

Car-stickers on Rear Windows: An Analysis from a Point of View of Linguistic Landscape

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Backgrounds

- **When walking through Japanese cities, one can see a variety of *linguistic landscapes*, such as public signs and commercial signs on roads and buildings. It can be said that the city is filled with a variety of written information.**
- **Definition of *Linguistic Landscape*:**
“Linguistic landscape refers to the visibility and salience of language on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region.” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, 23)

≡ Signs as Linguistic Landscapes

- The study of *linguistic landscapes* is limited, as the above definition indicates, to fixed and printed signs in specific locations, such as:



- Are they the only ones belonging to the *linguistic landscapes*?

Other Examples: Stickers on Cars

● For example, in Japanese society, textual information is found not only on such fixed signs, but also on moving objects such as cars (Nishijima, 2022).



「赤ちゃんが乗っています」
('Baby on board')



「ドライブレコーダー録画中」
('Dashcam in operation')

Stickers with linguistic expressions on a car can be also seen as *linguistic landscapes*.

Objectives

- **The aim of this presentation is threefold:**
 - 1) To see car stickers as part of linguistic landscape in Japan,**
 - 2) to find out what functions the stickers have analyzing several examples, and**
 - 3) to point out that some of their functions attempt to show individualities of the drivers and above all, playfulness.**



Outline

- (1) Description of the Problem**
- (2) Research Questions**
- (3) Methods**
- (4) Results**
- (5) Discussions**
- (6) Concluding Remarks**



Description of the Problem

- **Traditionally, the linguistic landscape has been limited to fixed, printed signs that are naturally visible in the city, as Landry & Bourhis (1997) describes. However, in Japanese society, textual information is found not only on such fixed signs, but also on moving objects such as cars and tags on the chests of supermarket clerks.**
- **In order to clarify the overall picture of the linguistic landscape of a particular society, stickers on cars and tags on the chests should be also added to the scope of research.**

Description of the Problem (cont.)

- **The former car sticker expressions were analysed from a stylistic point of view (Nishijima, 2022a). The latter tag “in training” on the chest of a supermarket clerk is analysed from the perspective of interpersonal awareness (Nishijima, 2022b).**
- **Therefore, this presentation approaches car stickers from the sociolinguistic perspective of linguistic landscapes.**



Research Questions

- 1. For what purpose do drivers attach the stickers to cars?**
- 2. How do stickers differ between working or commercial vehicles such as trucks and personal use?**
- 3. Are the contents of the stickers limited to traffic-related issues?**
- 4. If no, what are the contents and functions of the stickers?**

Methods

This is a pilot study for future larger studies.

- 1. The data analysed in this study is limited to what I happened to see when I was driving around. Therefore, the data is not exhaustive and may also be biased. Nevertheless, it should be possible to analyse the broad trends in car stickers.**
- 2. The linguistic expressions of the stickers are analysed in terms of target audience, purpose, form of expression and content of communication.**
- 3. In this way, the different roles of the car sticker are revealed.**

Results

The stickers can be divided into two main categories:

(1) those related to traffic

(2) those not related to traffic

(1) can be further divided into two sub-categories:

(a) those with clear intentions and

(b) those with unclear communicative intentions.

What types of stickers are there that are not directly related to traffic in (2)?

Those not related to traffic (2) were identified as stickers related to driver's hobbies, preferences and lifestyle, as well as playful stickers that clearly entertain those who see them.



Discussion

Stickers related to traffic I

(1-a) Clear instructions for following vehicles

This type of stickers provide clear instructions to drivers of following vehicles, such as:

***Osaki-ni doozo* ('After you, please')**

It is an instruction to overtake this car because it is too slow.

***Shakankyori chuui* ('Watch the distance between vehicles')**

It is a warning for drivers who are going to reduce the distance between vehicles.



Discussion

Stickers related to traffic I (cont.)

*hokoosya hogo-notame usasetsuji oodanhodoo
temae-de saijokoo ichiji teishi shimasu*

(‘For pedestrian protection, we slow down and pause before the pedestrian crossing when turning right and left’)



It is from one transport company and says that the driver of this car is obeying traffic laws. It can be said to be aimed at improving the company’s image through compliance.



Discussion

Stickers related to traffic I (cont.)

anzenunten sengensha ('Safe Driving Declaration Vehicle')

hotei sokudo-o mamotteimasu ('I observe the legal speed limit')

Like the previous sticker of a certain transport company, these stickers also transmit the obvious message that traffic laws are being observed, but they are aimed at improving the image of transport companies through compliance.



Discussion

Stickers related to traffic I (cont.)

The following example is similar, as it shows a company vehicle that is always ready for rescue in case of an emergency.

Kinkyuuji-ni sonaete kyuukeyuubako-o toosai
(‘Equipped with a first aid kit in case of emergencies’)

Discussion

Stickers related to traffic II

(1-b) unclear communicative intentions

This type of stickers seem to provide information that is to some extent related to traffic, but its purpose is not always clear to drivers of following vehicles who see it, such as:

akachan-ga nottemasu ('Baby on board')

doraibu rekoodaa rokugachuu ('dash cam in operation')

seimitsu kikai unpanchuu ('Precision machinery in transit')





Discussion

Stickers not related to traffic I

(2) Stickers not related to traffic

(2-a) self-introduction type (hobby)

ie-ni neko-ga imasu ('I have a cat at home')

suiyoo doodeshoo ('How about Wednesday', or
TV program name)

(2-b) safety certificate type (not infected.)

kennai zaijuu ('I live in the province')

This type of stickers has been placed against the backdrop of the new Corona disaster since 2020.



Discussion

Stickers not related to traffic II

(2) Stickers not related to traffic

(2-c) Providing enjoyment type

jijii-ga untenchuu ('an old man is driving')

“jijii” is a derogatory expression for an old man. The sticker is self-mockery.

WAL



This photo was taken by an acquaintance; it was not *JAL*, but it was *WAL*.

JAL is an abbreviation of Japan Airlines. “*WAL*” can be pronounced as “*waru*” in Japanese and is considered to sound the same as 悪 (evil). So, it is a kind of joke



Concluding Remarks

Answers to the research questions are as follows:

1. For what purpose do drivers attach the stickers to cars?

**Instructions to the following drivers,
Providing some information, etc.**

2. How do stickers differ between working or commercial vehicles such as trucks and personal use?

The former aim at giving information of enhancement of the companies through compliance. The latter play various roles to the following drivers.

Concluding Remarks (continued)

3. Are the contents of the stickers limited to traffic-related issues?

No. There are both traffic-related and non-traffic-related stickers.

4. If no, what are the contents and functions of the stickers?

Warning, providing information of the driver: hobby, preferences to the life, jokes.

Concluding Remarks (continued)

In this study, car stickers were analysed as part of the linguistic landscape in Japan, but what makes them distinctly different from public signs is that some of them do not make it clear what they are communicating to the viewers and what they expect from them.

Most car stickers only provide information and do not explicitly require specific actions to the drivers of the following vehicles. Therefore, it can be said that the information on the sticker provides drivers with the enjoyment of thinking about the meaning and intent of what the sticker is trying to convey.

Concluding Remarks (continued)

The amount of data collected in this survey was small and may be biased.

Therefore, in the future, a more extensive survey will be conducted, not only through fieldwork, but also by collecting data including stickers available on the market and also by examining the best-selling stickers.



Thank you for your attention.

Refereces

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