have a strong impact through the use of Thai and English in the southernmost areas; these two language codes even overshadow the use of Patani-Malay on signs, especially the monolingual and bilingual ones (Table 1 and Table 2, respectively).

Chinese on Signs as the Result of Trade and Tourism

The Chinese language also plays a key role as the language is mostly seen on business signage. With reference to the Trend Magnet Model (Lee, 2015), Chinese on signs may result from the concepts of both globalization and regionalization as Chinese is spoken by one of the world's largest groups of speakers (Hamilton, 2008). Its use on signs may be intended to welcome more Chinese native speakers living around the world, especially in the Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, the near and neighboring areas to Thailand's deep south. Not only is Chinese on signs is in contact with Chinese-speaking visitors, but also its internal speakers as aforementioned. This helps maintain the use of Chinese in informal contexts such as Chinese writing as a trademark on signs (Figure 4 and Figure 8). The Chinese language is still expanding its predominance on formal contexts when included on official signs

along with Thai, English and the local minority language (Table 3). This would be counted as the policy of the government to provide a wider means of communication to the Chinese consumers living in and outside of the southernmost Thai communities.

Bahasa Malay: Language from the Neighboring Area

Bahasa Malay, the official language of Malaysia, can be visible on both official and private signs in the deep south. Since it is the same language used in certain regions or sub-regions within Thailand, the magnet of regionalization (Lee, 2015) would describe the use of Bahasa Malay. As Patani-Malay is considered a dialect of Bahasa Malay, these two groups of people can, to some extent, mutually understand each other when speaking (Smalley, 1994; Boonlong, 2007; Premsrirat, 2008). However, reading and understanding signs written in Patani-Malay might be difficult for some Malaysian visitors to the deep south to comprehend, in spite of the Malay ethnic group largely sharing the same cultural, traditional and (spoken) linguistic practices with the local Malays in Thailand. This would be because Patani-Malay's script is a simplified form of Arabic, whereas Bahasa Malay uses a Romanized alphabet to transcribe its spoken language. Thus, there is a promotion of Bahasa Malay to be used more in various domains where it is not only commonly heard, but also increasingly seen on signs as to facilitate and communicate information to the Malaysian visitors. With this strategy, the higher the number of tourists visiting the area from Malaysia, the faster the growth of the economy and social units will be in the deep south. Notably, there is no report on the use of any other languages of the ASEAN member countries on signs in the deep south. The two reasonable reasons for this would be: 1) the three provinces are located at the deepest part of the country, which may be difficult in terms of transportation for both foreign tourists and even laborers from other member countries, except for Malaysia; and 2) the deep south is constantly portrayed by the media as the area of insurgency and instability, where foreigners might be reluctant to visit.

Roles of Other Foreign Languages on Signs: Arabic, French and Japanese

Apart from English, Chinese and Bahasa Malay, there are three more foreign languages that are used on signs for different domains of language use.

Arabic: Its Prevalence in the Religious Domain

Arabic is commonly perceived as being relative to the religious domain, since the language often appears on building signage of Islam-related places such as a masjid (Figure 7), a Muslim graveyard, or a non-secular school broadly located in the three southernmost provinces. This perception could also develop from the fact that Arabic is the main language used in the Quran, the central religious text

of Islam (Huda, 2018). Thus, this language inherently possesses the symbolic status of integrating Islam and its believers, with the language found to be widely used on place-name signage in this study.

French and Japanese on Signs for Trade

French and Japanese are the two other languages that can be seen on private signs. These two language codes are added for advertisement purposes only. French can often be found on the building signage of a coffee shop, while Japanese is seen on signs of a restaurant. Through the lens of globalization (Lee, 2015), the use of these languages has resulted from cultural diffusion in which not only the food culture (drinking coffee/tea with bakery and Japanese food) is being flown into the southernmost Thai society, but also the language use of such original cultures. This is supported by Backhaus's (2006) study where the researcher claims that nonofficial signs, which are normally employed by the business sector, offer higher use of foreign languages to represent an overseas atmosphere. This would explain the use of French and Japanese on signs in the sense that it may help provide customers with an authentic feeling of being in a foreign land. This is usually achieved through the packaging of products, the settings of a location, or the use of the local language of a certain country.

Patani-Malay on Public Signs in relation to the SBPAC's Linguistic Policy

It can be noticed that even though Patani-Malay is rarely seen on both monolingual official and private signs (Table 1), this language is frequently present, for the most part, along with the Thai language on bilingual private signs (Table 2). More importantly, Patani-Malay is largely included on many multilingual official signs along with other languages (Table 3). Through the lens of localization (Lee, 2015), this extensive use of Patani-Malay on official signs could mostly result from the linguistic policy imposed by the SBPAC as earlier discussed. The regional government sector might try to take into consideration the language usage of the locals when planning and implementing linguistic policy, which aims to communicate and provide more understanding of various information to most local people in the areas. They have tried to achieve that by promoting and encouraging the ethnic language of the people to be used on public signs. This multilingual phenomenon would not be accomplished without the supportive government policy and the action plans that followed. The SBPAC's policy can then be counted as one of the powerful influencers in achieving more visibility of the Patani-Malay language on public signs.

