

LINGUISTICS AND VIETNAMESE LINGUISTICS

A SURVEY STUDY ON LINGUISTIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF THE MARIAMMAN HINDU TEMPLE IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT: Recognizing linguistic attitudes is an assessment of the value of a community's or individual's behavioral tendency towards a language or a specific linguistic phenomenon; a survey of linguistic attitudes towards a linguistic landscape in a specific area will help us to seek local people's perceptions of an existing phenomenon in their contexts as well as assist the state in planning appropriate language policies. Mariamman Temple in Ho Chi Minh City is one of the most well-known religious institutions in Vietnam, drawing pilgrims of many ethnicities and nationalities. The purpose of this study is to survey the linguistic attitudes of religious believers, visitors, and the Temple Executive Board about the linguistic landscape of the Mariamman temple from a combination of quantitative and qualitative research perspectives. The findings of the study will demonstrate the participants' thoughts and views toward linguistic hierarchical features in a multilingual landscape where people from various language communities come to practice their beliefs and meet, exchange, and adapt to the linguistic landscape at the temple during the period of integration and internationalization.

KEYWORDS: Linguistic attitude; linguistic landscape; Mariamman Hindu Temple; religious believers; study.

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1. Introduction

Seen as a collection of traces of human social activities and as an identity that profoundly reflects cultural and historical changes (Backhaus, 2007), the linguistic landscape in each religious area of each country can help us to find out the social meanings behind open space models with multilingual contexts. In the words of Landry and Bourhis, the symbolic function refers to the value and status of the languages as perceived by the members of a language group in comparison to other languages (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Studying the linguistic landscape also helps us to understand the attitudes of users as well as the real intention and the real policy of the State to support recognized language, especially on official signs (Bourhis, 1992; Leclerc, 1989). The study of the linguistic landscape shows us its importance in the field of language through the role of the linguistic landscape in public places and the increasingly diverse development of languages and cultures. Studying linguistic attitudes toward a certain linguistic landscape is also considered a measure of the user's psychological response to language as a sign system existing in the population/ society. The study of the linguistic landscape is an indispensable thing because it is a linguistic-cultural phenomenon arising in the process of urbanization. In Vietnam, the study of the linguistic landscape has now been interesting to several researchers with the works mainly going into understanding the status of language use on billboards and shop signs, focusing on big cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, etc. Through the survey of references, we found that there has not been any in-depth research on the linguistic landscape and linguistic attitudes in the religious area - Mariamman Temple, the main object of this paper.

In this paper, we investigate the linguistic attitudes of religious believers and visitors towards the linguistic landscape of Mariamman Temple, Ho Chi Minh City which is the language system

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represented on the signs in the temple. The problem to be solved in this article is: What are the typical features of the current state of the linguistic landscape at Mariamman Temple? How is the linguistic attitude towards the linguistic landscape at this temple shown? What can we see about the typical cultural imprints of Indo-Vietnamese cultural interference and acculturation through the linguistic landscape picture here by analyzing the landscape and linguistic attitudes? To serve the purpose of surveying the linguistic attitudes of religious believers and visitors at the temple, we used the sociolinguistic investigation method with the semantic differential scale proposed by Osgood, including questions about the respondent's perception of the language system displayed on the tables of the temple (for visitors to visit and offer sacrifices at the temple). From solving the above problems, the article reviews and re-evaluates the role and meaning of linguistic signs shown at the temple, thereby helping us better understand the implementation of language policy in Vietnam to protect languages and the importance of having them present in the linguistic landscape for future maintenance and development.

2. Background information

The Mariamman Hindu Temple is the central temple of the Indian community in Vietnam. This is a historical relic, an imprint of Indian culture in Vietnam in general and Ho Chi Minh City in particular. Presenting as a witness to a period of development of the Indian community, a temple is a place built for the religious activities of Hindus, a meeting place for Indians in Ho Chi Minh City. The Mariamman Temple, a Hindu temple, is a testament to the unity and diversity in Ho Chi Minh City's culture. The unity is expressed through the interference between Indian culture, a huge culture with a long history in the world, and the indigenous culture of Vietnam; the harmonious combination between religion and folk beliefs, between gods and rituals in Hinduism and Vietnamese beliefs, is expressed through the belief in Mother Goddesses Worship. This is a well-known deity that is commonly adored in South India and has been integrated into the Vietnamese religion of Mother Goddess. Up to now, this temple is an urban heritage of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, with a strong attraction for devotees from all over the country and foreign visitors.

