

What People See and Think: A Linguistic Landscape of Urban Signages

Teresa May A. Mundiz^a, and Mary Ann E. Tarusan, PhD^b

^a teresamaymundiz@gmail.com, maryann_tarusan@umindanao.edu.ph ^b

^a University of Mindanao, Davao City 8000, Philippines

^b Faculty - University of Mindanao, Davao City 8000, Philippines

Abstract

A linguistic landscape study presents the written language on official road signs, highway markers, business signs, and government structures of a city, recognizing a multilingual public space. This LL study set out to describe and analyze the urban signage inscribed in the landscape of Bislig City using Gorter's Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS) model in a hybrid qualitative design. The photographs taken of actual public signs were assessed and complemented with street interviews of 20 informants in each of the urban sites. Analysis of the photographs accounted for 54 top-down signs and 45 bottom-up signs. Aside from English, languages displayed in top-down signs included signage in combination with Cebuano, Filipino, Kamayo, and Chinese. In the bottom-up signs, languages displayed also included English, Kamayo, Cebuano, Italian, Sanskrit, and Spanish. Common among the top-down and bottom-up signs were names, either of the establishments, streets, or places in the urban sites found in both top-down (n = 19) and bottom-up (n = 20) signs, respectively. In Component 1 of Gorter's MIPS, there is an absence of language policy processes that recognize the extant languages, either for top-down or bottom-up signs, in the city. Still, this points toward multilingualism in public space. From the street interviews, essential themes revealed the implications of the language displays to the communities of Bislig City following components 2 and 3, with the themes: *visibility and salience*, *intelligible language*, *building connections*, *positive impression*, and *dynamic transformation*. Moreover, relative to components 4 and 5, additional themes came out on how the LL shaped the identities of the Bisliganons, namely: *institutionalizing functional language*, *raising public awareness*, and *manifesting novel intentions*. Linguistic landscape is a resource that promotes cultural identity through language displays on public signs. This presupposes a policy on language use and sign production to cater to the multilingual realities of the urban communities, which is lacking. Therefore, a linguistic landscape study requires critical analysis on the existence of a multilingual environment.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, multilingualism, MIPS model, Bislig City, Philippines

1. Introduction

Language has constructed public spaces such as street signs, billboards, and other place markers. Although these languages in public spaces are regularly left out as a source of data on the use and explication of language in society (Jaworski and Thurlow 15), scaling a space into a label that shall speak for a territory or even a linguistic community is a relatively current field. These labels collectively become a community's linguistic landscape (henceforth LL).

Language in public signage is central to linguistic landscape. Ethnolinguistic identity is reinforced through the constructs found in it. Consequently, linguistic landscape sheds light on the use of language, diversity, and multilingualism. These are related to factors such as the progress in globalization, the increase of immigrants, and the growing importance of tourism ("Global and local forces" 188; Kallen and Dhonnacha 20; Pavlenko 148), not to mention the tolerance on the use of foreign languages (Spolsky 26) in public Signage where English has become the "default choice" (Backhaus 159). In fact, in the Philippines, English occupies a dominant space (Monje 16). Currently, though, the linguistic landscape in the Philippines is yet to be developed despite the

evident presence of English in the different public spaces.

In the second district of Surigao del Sur, the component city of Bislig has had its share of signs that contribute to its LL. Yet, there were no laws nor ordinances that would frame the LL in Bislig City. Moreover, there is no documentation as to policies and use of language in public spaces. Interestingly, one finds English on its own, and combined with other languages, in most, if not all of its LL, although Ethnologue (Lewis) cites a strong use of Kamayo, with EGIDS level 4 and high bilingualism in Cebuano in Bislig City. Empirically, this current situation points to unequal visibility and space for the languages of the Kamayo and Cebuano populations. Studying the linguistic landscape is one of the means to 'get a general sense for the description and analysis of the language situation in a certain country' (Gorter 1). In this case, the urban barangays of Bislig City are the sites for this linguistic landscape study.

Research into the linguistic landscape has taken place from a range of different approaches. In general, an area's linguistic landscape (LL) is described as linguistic scripts on official road signs, business signs, billboards, and signage on government structures pointing to a multilingual space (Backhaus 159; Ben-Rafael et al. 9; Kasanga 554; Spolsky 40). A public sign may function as a marker or as a symbol. The visibility of a language is its informational function—the way it demarcates territories, communities, and signs—these all point to the existence of a language, the information it communicates and identifies. On the other hand, a symbolic function for public signs is its relative position in the speaking community, the hierarchy it locates itself, and its power. This was developed from the seminal work of Landry and Bourhis which considered informational and symbolic functions to be inherently present in public signage (25). As a public sign explicitly presents a territory or a language, the symbolic function of the LL sign is the implicit messages within the language, the meaning beyond the surface function.

