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Review

Linguistic Landscape Projects as English Teaching and Learning Resources: A Review

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KEYWORDS

Linguistic landscape;
 EFL;
 Pedagogy.

A B S T R A C T

As the interest for linguistic landscape research has grown a lot in the past few decades, and so is the enthusiasm for taking advantage of linguistic landscape in language and subject-content classrooms. This paper aims at providing informative and valuable summary of works that have promoted the linguistic landscape as one of the English teaching and learning resources. Hence, it includes only papers that have specifically focused on advocating the benefits of linguistic landscape for English teaching and learning within the last ten years. The review is divided into several sections that explain the targeted participants, goal, method, advantages and several critical notes concerning the implementation of linguistic landscape projects. Suggestions for future review and studies on linguistic landscape are also provided.

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INTRODUCTION

After Landry and Bourhis' (1997) seminal work on language vitality, linguistic landscape has gained much attention from linguists. Several monographs and edited chapters as well as many research reports have been published (see for example, Gorter, 2006; Shohamy & Gorter, 2008; Blackwood & Tufi, 2015; Blackwood, Lanza, Woldemariam, & Milani, 2017). Those studies or work have revealed that linguistic landscape is more than merely a display of languages in public areas as linguistic landscape has demonstrated the relationship between language and power (e.g., Gorter, Marten, & Van Mensel, 2011), revealed the identity construction of communities in the research areas (Blackwood, et al., 2017), and superdiversity (Blommaert, 2013).

Because of the rich insights that linguistic landscape has offered, researchers and teachers have also advocated its use for pedagogical purposes. Many have included linguistic landscape into their language or subject-content syllabuses (e.g., Rowland, 2013; Burwell & Lenters, 2015; Dumanig & David, 2019; Gorter, Cenoz & der Worp, 2021; Wangdi & Savski, 2022). In addition, there have been reviews on the history of linguistic landscape and multilingualism (Gorter, 2013) and its pedagogical advantages (e.g., Huebner, 2016). However, there seems to be lack of a review on how English teachers and/or students have gain benefits from the linguistic landscape. Therefore, this paper aims at briefly reviewing reports of how linguistic landscape (henceforth, LL) has been utilized in language education setting, particularly the classrooms.

METHOD

The writer came up with the plan to do the review after introducing LL as one authentic English teaching or learning method in one course about approaches to English teaching and learning. Thus, she wonders if the growing interest of linguistic landscape studies all over the world is parallel with the increasing interest of using LL project in English classes. Therefore, she started to search for the said research reports in Google Scholar using the following key words: 'elt and linguistic landscape'. The search resulted in around two hundred papers in which 'elt' and/or 'linguistic landscape' appeared in the listed work in each webpage. To obtain only the research articles that are relevant with the objective of this review, a set of criteria was determined; which will be explained in the next paragraph.

To conduct this brief review, several criteria were set as follows: (1) the papers should be published in reputable scholarly journals or edited volumes, (2) in those articles, there should be at least an LL project that was carried out by students and/or teachers in the context of or can be related to English teaching or learning, (3) the works advocate the implementation of LL as one of the pedagogical resources, and (4) the period of publication was between 2000 to 2022. Thus, this review did not include the following work: (1) unpublished thesis or dissertation, (2) proceedings, (3) reports of LL projects that did not specifically focus on or were not related to English teaching or learning, and (4) articles discussing schoolscape because they need to be reviewed separately from this paper. With the above-mentioned criteria, there were fourteen articles to be reviewed.

DISCUSSION

The Targeted Participants and Goals of the Linguistic Landscape Project

Most of the LL projects have been carried out at tertiary level, particularly for students with English major (Rowland, 2013; Chestnut, Lee & Schulte, 2013; Dumanig & David, 2019; Ariffin, De Mello, Husin, Anuarudin, & Omar, 2020; Barrs, 2020; Kweldju, 2021; Gorter, Cenoz & van der Worp, 2021; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022; Wangdi & Savski, 2022). Even students at doctoral level have done the linguistic landscape projects to help them understand the rationale behind the dominance of English in commercial places like shopping streets or how the dynamic relationship between different communities and the powers attached to each is demonstrated in the linguistic landscape of a typical place like Chinatown (Li & Marshall, 2020). In several projects, the teachers or the lecturers are actively involved as the students' collaborators. For example, in