3. Methodology

3.1. About survey data

To conduct the study, we had to make different special visits to survey the Mariamman temple for obtaining quantitative and qualitative data. We conducted a survey of the Mariamman temple between February and April 2021, using smartphones to capture all the images of the linguistic systems represented on the signs of the Mariamman Temple. After the survey, we classified the tables according to the criterion of the number of languages shown on each table as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. To investigate the linguistic attitudes of religious believers and visitors towards the linguistic landscape at the temple, we used a multiple-choice with a semantic differential scale and use a linguistic anket to collect data of survey results. Regarding the survey subjects, we conducted interviews and opinions of religious believers and visitors at the temple based on the main factors that influence language attitudes, that is age, gender, occupation, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and place of residence (Allard & Landry, 1994).

3.2. About the survey content

We surveyed the linguistic attitudes of pilgrims, and religious believers towards receiving the linguistic landscape of the temple through the language expressed on the signs as follows: Content 1: Feelings about the language systems shown at the Temple; Content 2: Attitude interested in the effectiveness of font size and arrangement of words on bilingual billboards; Content 3: Recommendations for the current state of the language landscape at religious institutions. Survey subjects were asked to answer their feelings when encountering forms of linguistic expression at the Mariamman temple. Perception is assessed by four criteria (called scales): closeness, understanding, interest, and fondness. As suggested by Osgood, each scale is structured into seven points according to the semantic differential scale. Accordingly, each scale is divided into seven values representing the perceived level, the values are digitized from 1 to 7. Value 1 corresponds to the most negative attitude, value 7 corresponds to the most positive attitude. Survey subjects will show their evaluation

by marking a specific number. The linguistic attitude questionnaire was used to survey the entire population of ninety-two subjects, including eighty-nine religious followers and visitors and three members of the Temple Executive Board. The obtained results provide us with insights into the linguistic attitudes of religious followers, visitors, and the Temple Executive Board towards the signs at the Temple. We used SPSS statistical package 20 to analyze the obtained data. We used the Reliability Analysis method to test the reliability of the observed variables through Cronbach's Alpha index, then used the Descriptive Statistics analysis method to calculate the mean score, standard deviation, and percentage of attitude rating according to the scales. From there, we could draw objective conclusions about people's language attitudes.

Survey Results

The survey results show that the language system shown on the tables at the Mariamman temple is monolingual or bilingual. The system of single banners in English or Vietnamese - English bilingual is mostly dispersed in places linked to the introduction of the temple's history, the introduction of the gods presented at the Temple, and the temple's activities. The main hall area is unique in that it only has a monolingual signboard in Vietnamese. This is a religious practice domain that does not have any monolingual signs in English and also restricts the display of bilingual signs as shown in Chart 1.

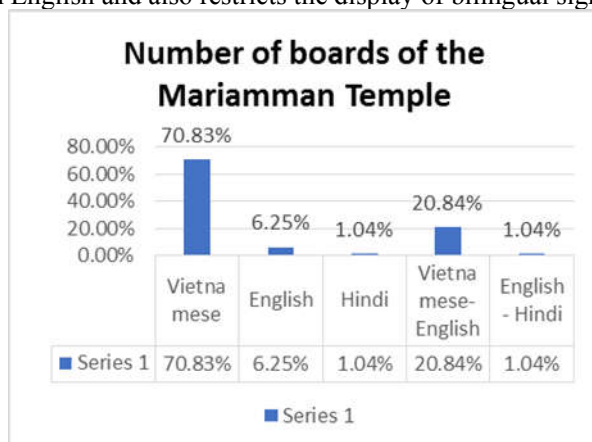


Chart 1. Number of boards in different regions at Mariamman temple (classified according to language criteria shown on the board)

When investigating, with the acceptance that the whole linguistic landscape at the Mariamman temple is a big variable, which includes much of the content within, we divided this large variable of the linguistic landscape into four sub-variables, including:

- System of Vietnamese boards (1)
- English board system (2)
- Vietnamese - English bilingual board system (3)
- English - Indian bilingual board system (4)

This group of variables will be used in turn according to the scales of closeness, understanding, interest, and fondness.

