VISUALS TO IDEOLOGIES: EXPLORING THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES OF MINDANAO STATE UNIVERSITY MARAWI CAMPUS

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How to Cite: Abbas, J. H., Samad, B. M. A., Imam, M. H. M., & Berowa, A. M. C. (2022). Visuals to ideologies: Exploring the linguistic landscapes of Mindanao State University Marawi campus. *Lingua Cultura, 16*(2), 187-192. https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v16i2.8406

ABSTRACT

The research demonstrated the linguistic landscapes of the Mindanao State University Marawi Campus in the Southern Philippines, known as the "Melting Pot of the South", where multilingualism, multiculturalism, and multimodality were quite situated. Linguistic Landscape (LL) encompassed and manifested the range of language use in society. Under the theoretical lens of linguistics, the research aimed to qualitatively and descriptively illustrate the linguistic tokens that marked the context of the school community. The needed data were photographed and collected inside the university premises and analyzed in terms of the number of languages used, language choice, and types of signs. The research reveals a sociolinguistic paradox: the multilingual realities of the school community and the prevalent exhibitions of monolingual English on its linguistic landscapes, which consequently seems to dishearten the status, propagation, promotion, and/or effectivity of multilingual policies and education in the Philippines. Furthermore, the research provides theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it shows another lens of the notion of presumed language prestige and hierarchies. Furthermore, practically, it aids the deepening of knowledge and understanding of language use, and its implications, in public spaces. Finally, the research suggests revisiting and recalibrating the exhibition of multilingualism in the country by simply considering the status of language use in their environments, as they do not just reflect or manifest languages but also propagate and promote them.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, signs, language choice, multilingualism, multilingual policies, multilingual education

INTRODUCTION

Language in its multitudinous forms pervasively surrounds human spheres as it is used to propagate, persuade, and portray ideologies. Its environmental functions, especially the exhibition of its textual form in society's public spaces, have been scholarly termed as linguistic landscape. Landry and Bourhis (1997), who are considered to be among the earliest researchers of such an emerging subdiscipline of sociolinguistics, have provided a detailed definition that has been widely accepted by many researchers (e.g., Zimny, 2017; Eclipse, Patricia, & Tenedero, 2018; Mulyawan, Ayu, & Maharani, 2019; Lu, Li, & Xu, 2020). They have defined linguistic landscape as the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings that combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. More so, Niedt and Seals (2021) have argued that linguistic landscape is not just about words, but it also encompasses meanings that can be communicated in many forms, such as with the use of photos, colors, sounds, design, and others. Hence, with its complex concepts, some underlying ideologies and embedded realities in its visual and environmental

languages can be unveiled and discerned with the use of several underpinnings such as the lenses of linguistics, sociolinguistics, semiotics, discourse analysis, and many others.

Interestingly, perusing linguistic landscapes can provide sociolinguistic implications that may be meaningful to be known or addressed in society. However, its field of research is still very young. Several studies, nonetheless, have been conducted to discover linguistic ideologies and tokens manifesting in different public spheres. In the context of Namibia, Zimny (2017) has investigated its linguistic landscape. The researcher argues that the prominence of English in both the physical and virtual spaces of Independence Avenue contradicts most Namibians' actual language practices. Furthermore, the data has revealed that public signage is divided into zones with distinct features, including a core zone that looks more exclusive and tourist-oriented and two peripheral zones that appear more useful.

Another research is conducted in Indonesia. Mulyawan, Ayu, and Maharani (2019) have delved into Bali's linguistic environment. According to their findings, most exterior signs are bilingually written in Balinese and English, followed by Indonesian and English.

Furthermore, Lu, Li, and Xu (2020) have explored the linguistic landscape of Hongcun, a Chinese traditional village. It focuses on the display of the linguistic landscape and the selection of languages in linguistic signs. With the growth of tourism, Hongcun is becoming more multilingual. Traditional Chinese characters and English are prominent. This multilingual linguistic landscape helps to shape the image of a tourist site. Further, government signs are more consistent, whereas private ones are more varied. Official signs are mostly influenced by policies, but private signs are primarily influenced by commercial profit.