In another perspective, public signage is an indicator of change as the language reflected on them changes time and again, designating the landscape on the dominant or the minority culture. In the study of Ben-Rafael et al., the characteristics afforded to public signs are intended to reflect a dominant culture or language, hence, a top-down structure and a minority language or a bottom-up structure (10). This concept further indicates that public signs can be analyzed according to their top-down and bottom-up linguistic items. The former points to signs that belong to "national or local, and cultural, social, educational, medical or legal institutions" (Ben-Rafael et al. 11), while the latter includes signs categorically coded as "professional, commercial, and services" (11). These distinctions, originated by Ben-Rafael in his seminal work on the LL of Israel, pare down public signs to its elements. Furthermore, coding public signs into top-down or bottom-up characteristics allow for complementary assessment of signs concerning its function.

All these, eventually, create an inventory of the existence of the different languages in urbanized places (Ben-Rafael et al. 7; Blommaert and Maly 1). Marking language territories and boundaries is made possible through public signs, which can be issued by the government or private entities (Ben-Rafael et al. 8). The public signage forming part of the linguistic landscape of a particular territory capture the existence of varied literacies. The language, or languages, used on public signs further indicate their distribution in consideration of a community's linguistic identity. Such is the discourse found in Spolsky's Prolegomena that he accounted for the choice of language in public signage. In countries like Canada, Japan, Italy, Mexico, and Russia which have passed laws regulating the use and visibility of language in public signage (Barni and Bagna 19; Cardinal 80; Cordova Hernandez et al. 9; Pavlenko 145). The indexicality of places is enforced through languages, especially found in the public space. The linguistic landscapes of these countries suggest that public written signs influence literacies that may increase or decrease an ethnolinguistic group. Spolsky (27) noted in his study of the Navajo Nation of Tonga that it was orally bilingual, yet its literacy was mostly in English. It is worth noting, then, that the choice of language in public signage has primacy over a community's literacy, not to

mention it is also its communicative identity. Likewise, the ethnolinguistic group of the language, minority or dominant group, evolves in reference to how it uses and maintains the language, creating speech communities while concurrently affirming and recreating structures (Grenfell et al. 162) akin to the linguistic landscape.

But in the Philippines, Monje has shared in her study on the transient linguistic landscape of protests that linguistic studies are still in its early stages (15) in the country. English is given primacy even in education, albeit the efforts for the continued implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Language Education, which has been beset with negative reactions even from education practitioners, language experts, and politicians alike (Aperoch 693). Despite the standing department order on “the use of regional languages as auxiliary media of instruction as well as initial languages for literacy” (DECS Order no. 52 s 1987, section D, item 2; no 54 s 1987; Nolasco 3), English fills the linguistic landscape in the Philippines.

Language, as a structure, then, helps in the formation of identity for every user. Language and identity, thus, are concepts that an individual or language user inescapably and essentially associates with one's self. This association is further asserted in the community or context to which a language user belongs. As this language use is extended into artifacts as public signage, collectively, this forms part of the linguistic landscape in different urban territories. Interestingly, identities are further developed as a language user increases participation with other speakers within the community (Paltridge 15). The continuous production of public signage influences the configuration of a territory as multilingual (Barni and Bagna 3), the preference of one language over another as evident in the linguistic landscape.

1.1. Gorter's Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS)

This holistic model examines the language processes in the public space, and how this affects the community's perceptions and language practices. Originally a model for language policy, Gorter's Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS) posits that there is inequality in languages a priori in relation to their presentation, perception by their users, and even how they are used within a community (“Theoretical development”). 18). It has five components connected by locked chains and an arrow indicating the cyclical nature of the processes in language policies (“Multilingual Inequality” 59) as shown in Figure 1.