Table 1. Statistics on the average value of language attitude

	Scale 1 Closeness		Scale 2 Understanding		Scale 3 Interesting		Scale 4 Fondness		Average Value
	AV1	SD1	AV2	SD2	AV3	SD3	AV4	SD4	
Vietnamese board system	6.26	0.9828	6.03	1.4224	2.36	1.2606	6.27	0.4123	5.23
English board	6.90	0.9369	3.73	1.2391	3.74	0.7751	6.01	0.4104	5.10

system									
Vietnamese - English bilingual board system	5.38	0.5765	6.32	1.3055	4.07	0.8386	6.12	0.4204	5.47
English-India bilingual board system	4.66	0.8061	3.71	0.8768	5.43	1.08190	6.93	0.4243	5.18
Average Value	5.80	0.8256	4.95	1.2109	3.90	0.9890	6.33	0.4168	5.25

In general, the average value of linguistic attitude towards the linguistic landscape at Mariamman temple reached 5.25/7, belonging to the high threshold, showing a positive evaluation attitude. In terms of scale criteria, the highest average value belongs to scale 4, Fondness, reaching 6.33/7; the lowest average value belongs to the 3 scales, Interesting, only 3.90/7, below the overall average. According to this criterion, the Closeness and Fondness scales have above-average values (5.80; 6.33 > 5.25 respectively); while the Understanding and Interesting scales have below-average values (4.95; 3.90 < 5.25), respectively, as shown in Chart 2a.



Chart 2a. The value of linguistic attitudes according to the scale

Considering the observed variable (expression forms of the linguistic landscape), the Vietnamese – English bilingual table system variable has the highest average value, reaching

5.47/7; The English Table System variable has the lowest average value, only 5.10/7, as shown in Chart 2b.

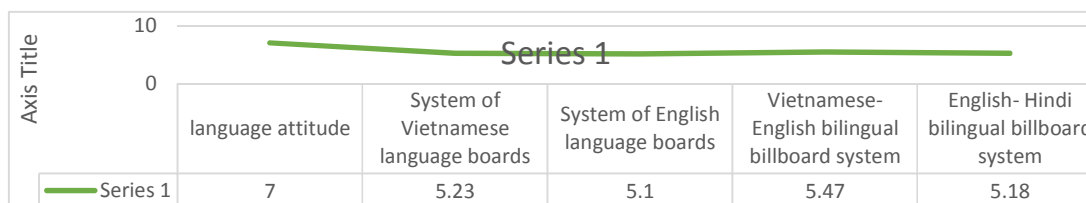


Chart 2b. Value of linguistic attitude in terms of observed variable

Observing the two graphs above, we can easily see that the value of linguistic attitudes the according to the scale (Chart 2a) has a significant difference, the curve shows a curve, changes from the above-average value (5.80 > 5.25) to the lowest point below-average (3.90 < 5.25), and then back to the highest score (6.33) from the maximum total of 7. On the other hand, the linguistic attitude value in terms of the observed variable (Chart 2b) is quite uniform, the line is almost a straight line, around the overall mean (5.25/7). In terms of standard deviation, it can be seen that the standard deviation value is not high, in the range of 0.7 - 1.0. This proves that the concentration in language attitudes of each group is quite high. That is, the linguistic attitude towards the linguistic landscape at the Temple is evaluated quite uniformly in each observed variable, according to each scale. When evaluating the Vietnamese - English table system variable, the standard deviation reaches the lowest mean value (0.7853), while the variable Vietnamese table system reaches the highest mean value (1.020). This result is quite reasonable when scale 1- Closeness relates to the status of language use

in a community. If a variant (language system) is used a lot, in a wide range with a high frequency of occurrence, a high degree of closeness is inevitable. Therefore, according to the survey results, the Vietnamese Table System and the English Table System achieve the criteria of high closeness (6.90 and 6.26). Since then, the understanding ability of the receiver will also be high because they are used a lot, so they become familiar with daily communication. Scale 1, Closeness, and scale 2, Understanding is, therefore, objective, associated with the current functional status of language in Vietnamese today. On scale 3, Interesting, and scale 4, Fondness (related to language sentiment) are subjective to the individual. Moreover, according to common logic, a linguistic phenomenon that has become close and highly intelligible does not create many interesting and interesting feelings for the recipient. Excitement and enjoyment often occur with new, strange, and unexpected phenomena. Therefore, we see that the English - India bilingual board system has the highest value for the Interesting and Fondness criteria (5.43 and 6.93) although it has the lowest value on the two scales of Closeness and Understanding (4.66). and 3.71); the Vietnamese board system, although achieving high values in the criteria of Closeness and Understanding, has the lowest value in the sense of Interesting (2.32). Among all the above-observed variables, the Vietnamese - English bilingual board system variable achieved the highest level of understanding (6.32/7). This result is inevitable because survey respondents, whether Vietnamese or other foreigners, can easily understand the language shown on the tables by the arrangement of the language position (Vietnamese first, English later). Therefore, the average level of understanding of Vietnamese - English bilingual boards has the highest average value. With the English Board System variable, the average score of the Closeness scale is the highest (6.9), however, on the Understanding scale, it has a low value, below the average (3.73). This result is closely related to the English ability of the survey subjects. This can be explained by the current multilingual situation in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The trend of global integration and internationalization and the policy of compulsory English education at the high school, university, and graduate levels have made the English language capacity of the Vietnamese community, especially teenagers, and students grow better. Therefore, not only in foreign companies and commercial centers but also agencies, state enterprises, and shops on both sides of the road, we all see the English language displayed on signs (boards). Therefore, most people have a feeling of closeness and familiarity with English, which is understandable. However, in terms of the age of survey respondents, the number of people middle-aged and older accounted for the most. In previous stages, with the political - economic - social situation of our country at that time, these people did not have the opportunity and conditions to learn foreign languages like teenagers - students today. So it is not difficult to understand why in this variable there is a rather high difference between the level of Closeness and Understanding (6.9 and 3.73). Our linguistic attitude questionnaire also designed a general assessment question about the placement of Vietnamese first, and English later on in the Vietnamese - English bilingual table system; proposing the reality of adding the Indian language to the system of signs at the Temple and adding a system of bilingual signs to other religious institutions in Ho Chi Minh City.