In the context of a Thai community center in Singapore, Rungswang (2018) has looked at the forms and functions of 97 business signs. Furthermore, accordingly, English is the prevalent language in the area. The number of languages that dominates the school community is bilingualism. Furthermore, English is employed in the majority of shop-name signs with the role of translating Thai.

Meanwhile, in the context of China, Rong (2018) has delved into their linguistic landscapes by employing a sociolinguistic approach. The research specifically examines the unique function of English in Beijing tourist destinations using the underpinnings of linguistic landscape and discourse. It reveals that English is becoming an inextricable component of Beijing's linguistic landscape as China actively engages in the globalizing process of English language commodification.

Equally interesting, in Saudi Arabia, Alsaif and Starks (2019) have explored the linguistic landscapes of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The research aims to illustrate the linguistic landscape of five domains:

holiness, education, workplace, local governance, and the public sphere. The investigation has found that Arabic is the most common and pervasive language across all areas. The continuity of Islam may be recognized in the holiness realm through classical Arabic inscriptions. Monolingual signs in Modern Arabic coexist alongside monolingual English signage in other sectors. Furthermore, English has a unique position on monolingual signs. Finally, the domains that allow multilingual signage reflect the pilgrims' different language backgrounds as well as the transient aspect of their journey.

Moreover, several studies have also been done in the Philippines. These studies have various and exclusive findings, as the country is linguistically and culturally diverse. Astillero (2017) has explored the linguistic landscape of one public secondary school in Irosin, Sorsogon. In particular, the research aims to identify four concerns: (1) the language/s exhibited on the signs; (2) who created the signs; (3) the materials used, and (4) the target audience. It also aims to determine how language is used, displayed, and regulated in the school. The research finds that English dominated the linguistic school community, followed by the Filipino language, consequently making the Bikol language less evident. It also shows how English is utilized in different parts of the school. In the top-down, it is used for formal communication, but in the bottom-up, it is employed as the language of youth, fashion, and fetishization. Furthermore, it is pointed out that Filipino, Bikol, and mixed languages are classified as bottom-up signs, which are frequently employed informally for things like expressing transgressive personal feelings, imposing order, making political decisions, and establishing individual and group identity.

Another research is conducted by Magno (2017), who has delved into the linguistic landscape of 51 academic bulletin boards in the five schools in Cebu City. The research utilizes the descriptive-qualitative method as well as frequency counting in analyzing the photographed visual languages. It reveals that the English language dominates the five schools. The text content functions for invitation, instruction, and announcement. The research has concluded that the linguistic landscape exhibits current news and information in a formal tone and context to accommodate mature audiences. Further, Eclipse, Patricia, and Tenedero (2018) have explored the linguistic landscape of the Manila Central Post Office. The research has employed a mixed method in determining the dominant language of the signages found in the public-access spaces of the said setting. It is concluded that English is the dominant language of the office's linguistic landscape. Finally, Devanadera (2019) has investigated the linguistic landscapes of the three Philippine Chinatowns in Manila, Quezon, and Davao City. It reveals that English is the dominant language used in displaying signs. It is also concluded that most of the signs are monolingually written. Lastly, the research has found that all signs are bottom-

up (non-official) signs.

To generalize this cited literature and studies, they illustrate the existence and realities of monolingualism, bilingualism, and/or multilingualism in different countries (Zimny, 2017; Rong, 2018; Rungswang, 2018; Mulyawan, Ayu, & Maharani, 2019; Alsaif & Starks, 2019; Lu, Li, & Xu, 2020), as well some places in the Philippines (Astillero, 2017; Magno, 2017; Eclipse, Patricia, & Tenedero, 2018; Devanadera, 2019). The values are ascribed to languages, how languages are employed, displayed, and regulated, the purposes and functions of visual languages, and the embedded ideologies and tokens of the multimodal features of those linguistic landscapes reflect, or at least provide an implication on, the social, political, economic, and educational status of a country or region's context. Hence, discerning and elucidating linguistic ideologies present in the linguistic landscape brings to light sociolinguistic concerns, draws sound implications, and calls for reconsiderations involving multilingual policies and education.

