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## **ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ, ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ЛАНДШАФТЫ И ФЕТИШИЗАЦИЯ ЯЗЫКА**

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается проблема фетишизации языков в лингвистических ландшафтах общественных пространств городов в условиях развивающейся глобализации. Приводится обоснование символического использования языка в общественных пространствах и классификация лингвистических объектов, которые наиболее подвержены процессу фетишизации. На примере общественных пространств города Чиангмай (Таиланд) рассматриваются случаи использования английского языка в символических целях.

**Ключевые слова:** глобализация, фетишизация языка, джентрификация, социолингвистика, городская лингвистика, Чиангмай.

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## **GLOBALIZATION, LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES, AND FETISHIZATION OF LANGUAGE**

**Abstract:** The paper investigates the fetishization of languages in the linguistic landscapes of urban public spaces in the context of globalization. It suggests the reasons for symbolic usage of languages in public spaces and the classification of linguistic objects being most exposed to the fetishization. With the example of Chiang Mai (Thailand), the paper studies the symbolic usage of the English language.

**Keywords:** globalization, fetishization of language, gentrification, sociolinguistics, urban linguistics, Chiang Mai.

As globalization is gaining momentum, it impacts cityscapes worldwide and gives rise to many new phenomena. One of them is gentrification, which is traditionally defined as ‘upscaling of a neighborhood and its inhabitants’ [2, P. 41]. During this process, new affluent inhabitants and clientele is drawn to the neighborhood, which adds value to its attractiveness for making business.

Consequences of globalization and gentrification in particular are manifold. In our research, we study them from a sociolinguistic perspective. Papen argues that the process of upgrading an urban neighborhood is reflected in the changing linguistic landscape of this same neighborhood and continuously contributes to it [5, P. 76].

Linguistic landscape studies are considered an approach to analyzing visual multilingualism and represent an attempt to account for the visual presence of particular languages in the public space [3, P. 136]. The understanding of the motivations for choosing a certain language in place-naming or design and the consequences this choice entails contributes to urban and socio-economic research in the XXI century.

As mentioned above, gentrification poses new challenges for linguistic landscape researchers, such as social inequality, power disparity, and languages' cosmopolitanism and fetishization.

By fetishization of languages in the linguistic landscape researchers traditionally refer to the usage of a language for symbolic (fetishized) rather than utility (instrumental-communicative) purposes [3, P. 135]. The language is viewed as a distinction-making tool for upscaling a business, whereas some languages in certain regions are marked as prestige languages. More specifically, we support the point that the English language is now a prestige language, as entrepreneurs in non-Anglophone countries use it to scale up the value of both the neighborhood and its businesses [8, P. 101].

Using English and other foreign languages as distinction-making tools adds to the whole atmosphere of a place and contributes to its 'hipness'; it makes a place more attractive for social media users, who strive to self-document their lives. This phenomenon is referred to as 'Instagrammability' – a precondition that locations carry as consumers are increasingly choosing experiences that merely serve as pretexts for their Instagram posts [6, P. 572]. Cafes, coffeeshops, museums, art centers, and libraries all over the world follow the trend and adopt new design solutions to cater to the tastes of new consumers.

To exemplify the aforementioned tendency for fetishizing the English language in public spaces, we carried out a content analysis on Instagram. We chose cafes and coffeeshops of Chiang Mai (Thailand) as an object of our research.

Chiang Mai (literally meaning new city) is the second largest city of Thailand [1, P. 39]. The city is a popular tourist destination, and it hosts many cafes and coffee shops, as coffee culture is currently on the rise in Thailand and some other Asian countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, etc.).

We argue that in their quest for higher profits and more Instagram-friendly design, entrepreneurs pay much attention not only to the interior of the place, but also to the language used and linguistic objects that can potentially serve as a background for photographs and, thus, attract more customers. These linguistic objects are the following:

- 1) brand names;
- 2) logos;
- 3) on-wall signs;
- 4) on-cup signs;
- 5) navigational signs.

All these objects frequently appear in the photos customers take and post on their social media. These photos generate online linguistic landscapes, which are as important to study as offline ones. We share the opinion that the linguistic landscape is an effect of social life, of collaboration, response or conflict with others offline and online [ссылка].

On analyzing photos geotagged in Chiang Mai's cafes and coffee shops, we selected the most noteworthy cases for the discussion. We preserved the original spelling of all examples.

“Creative on Demand” café features an on-wall sign which reads: “Hello, we are ‘creative on demand’ but you can call us ‘.co’ for short. We are here to give you a positive and creative energy. Have an amazing day ahead! Nice to meet you.” The sign greets the customers and often appear in the feed in their photos. Despite the fact that as for 2019, Thailand is ranked as the country with the ‘very low proficiency’ of English [7], the company chose English for their linguistic objects; thus, those who are fluent in English have more access to the linguistic landscape of the café, although English is not a national language of Thailand.

“Artisan Café at Oxotel” uses a blackboard and handwritten-styled signs: “Chiang Mai. Artisan café. Single origin. House blend coffee. Vintage furniture. Imported beer.” All these elements add value to the “authentic” atmosphere of an artisan café. However, the linguistic landscape of the café does not offer any signs in Thai or any other local language.

“Transit Number 8” also sticks to English. The café has several symbolic signs: “Slow Bar”, “Soft Serve”, “Drip Coffee”, “Order here”. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the café put a symbolic sign in a form of a blackboard which reads “Take away and save lives”.

Another example of using the English language in fetishized rather than instrumental purposes is “Heylueee” café. The kiosk is decorated with several signs, all of which are encoded in English: “Knock knock”, “Don’t make me wait. Cause right now I need your smile”, “Come in for goodtime”. These signs do not render any important information; their function – as well as the function of the language used – is purely symbolic.

As all examples suggest, Chiang Mai's entrepreneurs prefer English to any other languages when encoding linguistic objects of their businesses. Most signs are of symbolic nature: they are an important design element, as they serve as a good

background for photos and do not deliver any particular messages. Therefore, the English language is being fetishized – it is used for upscaling a business, for attracting local youth and foreign clientele, and for following the worldwide trend of using global languages.

Fetishization of the English language in Chiang Mai's cafes and coffeeshops leads to the higher level of social inequality, as the bigger part of local population does not have the full access to their linguistic landscapes.

For an in-depth analysis, more research on the issue is required. Our research is restricted to quantitative methods, whereas employing qualitative data (namely, results of surveying entrepreneurs on their motivations for choosing a certain language or local population on their attitude towards the ongoing linguistic changes) may help establish other reasons for languages' fetishization and reveal public opinion on the matter.

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