Chestnut et al.'s (2013) project with their students, the researchers-teachers discussed with the students about their observation of the frequent presence of one language in one area, or the rationale of the occurrence of one foreign language with the national language in public signs in Seoul and had arguments about their opinion of the multilingual signs. Meanwhile, in Barr's (2020) project, the teacher assisted the Japanese EFL students to propose a title for their theses after they presented their description of the public signs collected and in Sabaté-Dalmau's (2022) study, she designed the project as part of the English Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic EMI course and guided the students conducting the ethnographic fieldwork for the project within the Sociolinguistics Citizenship paradigm. It can be seen that the complexity of linguistic landscape concept and the specific linguistic aspects demonstrated through linguistic landscape, such as the denotative and connotative meanings of language the public signs, the functions of linguistic landscape, and the interplay between community and language have made linguistic landscape more suitable for undergraduate and graduate students rather than for secondary or primary school pupils. Nevertheless, given the multifaceted items related to language learning that are available in the linguistic landscape, several scholars have advocated using the linguistic landscape projects for lower level of students by adjusting the landscape projects so that they can be carried out by young students, e.g., the primary or lower secondary school students with the teachers' scaffolds (e.g., Dagenais, Moore, Sabatier, Lamarre, & Armand, 2009; Sayer, 2010; Chern & Dooley, 2013; Roos & Nicholas, 2019; Gorter, et al., 2021).

Consequently, the goals of the linguistic landscape projects were established in line with the learning goal above targeted participants. Generally, the researchers or the teachers intended to examine to what extent the linguistic landscape projects can provide pedagogical resources in their EFL classes (Chestnut et al., 2013; Dumanig & David, 2019; Barrs, 2020; Kweldju, 2021). More specifically, one of the aims is to have the English major university students examine how English has been used in the public signs, for example, identifying signs with inaccurate English (Rowland, 2013; Barrs, 2020; Ariffin et al., 2020), learning about the word-formation in English (Kweldju, 2021), increasing vocabularies and improving spelling (Dumanig & David, 2019), and learning the connotative meanings of English (Chestnut et al., 2013). Other aims are to investigate the EFL students' perception about the linguistic landscape projects (Chestnut et al., 2013; Dumanig & David, 2019) and develop students' critical thinking skills (Sayer, 2010; Rowland, 2013; Chestnut et al., 2013; Barrs, 2020) as well as critical language awareness (Wangdi &

Savski, 2022) or metalinguistic awareness of the language varieties, including the Englishization phenomena in the public spaces (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022). Meanwhile, for the young students at the primary level, the linguistic landscape project was expected to enable students to acquire basic literacy in English (Chern & Dooley, 2014) as well as to obtain some insights into the English signs outside the classroom from their perspectives as young EFL learners (Roos & Nicholas, 2020), and to raise the students' language awareness in their surroundings (Dagenais et al., 2009; Gorter et al., 2021).

The Methods Employed for the Linguistic Landscape Project

In this section, the discussion about how the linguistic landscape project was carried out method entails the following items (1) sites, (2) selection of signs, (3) techniques and (4) stages of collecting and processing the signs as well as (5) concrete outcome expected from the students. First of all, most of the studies were conducted in big cities of the countries where English is not the national or official language, such as China, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Oman, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Mexico, Spain, and Taiwan. In the linguistic landscape projects, the students were asked to choose the sites for the projects themselves and they have to explain the rationale, e.g., where there are abundant multilingual signs (Chestnut et al., 2013) in a typical area such as in Chinatown (Li & Marshall, 2017), anywhere as long as they can collect as many signs in English as possible in within a period of time e.g., a week (Rowland, 2013), within the capital city (e.g., Wangdi & Savski, 2022), in different cities of one country (Kweldju, 2021) or in different places of one city (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022) through Google Map.