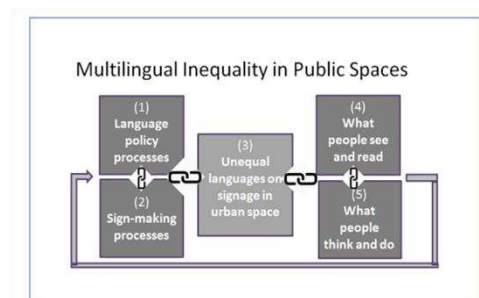


Figure 1. Multilingual inequality in public spaces (MIPS)

In this model, Components 1 and 2 are the language policy processes and the sign-making processes, respectively, which both set and shape the emplacement of the physical signs. While the first component directs which language appears on the signs, the second component points to the material and design in which the sign is produced. Component 3, consequently, explains that there is an inevitable existence of unequal languages on signage in urban space. The inequality is in the signs on the languages that have greater visibility than others despite existing in the same space. Components 4 and 5, which show what people see and read and what people

think and do, respectively. People's interaction with the signs, as manifested in component 4, concurrently describes the effects of the linguistic elements on signs on a person's language practices. People's behavior toward the linguistic landscape of the community is a cycle that points to the existence of unequal languages produced in congruence to the mechanisms available in the community ("Theoretical development" 18-19; "Multilingual inequality" 59-65; Gorter and Cenoz 80-88).

Linguistic landscape of the urban space in Bislig City are interesting elements to record, as none has been done on it. This is the gap of the present study; the landscape of Bislig City, Surigao del Sur is filled with narratives yet to be explored, as evidenced by the street signs, billboards, place markers, and even other usual sights. Bromhead (7) noted that different languages and cultures have different linguistic landscapes. Thus, this linguistic landscape research aims to describe and analyze the urban signage inscribed in the landscape of Bislig City. Identifying and codifying the public signs involved documenting these signs in the actual urban spaces of Barangays Tabon, Mangagoy, Comawas, Poblacion, and Maharlika from institutions and establishments, which include national or local, and cultural, social, educational, medical or legal institutions, professional, commercial, and services (11) as noted by Ben-Rafael et al. These barangays are found along the Davao-Surigao coastal road, which leads to the national highways of Agusan del Sur to Agusan del Norte AH26. Onsite data collection has been done using a smartphone camera at 720x1600 pixels resolution, a tall aspect ratio of 20:9, and an estimated pixel-per-inch density of 270; street interviews ensued. The data answered the following research questions: a) What are the linguistic landscapes and demographic compositions of Bislig City? b) What are the implications of these language displays to the communities of Bislig City? c) How does linguistic landscape shape the identities of the Bisliganons?

In all these, this present study finds its relevance as it contributes to the expanding literature on the linguistic landscape and the currency of the MIPS model. As the country's Department of Education has developed the MATATAG agenda, inclusive education and a positive learning environment are encouraged. Through this study, classrooms put more value on authentic materials such as public signage found in the locality. This study is the first of its kind to account for the existence of a multilingual space and use of the extant languages that form part of the city landscape of Bislig. The implication of the study is instrumental in efforts to preserve and increase visibility of the other languages thriving in Bislig City. Also, language policy may be developed in regulating the language displays on public signs as a product of this study. In consonance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this study addressed the following goals: 1) ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4-Quality Education), 2) make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 3) promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

This paper only explores the linguistic landscape of Bislig City, within the urban barangays found along the Davao-Surigao coastal road, and the survey sites only include those with prolific displays of LL items. The signs in the picture have been counted as one item, irrespective of its size and shape. The quantitative data generated have been analyzed using frequency count and percentage; no correlation or inferences are drawn from the data. A street interview has supplemented the database. It is then transcribed and analyzed to its qualitative nature. The sample for the street interview is limited, as it only includes those people who are present during daytime in the survey areas. Consequently, as there is no dedicated methodology for an LL study, mixed methods research design, sampling parameters, and frameworks from varied LL researchers have all been initialized accordingly in the study. The results of this study cannot be used to generalize the other LL of the other regions in the country.

2. Method

2.1 Data Sources and Study Participants

The corpus of this study included 99 photographs of public signage around the five urban sites of Bislig city and accordingly categorized using Ben-Rafael et al.'s linguistic landscape survey items. The researcher employed both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the analysis of these photographs, which were then complemented by street interviews (Aiestaran et al. 225) among random passersby of the sites.

As each public sign is counted as one item, regardless of its size, shape, and material ("Multilingualism in Tokyo" 55), the photographs of these signs were the initial qualitative data the researcher personally collected using a smartphone camera. Documentation of the public signs was captured in a resolution of 720x1600 pixels, an aspect ratio of 20:9, and an estimated pixel-per-inch density of 270. This was done during the daytime, during business hours of the establishments and institutions identified in the study from February to April 2024. The sampling parameters, categories, and sampling criteria used in the seminal work of Ben-Rafael et al. in 2006 were observed primarily. The items were generally categorized as top-down and bottom-up (Ben-Rafael et al. 14). While top-down signs are those issued by national and public offices, bottom-up signs are those from private entities. However, from the urban sites, Barangay Comawas and Barangay Maharlika did not have signs of street names, which is part of the top-down category; hence, the study only generated a total of 99 pictures of the public signs comprising the linguistic landscape of Bislig City. Table 1 shows the categories, types of items and sampling criteria.

