

BOOK REVIEWS/TAIWAN

Ching-Yu Na and Serafín M. Coronel-Molina. *New Immigrants and Multilingual Linguistic Landscape in Taiwan*. Multilingual Matters, 2025. 214 pages. Hardcover, £99.95; eBook, £20.00.

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New Immigrants and Multilingual Linguistic Landscape in Taiwan is an intriguing book situated at the intersection of semiotics, migration studies, language policy studies, and linguistic landscape studies. The book by Ching-Yu Na and Serafín M. Coronel-Molina offers an academic analysis of multilingual signage in Taoyuan City, which has experienced considerable diversification over the past several decades. The city's diversification is representative of Taiwan's larger demographic changes, and analysis of the multilingual signage emerging as a result provides a lens into these broader shifts. The book applies geosemiotic analysis to signage in Taoyuan to make inferences about the impact of contemporary migration into Taiwan and includes interviews with local Taiwanese and foreign informants to further elucidate how diversity is reshaping Taiwanese society.

Chapter 1 explains linguistic landscape studies and situates this study within the theoretical literature. Particularly useful for readers unfamiliar with the theories used in the book, the authors introduce important concepts from geosemiotics, language policy studies, and applied linguistics that the book engages with. The chapter also provides a short overview of the history of migration into Taiwan, as well as a summary of the current situation of linguistic diversity in Taiwan. The chapter contextualizes these linguistic and semiotic interests within a broader context of Taiwan and its contemporary identity.

Chapter 2 expands on the historical and sociolinguistic discussion from chapter 1 by further describing Taiwan's linguistic tapestry of Chinese and indigenous Austronesian languages and ethnic groups. It also offers a history of Chinese migration from the Asian mainland, as well as a summary of the trajectory of Taiwan's national language policy. The authors show that Taiwan's language policy has always been tied to its economic objectives and global positionality, a point revisited throughout the book. The chapter concludes by explaining the linguistic and social parameters of recent immigration from Southeast Asia to Taiwan.

Chapter 3 continues with a slightly deeper explanation of the study's theoretical approach and explains the methodology, offering justification for its use of geosemiotic analysis and the general necessity of the study. The chapter covers the aforementioned theories in greater detail and more clearly connects these ideas to the deployed methodology.

The authors begin introducing their sign data in chapter 4, which examines the difference between “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to language on signage. The former concerns centrally regulated signage, while the latter reflects how signage develops through everyday grassroots practices. Together, these approaches shape how language appears on signs, and geosemiotic analysis reveals how signage carries distinct cultural and political meanings depending on intention. For example, top-down signs with bilingual Chinese and English embody Taiwan's global aspirations, bottom-up signs featuring only English can signify that a particular establishment is trendy and trying to appeal to younger customers, and signs in Japanese can signify authenticity when appearing on Japanese stores or restaurants. Signage is thus not merely a practical instrument of communication but also a representation of aspirations, identities, and subjectivities that reinforce and reify power relations and ideologies within society. Attention to top-down and bottom-up differences in language choices can reveal important differences in the motives behind these choices and their broader implications (see also chapter 6).

Chapter 5 further explores multilingual signage in different Taoyuan enclaves and draws attention to the ways the arrangement of signs reflects power dynamics and language policy in Taiwanese society, as well as how migrant communities are coming to be positioned locally. The appearance of foreign language signage can reinforce identities of foreign residents and serve symbolic and cultural functions (e.g., Arabic signage to index identification with Islamic practices and identity). Chapter 6 follows this theme by exploring “code switching” on multilingual signs. Analyzing code switching illuminates how the linguistic preferences of signs (what languages appear first, what sizes they are, how they are positioned, etc.) are shaped by historical and institutional dynamics in Taiwan. In doing so, the chapter shows how multilingual signs in Taoyuan reflect broader ideological approaches to language policy, national and migrant identity, and aspirations for Taiwan to be an inclusive society accommodating to foreigners while preserving local cultural norms.

Chapter 7 presents interview data from Taiwanese and foreigners to explore how the city's diversification is actually being perceived and experienced, as well as how residents perceive the growing presence of multilingual and foreign language signage. This is one of the more interesting chapters, as it shows the multifaceted and idiosyncratic ways residents perceive the presence of these signs, how foreigners view them as symbols of inclusion extended by Taiwanese society, and how some locals perceive multilingual signage as

threatening. The book concludes with chapter 8, which synthesizes the book's findings as they pertain to Taiwan's future and advocates for a more inclusive Taiwanese society.

New Immigrants and Multilingual Linguistic Landscape in Taiwan is full of interesting data and interpretations of the changes that are currently transpiring in Taiwan. The photographs of multilingual signs provide a valuable supplement to the data, enabling readers to observe these multilingual signs in their situated contexts. There are, however, a few critiques worthy of mention. There is an overreliance on a relatively narrow range of theories, which limits the book's utility to readers with a wider range of applied linguistic interests. Additionally, the theories are at times applied in a highly procedural manner, giving the sense that they are being treated more as empirical tools than as interpretive frameworks. Relatedly, the uniform chapter structure sometimes makes the book read more like a dissertation than an academic monograph. Lastly, the book would have benefited from more photographs, which would have added greater richness to the data. Some of the figures consist of hand-drawn maps that add little detail or substantive value. Replacing these with actual photographs would have provided greater contextual and descriptive value.

Shortcomings aside, *New Immigrants and Multilingual Linguistic Landscape in Taiwan* offers a unique analysis of signage in a society that is quickly changing. The book highlights how the growing presence of foreigners is making a tangible impact on the visual landscape in Taoyuan and demonstrates the analytical and practical significance of these signs and their broader implications. The signage data and its analysis, together with the interviews, will be of considerable interest to readers interested in Taiwan's demographic changes and their implications, as well as to scholars in linguistic landscape studies, geosemiotics, and, to a lesser but still meaningful extent, migration studies.

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