Concerning the techniques of collecting the signs, almost all linguistic landscape projects reported (Sayer, 2010; Rowland, 2013; Chestnut et al., 2013; Li & Marshall, 2017; Dumanig & David, 2019; Roos & Nicholas, 2019; Ariffin et al., 2020; Barrs, 2020) required students to go to the above-mentioned public places and take real pictures of the signs. Going to the field was considered to be able to raise the students' awareness of the English usage around them, in particular their community, and the impact of the language upon them, hence the ethnographic fieldwork (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022). Equally important, witnessing the language use in person could help them get the 'sense' of the places and how languages used by the people there can inform the typicality of the places (Li & Marshall, 2017). It's important to highlight how these two researchers not only collected signs but also observed the daily language of the people, employed all the senses, made field notes

and written reflections to understand how the linguistic landscape was informed by dynamic power-language relationship of the linguistic communities in the research site. Only three studies (Kweldju, 2021; Wangdi & Savski, 2022; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022) made use of Google Map to locate the sites for collecting public signs, which enabled the students to go to distant cities in one country (Indonesia) or different streets in a city in a short time from wherever they were.

Collecting and then restricting signs usually go hand-in-hand. One way to restrict the sign collected is by determining a timeline, e.g., a week (Rowland, 2013) or month as in Dumanig and David's (2019) report. Otherwise, teachers could determine the type of sign to collect, e.g., business names in which English was used (Kweldju, 2021) or signs in which English is used with other languages as in Sabaté-Dalmau's (2022) project, which was grounded on the Plurilingualism view in language learning.

For the young English learners, the linguistic landscape project has been implemented to acquire basic literacy and to raise an awareness of different scripts in their environment, for example in the linguistic landscape of Taipei where Chinese, Japanese and Roman scripts are available (Chern & Dooley, 2014). The sign collection procedure has been simplified for these young students, but commonly it covers an introduction of what public sign is and what it can display, the sign collection, and the report or the reflection. For instance, in Chern and Dooley's (2014) study, before the walk, students were introduced to the public signs that contain images and text; then students walked around their environment with their teachers and took photos; after the walk, they were asked to identify letters or group the signs based on the scripts, e.g., in Chinese, Roman, Korean, Japanese. In another project (Roos & Nicholas, 2020; Gorter et al., 2021), there were some adjustments made, i.e., expanding the site for collecting signs to children's homes, allowing them collect not only signs from the streets but also from books, magazines, and Internet, and letting them not only take photos, but also draw pictures or cut signs from the printed text. Meanwhile, in Dagenais et al.'s (2009) study, the linguistic landscape project is part of the language awareness activity that was carried out in the school neighborhood: in the closest quadrangle and 1-km-away quadrangle.

As for the public sign collection procedures, care needs to be taken since the prevailing linguistic landscape projects can be very demanding and time-consuming. Therefore, arousing and simulating interest in the project through a clear introduction and explanation of the benefits students can get from the linguistic landscape can be a starting point, before the project is carried out.

In Barrs' (2020), Kweldju's (2021) and Wangdi and Savski's (2022) projects, the stages of data collection started from an explanation of what linguistic landscape is, the project itself including the expected outcome and the linguistic theory relevant to the project, which was continued with carrying out the project and the report making at the end. The project can also start from students' group presentation about linguistic landscape, implying learning through peer-teaching (Gorter et al., 2021). Hence, it is important to provide a theoretical explanation of the linguistic theories learned through the linguistic landscape projects, e.g., the English grammatical, lexical and spelling errors (Ariffin et al., 2020), World Englishes (Barrs, 2020), or the English morphology (Kweldju, 2021). Furthermore, within the process, teachers have provided necessary scaffolds in forms of clear instructions or guidelines, discussions and feedbacks. In most of the projects, students worked in groups of 3-5 (e.g., Rowland, 2013; Ariffin et al., 2020; Barrs, 2020, Kweldju, 2021; Gorter et al., 2021; Wangdi & Savski, 2022; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022)). Only in projects that are parts of the students' dissertation (Li & Marshall, 2017) or that adopted narrative inquiry (Chestnut et al., 2013), did students work individually.