4. Discussion

Through the survey process, we found that the average value of linguistic attitude towards the linguistic landscape at Mariamman Temple reached 5.25/7, belonging to the high threshold, showing a positive evaluation attitude. According to the scale criteria, the highest average value belongs to the Like scale; the lowest mean value belongs to the Interesting scale. This demonstrates that the survey participants are enthusiastic about and pleased with the linguistic landscape of Mariamman Temple. In terms of observed variables, the Vietnamese - English bilingual table system is valid highest average; The English chart system has the lowest mean. The system of Vietnamese and English tables has reached the criteria of high closeness. From then, the receiver's comprehending capacity will be good as well because they are employed frequently and become acquainted in daily conversation. The English - Indian bilingual board system has the highest value for Interesting and Fondness, but the lowest value for Closeness and Understanding. The Vietnamese Board System, on the other hand, has the best value in the criterion of Closeness and Understanding but the lowest

value in the sense of Interesting. As a result, we discover that the Closeness scale is associated with the reality of language usage in a community. As a result, if a language is used frequently, in a wide range of contexts, a high degree of closeness is inevitable. The Interesting and Fondness scales are tied to language attitudes and are sensitive to individual subjectivity. Furthermore, conventional reasoning is that a linguistic phenomenon that has gotten intimate and has a high degree of understanding does not generate many exciting and interesting sensations for the recipient. New, strange, and unexpected things can cause excitement and satisfaction. The English Table System variable has the greatest average score on the Proximity scale. This outcome is directly connected to the survey subjects' English proficiency. This can be explained by the current multilingual situation in the Ho Chi Minh City area. The trend of globalization and internationalization, as well as the policy of obligatory English education, have increased the English capacity of the Vietnamese community in Ho Chi Minh City. The goal of placing Vietnamese before English on the Vietnamese - English bilingual board system has resulted in two streams of comments from receivers. Some claim that it demonstrates Vietnamese supremacy over English, while others argue that English is employed on boards as a complementary symbolic language with an aesthetic function. The proposal of adding the Indian language to the temple's signboard system and adding a bilingual signboard system to religious institutions in Ho Chi Minh City was agreed upon by many visitors and religious believers. However, the Temple Executive Board considers that adding the Indian language to the table system at Mariamman Temple is dependent on the permission of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee because the temple is currently one of the rare vestiges of the sort of art building in which the government is interested in preserving historical and cultural values. In conclusion, the survey findings on language attitudes show that the majority of respondents are content with the existing status of the state landscape at the Mariamman temple. The majority of visitors and religious believers recognize English as the community's official language; they all feel extremely connected to English, which has become popular in their daily lives today. They considered the advent of the Indian language in the national landscape at the Temple quite intriguing, and they proposed that the Indian language should be added to the Temple's board system to preserve its intrinsic national cultural character. Gorter notes "The variety of languages in this world and the dissimilar vitality of the languages takes significant inferences for both societies and individuals" (Gorter, 2006, p.1). Therefore, with the placement of Vietnamese first and English subsequently on the bilingual billboard system at the Temple, there were two streams of opinions from the recipient. Some claim that it shows the dominance of Vietnamese over English, while others argue that English is used on the signs as a figurative language since most pilgrims know Vietnamese. The way languages are written on bilingual billboards is just for the sake of artistic expression. Therefore, there is no purpose to show the dominance of one language over another. Both the Temple Executive Board and the pilgrims have agreed that a bilingual/multilingual signboard system should be added to the current religious facilities. With the current state of internationalization, an increasing number of pilgrims of various ethnicities and countries are visiting religious institutions in Ho Chi Minh City for various religious and non-religious purposes, which creates a need for religious institutions to add tabular systems to accommodate this linguistic diversity.