Standard Pattern of Official Signs

It can be generalized from the analysis of signs in the deep south that the official signs produced by the government sectors normally consist of quite a specific

order of languages displayed on signs. As we can see from the sign results (Table 3), the more visible formulae of languages on multilingual official signs in Pattani and Narathiwat were 'T+E+PM' and 'T+PM+E', while the official 'T+E+PM+C' signs were mostly found in Yala's research sites. It seems that the signs in each province are quite compatible with the locals in terms of their use of the patterns of languages on signs. Following the policy, it has been observed that signs have become more congruent and look-alike.

Private Signs: A Rich Source of Linguistic Diversity

As discussed above, official signs generally employ quite a static order of languages, while private signs have a higher assortment. Private landscaping can be seen as a home of linguistic diversity in which languages are fluidly presented with various numbers and orders of language codes. It is reasonable to say that this productive situation of private signs has been yielded by the private sector and individuals. These signs are distinctly influenced by feelings, opinions and tastes of their owners or producers. The language use on signs and the design of signs are, therefore, subjective. This feature of private linguistic landscaping of the deep south is supported by Backhaus (2006) who pointed out that one can still differentiate official and nonofficial signs, since the latter often produces a diversity of languages compared to the former.

Conclusion

This research offers a perspective on how the deep south of Thailand can be regarded as being in the realm of societal multilingualism. Walking along the streets in Yala, one can see several languages on signs such as Thai, English, Chinese, Bahasa Malay, Arabic, and importantly, Patani-Malay. These languages are displayed on signs with various degrees of language use from monolingual, bilingual to multilingual levels. The languages are also placed on signs in different orders of language codes, with this feature being reported to be seen more on private signs. With the help of the Trend Magnet Model proposed by Lee (2015) and the sociolinguistic aspects, it seems that the concepts of globalization, regionalization, nationalism and localization have brought a multitude of languages to come into contact on signs in the southernmost Thai communities. This is especially true of the inclusion of Patani-Malay on public signs, which was result of the government's promotion and implementation through linguistic policy.

Implications

Public signs could be a rich source of language learning. Multilingual public signs can serve as practical teaching materials, and can explain how languages are practiced in everyday communication. Students can then relate what is taught in the classroom such as grammar rules or word spellings with how people actually make use of language in the real world. These signs can also inspire students to learn languages in a more active and interesting way. As signs can make students more observant, they might start noticing other things around them as sources for learning a language as well, while at the same time, attempting to apply their classroom knowledge into practice. More importantly, several languages on signs could raise student awareness in terms of the need to learn more than one language. Students may be inspired to learn other languages, since they are surrounded by multilingual materials (e.g., signs and billboards) in the public sphere. Consequently, several languages, Patani-Malay in particular, on signs across spaces, outside the classroom and at home can, to some extent, have a positive motivational effect on children's cognitive processes in language learning.

In addition, signs would be one way of language revitalization. An increasing use of Patani-Malay on public signs in the deep south may help provide more exposure to the younger generation who reportedly uses less of this language (Burarungrot, 2010).

Lastly, one of the desired objectives of this research is to potentially raise the government's awareness, especially policymakers, in promoting and encouraging the use of minority languages in formal contexts. The officers should take into consideration the ways of living of the people, and the cultural, traditional and linguistic practices of a particular speech community when planning and issuing linguistic policies to be used in such areas. For example, the government could produce more multilingual signs in areas where ethnic minority languages are used in an attempt to protect and support the citizen's language rights. The act of valuing and embracing an ethnic linguistic reality by the government could enhance the psychological well-being of the minority groups, which could in turn lead to lower conflicts in society. This diversity of languages on signs would also create a more desirable atmosphere for both locals and newcomers to the areas.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are four recommendations that this particular research can provide to a potential future research in similar fields. First, the borderline areas in other regions of Thailand could be a new research locale for investigating whether there

is any use of minority languages or even the use of a neighboring country's languages on signs. The comparison of signs in such areas and the deep south should be made in relation to the linguistic policy and the current situations/tensions in the region(s). Second, it would be more revealing if other modes of textual representation such as graffiti, paintings or even texts written on materials such as pieces of paper or on product packaging in the deep south were examined to see whether they portray any messages in relation to the sociolinguistic situation and the unrest in the areas. Next, the linguistic features of language use on signs could be the research focus in examining the correctness of a particular language displayed on signs, and to what extent such messages can potentially be communicative to passersby, especially foreign visitors. Last, scholars in other relevant academic disciplines such as psychology, communication and peace studies can further study how signs can help resolve political and social conflicts in a given society.

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