The number of signs obtained may vary, for example, Sayer (2010) took 250 items, Li and Marshall (2017) collected 192 photos, and Ariffin et al., (2020) had students collect 300. However, what is considered to be more important is what the students and/or teachers did with the collected photos which should be in line with the objective of each study. Sayer (2010) categorized the photos according to common themes and did a content analysis until he found six social meanings that can be associated with the English language used in the signs in Oaxaca, Mexico, i.e., fashion, being cool, being sex(y), love expression, and seditious identities. Adopting Sayer's (2010) study, Rowland (2013) asked and guided students to reflect upon how and why English is used in the linguistic landscape through questions about the typology of the signs, their locations, creators, targeted readership and choice of language. Likewise, Gorter et al. (2021) had students analyze the signs based on the place (where they were taken), the meanings of the signs from the passers-by and shop owners' views, the language status, and the multimodal dimensions. Different from Rowland (2013), Chestnut et al. (2013) worked on the linguistic landscape project together with their students. Realizing the complexity of linguistic landscape project, they highlighted the importance of looking at the collected photos carefully, checking students' comprehension and experiences about the project, making it possible for the teachers to give necessary or needed input, suggestions, corrections or critiques to the students, which would help them reach

the goal of the project. Similar to Sayer's (2010) work, Li and Marshall (2017) also used content analysis for the photos collected through the visual and sensory ethnography.

There can be various outcomes of the project, depending on the goals and level of students (adult or young students and their proficiency). Chestnut et al. (2013) requested the adult students to write narrations of their learning experiences and reflections about the linguistic landscape project. Rowland's project (2013), which adopted Sayer's (2010), required the students to produce 500 to 1,000-word-written report. Likewise, in Wangdi and Savski's (2022) project (which used Rowland's hermeneutic approach), the students wrote 800-1,000-word report based on their activity sheet in which they listed the type of sign, location, sign owner/creator, audience, use of English and other languages, and their brief observation notes. Similarly, Ariffin et al. (2020) had their students create written report of the inaccurate uses of English in terms of the spelling, lexical items and grammar, their analysis and corrections for the errors. In the same vein, Kweldju (2021) asked her students to write reports which should contain the typology of the word-formation process of the business names and the analysis, which should be supported by relevant literature. Meanwhile, Barrs (2020) asked the students to describe how English was used in each sign collected in 50 to 100 words and discuss them in the class. The goal of the discussion was to gain possible themes for the students' theses, whereas Dumanig and David (2019) only asked the students to list the English words that they could recall in the linguistic landscape. Quite differently, Gorter et al. (2021) asked the students to prepare a presentation video and reflection upon the linguistic landscape exploration, while Sabaté-Dalmau (2022) combined blog entry, written report and group presentation in the project. As for the project with the young students, Roos and Nicholas (2019) asked them to fill in worksheets in which they had to reflect upon why they chose only some signs in English and why English was used.

The Pedagogical Benefits Students Receive from the Linguistic Landscape Project

All studies collected have advocated the use of linguistic landscape for several pedagogical purposes. First of all, doing a linguistic landscape project can help learners connect the English lessons they receive in the classroom and how the language is used outside the classroom, particularly in their own community by being a 'language investigator' (Sayer, 2010; Rowland, 2013; Roos & Nicholas, 2019). The linguistic landscape can provide ample opportunities for incidental learning of the English lexical items, structure, spelling (Chestnut et