5. Conclusion

Today, Mariamman Temple is not only a location where believers worship their faith, but it is also a popular tourist destination when visiting Ho Chi Minh City. The linguistic landscape can distinguish it from other places or regions and present its uniqueness. Through the state landscape at Mariamman Temple, we see the importance of religious institutions as part of the overall "linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration." (Landry and Bourhis, 1997: 25). Looking at the languages represented in religious institutions may be the best way to gauge the degree of prestige with which different languages exist in a multilingual country/region. Especially when religion is vital in the life of the residents, such as at the Mariamman Temple. In reality, the findings of this study, as well as earlier authors' research on the linguistics reflected on street signs, demonstrate a significant gap between the official policy of the State of Vietnam and the languages

spoken by Vietnamese people. Basically, in addition to Vietnamese as the national language, what may be surveyed is also related to the actual multilingualism trend of society, cultural interaction, and acculturation, in which English plays the role of a practical language for many Vietnamese people and the Indian language are gradually fading away even though they co-exist in the same Hindu temple. Vietnam is similar to many other nations in that English serves as a super-dependent language (Coluzzi, 2012), a neutral language that may be used for inter-ethnic communication and promises cultural and economic opportunities that the Indian language does not appear to provide. In the case of Mariamman Temple, today, the 3rd generation of Indians still live quite a lot in an Indian community in Vietnam. Furthermore, given today's globalization, it is still worth noting the preservation of the cultural identities of a nation through the writing system, customs, through religious architecture in harmony with the local culture. As a result of this research, we suggest that additional multilingual signage in India be installed at Hindu institutions in Vietnam. However, like with the Mariamman Temple, it is under government administration, so any changes, if any, will be subject to consideration by the government's language policy. The addition and restoration of the Indian language on the table system are, in our opinion, necessary proposals to add Indian cultural values to this religious work. The usage of different languages (Vietnamese, English, and Indian) at the temple promises to add to the temple's distinctive qualities. We hope that further researchers will be able to expand and add new sorts of public places as well as compare those that have not been studied and can be analyzed using landscape language. Besides religious values, many public places convey other values and identities that further researchers might investigate. As a result, linguistic landscape study will become more diverse and developed to support sociolinguists in correcting people's everyday linguistic life and experiences via negotiating desired linguistic realities and their meanings.

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**Thái độ ngôn ngữ của khách hành hương và tín đồ tôn giáo
đối với cảnh quan ngôn ngữ tại đền Mariamman thành phố Hồ Chí Minh**

Tóm tắt: Nhìn nhận thái độ ngôn ngữ là sự đánh giá xu hướng hành vi và sự phản ứng của những thành viên trong một xã hội đối với các ngôn ngữ và các biến thể thuộc môi trường xã hội của họ. Việc nghiên cứu thái độ ngôn ngữ đối với một cảnh quan ngôn ngữ nào đó cũng được xem như một thước đo về sự phản ứng tâm lý của người dân địa phương về một hiện tượng ngôn ngữ đang tồn tại, để từ đó góp phần hoạch định các chính sách ngôn ngữ phù hợp. Đền thờ Mariamman là một di tích lịch sử, một dấu ấn của văn hóa Ấn Độ ở Việt Nam nói chung và Sài Gòn - Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh nói riêng, có sức hút mạnh mẽ đối với tín đồ khắp nơi trong nước và khách nước ngoài. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là điều tra thái độ ngôn ngữ của của khách hành hương và tín đồ tôn giáo đến tham quan, thờ cúng tại đền Mariamman, thành phố Hồ Chí Minh đối với cảnh quan ngôn ngữ tại đền mà cụ thể là hệ thống ngôn ngữ được biểu đạt trên các bảng biểu ở đền từ sự kết hợp giữa phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính và định lượng. Những kết quả khảo sát của bài viết này cho thấy được suy nghĩ và quan điểm của những người từ nhiều cộng đồng ngôn ngữ khác nhau đến để thực hành tín ngưỡng đối với đặc điểm và thứ bậc ngôn ngữ được thể hiện tại đền trong bối cảnh đa ngữ.

Từ khóa: thái độ ngôn ngữ; cảnh quan ngôn ngữ; Đền Mariamman; tín đồ tôn giáo; nghiên cứu.