

Linguistic landscapes (LL) as a target of urban language planning: A comparison of three Sinophone cities

Date: 11 April 2017 (Tue)

Time: 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Venue: GH803, PolyU

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“Linguistic landscape” (LL) is a general term for language displayed on private, public and commercial signs (Shohamy, Ben-Rafael and Barni 2010, Shohamy and Gorter 2009). In the past two decades, LL have become an increasingly important area of research in the intersections of sociolinguistics, media studies, geography and semiotics. Looking at LL from the perspective of language planning, my presentation distinguishes formal and informal LL. A typical example of formal LL are street signs, the visual and linguistic contents of which follow guidelines of official language planning agencies, both in terms of language choice and design. Informal LL, on the other hand, include signs designed and written by individuals and put on display in shops, markets, coffee bars, public bulletin boards, etc. I will discuss to what extent informal LL can be analyzed as expressions of language attitudes and acts of unofficial language planning. My analysis will be based on LL examples collected in the cities of Hong Kong, Singapore and Taipei. All these cities are predominantly inhabited by speakers of Sinitic languages. At the same time, however, they differ considerably in terms of coexistence of different Sinitic and non-Sinitic varieties. The comparison will highlight the differences in responses to language variation and language ideologies by official language planning agencies and individuals.

References

Shohamy, Elena, Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Monica Barni. 2010. Linguistic landscape in the city. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Shohamy, Elena and Durk Gorter. 2009. Linguistic landscape: Expanding the scenery. New York & London: Routledge.