al., 2013; Ariffin et al., 2020; Kweldju, 2021) including learning from the lexical, grammatical or spelling errors. However, the frequent errors that appear in public signs are not always seen as learning sources if one of the primary learning objectives is to pass the national exam (Shang & Xie, 2019). Secondly, guided by the teachers, students can develop their critical thinking skills as they observed and collected signs in English. For example, because of the frequent occurrences of English in the linguistic landscape, students wonder why they could see much more signs in English rather than in other foreign languages (Rowland, 2013; Chestnut et al., 2013). Yet, in Wangdi and Savski's (2022) study, students seemed to accept the idealization of English in the linguistic landscape of Thimphu, Bhutan. It is at this point that teachers, through the linguistic landscape project, can guide students develop their critical thinking and language awareness. Furthermore, by understanding the social uses and meanings of languages (the national language, the minority language and English) in the linguistic landscape, the project can be used to develop students' trans/intercultural awareness (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022). Thirdly, students have chances to build their pragmatic competence when they were assigned to classify the public signs based on its goals, e.g., to give information, to persuade, to warn people (Rowland, 2013; Chern & Dooley, 2014; Barrs, 2020). Fourthly, the linguistic landscape consists of texts and images that are placed in different positions depending on the purpose of the signs, from which students can learn the interplay between them to create different meanings to the readers (Rowland, 2013; Chestnut et al., 2013) as well as the connotative meanings of English to a variety of audience (Sayer, 2010; Rowland, 2013; Chestnut et al., 2013; Roos & Nicholas, 2019; Barrs, 2020) and witness how multimodality has been used to show power and language relationship (Wangdi & Savski, 2022). Finally, the project has given fun learning experiences for students because it was quite practical for them (Gorter et al., 2021). In addition, they did not feel like learning English formally in the classroom and could 'go' to many places via Google Map in the Internet (Kweldju, 2021). Moreover, they were fascinated by the people's language creativity in the business names they collected (Kweldju, 2021). The linguistic project has also given a meaningful learning experience for them since they had, to a certain degree, a control over the project (Ariffin et al., 2020), made them aware of the abundant presence of 'linguistics' their social environment, and hence, helped them understand the abstract Sociolinguistics concept. As a result, they then gained a new perspective in seeing their surroundings, their society (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022).

The Teachers' Critical Notes About the Linguistic Landscape Project

Despite the benefits students could obtain from the project, teachers have made several critical notes. First of all, should the students be expected to develop their understanding of the linguistic landscape concept, they need a lot of exposures to research focusing on the linguistic landscape (Chestnut et al., 2013). To be able to understand the multivarious goals behind the use of languages in the linguistic landscape, students need to learn how the previous researchers have gathered signs and how they perceive the various meanings of those signs by making connections between signs and the history, economic, politic and social aspects of the place. Second, when the project is part of a linguistic course, students need to put more effort in understanding the linguistic theory that they are learning through the project and seek for theoretical explanation from relevant and supported readings so that they would be able to engage themselves in the higher-order thinking discourse (Kweldju, 2021). Likewise, Wangdi and Savski (2022) pointed out that the linguistic project could activate students' higher order thinking process although it did not always appear regularly. Thirdly, students need to take a positive and responsible attitude for their own learning so that they are able to make connections between the abstract linguistic concepts that they have learned in classroom (which they considered as uninteresting and difficult) and the real language use in the linguistic landscape through their understanding (Ariffin et al., 2020; Kweldju, 2021).

CONCLUSION

So far, I have presented the various applications of linguistic landscape projects. Interestingly, the projects could be addressed for a variety of students, from primary to tertiary levels and with a number of purposes, from simply helping the students acquire the basic literacy to raising their language and metalinguistic awareness, developing critical thinking skills as well as pragmatic competence. Most of the projects were conducted in countries where English is not the first of the national language, and designed to enable students experience, witness, and sense the real linguistic landscape project as opposed to the virtual one. Some, though, have made use of technology, i.e., Google Earth, Google Map and Google Street for the projects. Students were guided to collect signs in English only or signs in which English was present and to make reports about how English was used, how they perceive the use of English, or how the project has helped them in their learning through several modes, such as worksheet, oral

presentation, or academic reports, depending on the level of the students.

Although the researchers have reported students' positive impressions and perceptions about the linguistic landscape projects, e.g., the chances for learning English incidentally, being aware of the presence of English and other languages in their environment, the meanings deciphered from the signs, or exciting learning experiences through the project, they also raised considerable issues. For students at the tertiary level, it is important to be committed to widening their views about the project by intensive reading of the linguistic landscape studies and linguistic theory which was learned through the project. Without sufficient readings, it would be challenging for the students to apply the demonstrate and develop the higher order thinking skills.

Future review of linguistic landscape projects and its pedagogical benefits can be extended to schoolscape to examine the policy, including the language policy of educational institutions which has been introduced through the schoolscape. Another possibility is to review the utilization of the linguistic landscape project in subject-content classrooms. Still, one interesting and potential issue for the next linguistic landscape projects is using Google Street view to investigate the translingual or translanguaging practices as well as language policy in Indonesian linguistic landscape, particularly the new prime tourist areas and how they can be used as a pedagogical source in both language and subject-content classes.

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