In essence, these scant number of linguistic landscape studies carried out in the Philippines cannot capture enough of the multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal tokens and situations of the country that reside in its diverse contexts. The country, being a host to 182 living languages (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020), is indeed a good source for exploring in-depth the spectrums of linguistic landscapes. Interestingly, the same impression can be deemed in the unstudied context of Mindanao State University Marawi Campus as its school community has been known as the 'Melting Pot of The South' that integrates people of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds as well as promotes cultural diversity. As such, with its vicinity being dominated by Meranaws, it can be safely assumed that the language prestige and dominance can be associated with the Meranaw language; hence, the research aims to confirm such sociolinguistic assumptions and demonstrate those linguistic ideologies occupying the public spheres and spaces of the university. Specifically, it seeks to illustrate the linguistic tokens: the number of languages, the languages used, and the types of linguistic landscape that mark the context of the school community.

METHODS

The research applies a descriptive qualitative research that sought to investigate the linguistic tokens that mark the context of Mindanao State University Marawi Campus in the Southern Philippines. The data are collected through picture-taking with a digital camera and smartphones from March to May 2021. Moreover, the research locale is an academic territory where many college buildings are instituted. Inside its premises are residents dwelled, mostly by Meranaw people and other tribes, which include both Muslims and Non-Muslims. Around the campus are numerous private business establishments and commercial commodities, implicating that their overwhelming linguistic landscapes are a good source of research.

Furthermore, the data are 237 signs comprised of tarpaulins, streamers, billboards, banners, and any printed signboards. These can be both public/ institutional signs (street names, public building names, traffic signs, etc.) and private/individual signs (commercial shop signs, etc.). These signs are categorized according to these criteria: (1) the language/s used on the signs; (2) the number of languages used on the signs; and (3) whether the signs are government or private signs.

Meanwhile, the research uses purposive sampling, commonly used in qualitative research, to identify and select the most information-rich cases to make the best use of available resources. Specifically, the research adopts Backhaus' (2006) data collection methods and recommends two fundamental points to be considered to obtain a sound data collection procedure. These include the determination of the survey items and the geographical limits of the survey area. Thus, the survey item in the research is the public and private signs at the university, while the geographical limitation is solely confined to the streets inside the university.

Lastly, in analyzing the data, several frameworks in the linguistic landscape are employed. Firstly, to identify what linguistic tokens mark the context of the university, the framework of Backhaus (2006), who demonstrated the different characteristics of official and non-official multilingual, is used to determine if the linguistic landscape signs are monolingual and/ or multilingual. These differences are captured in terms of the languages manifesting in the signs, their arrangements, power, and solidarity, as well as the distribution of languages used in the signs. Similar to the framework of Backhaus (2006) about the official and non-official signs, the work of Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) is also employed to determine if the linguistic landscape signs belong to Top-down (official) and Bottom-up (non-official) signs. They differentiate the two opposing concepts by describing 'top-down' signs as the linguistic landscape elements used and exhibited by institutional agencies which in one way or another act under the control of local or central policies, while 'bottom-up' signs as those utilized by individual, associative or corporative actors who enjoy the autonomy of action within legal limits. Hence, after identifying these linguistic tokens, the data are then drawn descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Anchored on illustrating the linguistic tokens that mark the context of the university, the section presents the results and discussion of this research. For the first token, the number of languages used, the results present the number of languages used as a linguistic token marking the context of the university, which are monolingual or multilingual, are shown in

Table 1.

Table 1 Frequency and Percentage Distribution
of Number of Language(s) Used on the Linguistic
Landscape of the University

Number of Languages Used	f	%
Monolingual	216	91,1
Multilingual	21	8,9
Total	**237**	**100**

Table 1 shows that 91% of the signs are monolingually written, while 9% are multilingually displayed, implying language dominance. Interestingly, this corroborates the findings of Astillero (2017), Magno (2017), Eclipse, Patricia, & Tenedero (2018), and Devanadera (2019), who have claimed that the linguistic landscapes of their own local contexts in the Philippines are dominantly monolingually written. These results do not seemingly contradict the multilingual realities of the school community in terms of advocating and maintaining multilingual policies and education but also a deviation from the multilingual status of the school community and the Philippines, in extension. Hence, in a holistic sense, the country's multilingual policies and education appear to be out of sync concerning the deployment of the Philippine languages in their environments. Nevertheless, with a few tokens pertaining to multilingualism, it is still proven that the university, and the country in extension, is indeed a home to different languages.

Moreover, similar to the finding, Alsaif and Starks (2019) have argued that the linguistic landscape of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Suadi Arabia, is also dominantly comprised of monolingual texts, which implies that monolingualism is deemed to be effective, persuasive, informative, and strong as these can be the most sensible reasons why it is prevailing in both national and international contexts.

Meanwhile, for languages used in signs, the results show that different languages are used in the linguistic landscape of the university. The languages are presented and computed as reflected in Table 2.

As clearly shown in Table 2, 85% of the linguistic landscape in the university uses English only. This affirms the notion that English is dominantly used in the Philippines, which many Filipino researchers have been contending (Astillero, 2017; Magno, 2017; Eclipse, Patricia, & Tenedero, 2018; Devanadera, 2019). Despite how prevalent this language is across the country, it is undeniable that some contexts in the Philippines give significance to their local languages. Nevertheless, and evidently, the results strongly suggest that there is no active competition occurring among the English language, Philippine/local languages (e.g., Filipino/Tagalog and Meranaw), and foreign languages (e.g., Spanish, Thai, Arabic) in terms of their deployment or use in public spaces and domains.

Table 2 Frequency and Percentage Distribution
of Language (s) Used on the Linguistic Landscape
of the University

Language(s) Used	f	%
English only	203	85,7
Filipino/Tagalog only	8	3,4
Meranaw only	5	2,1
English and Arabic	5	2,1
English and Filipino	4	1,7
English and Meranaw	4	1,7
Filipino and Meranaw	2	0,8
English and Spanish	1	0,4
English and Thai	1	0,4
English, Arabic and Meranaw	4	1,7
Total	**237**	**100**

This also extends to foreign contexts as several researchers illustrated the dominance and wide use of English in their places (Zimny, 2017; Rong, 2018; Rungswang, 2018; Mulyawan, Ayu, & Maharani, 2019; Lu, Li, & Xu, 2020). This affirms the status of English being a superior language in terms of popularity and being an index of globalization. Apart from that, the research also corroborates the notion that English is commonly used as a sign of prestige, power, and authority as students, faculty, administrators, government officials, businesses owners, individuals, and other stakeholders prefer to employ it for various purposes such as for information dissemination, product advertisement, and many others.

Moreover, the result also shows that Filipino or Tagalog is secondly used in the linguistic landscape of the university. These Philippine languages are also found in several studies conducted within the country (Astillero, 2017; Magno, 2017), which confirm their function as an alternative/second medium of education in the Philippines after English. Furthermore, the results also show that the Meranaw language is on the linguistic landscape of the campus. This finding debunks the notion of the supremacy of the first/local language in terms of popularity and exhibition around the community of its speakers. Additionally, in a similar percentage, bilingual signs of English and Arabic are found, which acknowledges the diverseness and richness of the university in practicing different languages. Moreover, the presence of Arabic, Spanish, and Thai as foreign languages indicates the flexibility or competence of the school community in learning/practicing many languages.

Finally, the results suggest that the displayed languages on signs are the apparent representation of the languages existing in the university. However, it is still arguable and too early to generalize or limit the number of languages existing in the university, considering the diversity of the school community and the delineation of displayed languages from oral or spoken languages.

Lastly, regarding the types of signs employed, the results show that there are different types of signs in the university that makes up its linguistic landscape. These signs are either top-down (official) or bottom-up (non-official) that are presented and computed as reflected in Table 3.

Table 3 Frequency and Percentage Distribution
f Types of Signs Used

Types of signs	f	%
Top-down (official)	116	48,9
Bottom-up (non-official)	121	51,1
Total	**237**	**100**

Table 3 indicates that 51,1% of the signs belong to the bottom-up (or non-official) signs which suggests that the majority of the landscapes at the premises of the university are established by private owners. Moreover, in just a small gap, the result shows that 48,9% of the signs belong to the top-down (or official) signs, implying that these public signs owned by the government and the school are relatively outnumbered.

Centering on the theoretical framework proposed by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), it appears that the results deviate as the little bit higher number of bottom-up signs implicates an inconsideration of language policies, education, and ideologies. It specifically appears that the propagation and implementation of multilingual policies and education is spiritless with the downplayed state of top-down signs.

CONCLUSIONS

The research delves into the present linguistic landscapes of the Mindanao State University Marawi Campus. It particularly investigates the number of languages used, the language choice, and the types of signs as linguistic tokens marking the school community. The research unearths a sociolinguistic paradox: the university is home to multilingual speakers of different socio-cultural backgrounds, yet its linguistic landscapes seem to exhibit contrastingly and dominantly monolingual English. This also conforms to the universal and widespread use of English in public and private signs as it has surpassed the default and/or the first language (i.e., Filipino/Tagalog and Meranaw language) of the residents of the university, which implies that the school community puts the said language into strong practice and employs it in diverse purposes. Hence, how English as a language of education prevails within the school public spaces suggests that the importance of a language in academic institutions reflects on their choice of language in making signs. However, this overwhelming prevalence of English appears to emphasize and reflect the negligence of strongly implementing multilingual policies and education in the Philippines. Hence, this presupposes that there is a scarcity and apparent confinement of propagation and implementation of multilingual policies and education in the public spaces and environmental spheres of the country.

Moreover, the finding still does not generalize how multilingualism is being practiced in the university or the Philippines, as the deployment of a language in the environment can be far different from its use in spoken and other manners. However, it shall be still noted that such imbalance is still a great factor to consider in strengthening multilingualism and preserving Philippine and/or local languages. Hence, the use of linguistic landscapes as the subject matter of this research has not just equipped a broader understanding of the sociolinguistic phenomena of the university but also even how local/Philippine languages or even foreign languages are being downplayed at school premises which can indicate implications on multilingual policies and education.

Interestingly, since the research shares similar findings with previous studies towards implicating that, despite the presence of multilingual policies in Philippine education, English remains the most preferred language, which outnumbers and leaves behind local languages. Stressing the advocacy and preservation of Philippine languages, it is highly encouraged that language educators and administrators, curriculum designers, and curriculum planners should revisit, reconsider, and recalibrate the propagation of multilingualism by simply considering the status of language use in their environments as they do not just exhibit or manifest languages, but also propagate and promote them.

Lastly, the scope of the research is solely confined to the examination of linguistic tokens of signs around the school community. Nevertheless, this demonstrates the importance of the linguistic landscape in multilingual contexts and its relevance to language status. More so, with the humble insights that this research offers, it is suggested that more research engagements and explorations of the topic should be pursued on a larger scale and expanded frameworks to affirm, negate, and add the findings presented. Finally, apart from the lens of linguistics, future researchers can also employ the underpinnings of semiotics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis.

the Almighty Allah for enabling us to finish this paper and for giving us the strength and wisdom to write every word in this humble work.

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