Table 1. Categories, LL items, and Sampling Criteria

Category	Items	Sampling criteria
Top-down	Public institutions: religious, governmental, municipal-cultural and educational, medical Public signs of general interest Public announcements Signs of street names	3 Signage for every item category in every site
Bottom-up	Shop signs: grocery stores, cellphone shops, appliances, pharmacies, gasoline stations Private business signs: offices, repair shops, services, restaurants Private announcements: 'wanted' ads, sale or rental	

Yet, from among the signs, one would commonly find names of establishments such as shops and stores that could not be identified to a single language ("Multilingualism in the North" 4). These hard-to-define languages are also proper names in both top-down and bottom-up signs. This issue of names has been tackled by Edelman in her dissertation on multilingualism in Amsterdam and Friesland. For her, assigning a specific language to names proves to be difficult yet crucial in the analysis (Edelman 120); Gorter ("Names in the Frisian language" 122) describes this would immensely distort the quantitative analysis of the LL study. Thus, in the present study, proper names found on the signs are attributed as 'hard to define language' ("Global and local forces" 196), which also further signifies that the LL items in the urban areas in Bislig City are multilingual.

Street interviews were also done immediately after the pictures were taken. The questionnaire used was translated into the local language for the interview, which included as many as 20 informants in every site who were randomly selected in consideration of their consent and willingness to participate in the short interview. In particular, the inclusion criteria for the informants indicated that they should not be less than three participants

in each of the five survey sites; they should be at least 18 years old and a resident of Bislig City for the last five years to participate in the study. They should also be educated enough to read and understand public signage in English, Cebuano, and Kamayo. Still, any of the participants can withdraw any time from engaging in the study without any explanation or reason for their disengagement from the study.

2.2. Locale

This linguistic landscape study was in Bislig City: an urbanized city in the province of Surigao del Sur which has a population of 94,535 as of the 2015 Census (LGU Bislig Demographics). With an estimated land area of 33,180 hectares, the municipality of Bislig has been made a component city by the Republic Act 8804 of 2000, establishing boundaries along the municipalities of Lingig, Hinatuan, and Tagbina, and the provincial boundary of Agusan del Sur and Surigao del Sur. Subsequently, the city of Bislig has 24 barangays that can be classified as urban and rural barangays. For the present study, the survey sites were the five urban barangays, namely, Mangagoy, Poblacion, Comawas, Tabon, and Maharlika. The barangays were purposively identified as they are found along the Davao-Surigao coastal road, and these barangays form an ideal environment for a linguistic landscape study. This study was the first that documented the extant languages in Bislig and their visibility in the community through public signage. The chosen barangays have had noticeable displays of public signs, and these were valuable analysis of the study.

2.3. Materials and Instrument

Onsite data collection was done using a smartphone camera. Images of the linguistic landscape of survey sites were taken at a resolution of 720×1600 pixels, an aspect ratio of 20:9, and an estimated pixel-per-inch density of 270. These photographs are the LL items which were classified into categories as public institutions, including religious, governmental, municipal-cultural and educational, medical signs, public signs of general interest, public announcements, signs of street names; shop signs like grocery or dry goods stores, pharmacies, and food stalls; private business signs like offices, print shops, services, inns, and pawnshops; and private announcements like ‘wanted’ ads, sale, rental, or hiring.

The interviews were based on the structured interview in accordance with Gorter’s MIPS model. Citing Aiestaran et al., my interview included closed-ended questions related to their background, such as a) their residence, b) ethnic group, c) first language, d) other languages used and understood, and e) their occupation (225). Then open-ended questions ensued as to what people see and read from the public signs and their perceptions and behaviors of the language displayed in the public signage. The interview guide was validated both by the designated internal and external validators as to the appropriateness of the questions to the framework of the study.

2.4. Design and Procedure

This study used a hybrid qualitative research design. The mixing or the hybridization of the qualitative and quantitative elements of research is characterized by the fusion of qualitative and quantitative, or quantitative and qualitative, research methods (Gorter and Cenoz 104; Knappertsbusch et al. 203) through a comprehensive perspective of a theoretical lens (Creswell 15). Mixing the qualitative and quantitative, or quantitative and qualitative, research methods “can, but need not, include quantitative data collection” (Schoonenboom 13). This signifies that a study could be called mixed-methods research with its inclusion of textual and numerical data (13). She further argues that naming data as quantitative or qualitative depends on its characteristic as an “end product, not after the methods through which they came into being” (13).

Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches leads to detailed investigations and understanding of phenomena, especially in social (Knappertsbusch et al. 266) and applied research (267). For Creswell, using a theoretical lens in mixed methods research engineers the entire study (49). It helps design “the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a call for action or change” (62), directing the researcher to the problem to be investigated and the subject to be studied. In this mixed design, the researcher’s primary object of inquiry were the photographs of public signage as the LL items, with each sign counted as one item. The qualitative element of my study was the data collection procedure, which involved documentation of the public signage through photographs, and in-depth interviews. From the qualitative nature of the photographs, the researcher proceeded the “quantitized qualitative data” (Schoonenboom 12) to its quantitative analysis with the use of tabular presentation on the frequency of the categories, and their percentages, which the signs display.

Guided by Gorter's Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces model, the language displayed on the public signs was later explained as analogous to how it was constructed in the survey areas, and their implications on the people's language practices. In this project, the transcriptions from the street interviews were the text data, which were organized into segments, and then labeled into categories from the actual words of the participants (Strauss and Corbin 89). Applying these codes to answer the research questions provided an understanding of the linguistic landscape phenomenon. They were put in order to interconnect themes into a storyline (Creswell 189) and explained them further in relation to Gorter’s Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces model. The LL items were also distributed to the components that best describe their features relative to the framework I used.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Linguistic Landscapes and Demographic Compositions of Bislig City

The urban landscape is a tapestry of languages, with public signs often displaying a rich diversity. Table 2.0 reveals that over four languages are represented, with 41% of signs being bilingual ($n = 41$). Some signs proudly showcase three languages ($n = 25$) at 25%, while others stand alone in their linguistic representation ($n = 23$) at 23%. A notable 10% of signs ($n = 10$) boldly present four or more languages. Interestingly, there are more top-down ($n = 54$) public signs than bottom-up ones ($n = 45$), adding to the linguistic mosaic of urban areas.

Table 2.0. Number of Languages on Public Signs

Number of Languages	N	Percentages
One language	23	23%
Two languages	41	41%
Three languages	25	25%
Four or more languages	10	10%
Total	99	100%

Table 2.1. Number of Languages in Top-down Public Signs

Number of Languages	N	Percentages
One language	10	19%
Two languages	27	50%
Three languages	11	20%
Four or more languages	6	11%
Total	54	100%

Table 2.2. Number of Languages in Bottom-up Public Signs

Number of Languages	N	Percentages
One language	13	29%
Two languages	14	31%
Three languages	14	31%
Four or more languages	4	9%
Total	45	100%

On the other hand, the catalog of the linguistic diversity in Bislig City, shown in Table 3, exhibits the multilingual space of public signs. Remarkably, bilingual signs of English and Cebuano ($n = 24$) are displayed at 24 percent, and English ($n = 23$) is at 23 percent most. Other public signs displayed a language combination of English and Filipino ($n = 2$) at 2 percent, and at 1 percent each for English and Kamayo ($n = 1$) and English and Italian ($n = 1$). Five percent ($n = 5$) of the signage includes a combination of three languages: English, Cebuano, and Filipino. All at 1 percent each are signage with English, Cebuano, and Kamayo ($n = 1$), English, Cebuano, and Chinese ($n = 1$), English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit ($n = 1$). Also, only one percent of the public signs combine four or more languages: English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Spanish ($n = 1$).

It is also worth noting that some signs have hard to define languages in combination with English ($n = 13$) at 13 percent, English and Bagobo ($n = 1$) at 1 percent, and English and Filipino ($n = 5$) at 5 percent, English and Cebuano ($n = 11$) at 11 percent, and English, Cebuano, and Filipino ($n = 5$) at 5 percent. Similarly, the remaining signs all have one percent each displayed on the signage in combination with the hard-to-define language. There are English, Cebuano, and Kamayo ($n = 1$), English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Kamayo ($n = 1$), and English, Cebuano, Arabic, and Chinese ($n = 1$). These are further distributed across top-down (Table 3.1) and bottom-up (Table 3.2) signs.

Table 3.0. Languages Used on the Signs

Languages of LL Items	N	%
English	23.00	23%
English and Kamayo	1.00	1%
English and Cebuano	24.00	24%
English and Filipino	2.00	2%
English, and Italian	1.00	1%
English, Cebuano, and Filipino	5.00	5%
English, Cebuano, and Kamayo	1.00	1%
English, Cebuano, and Chinese	1.00	1%
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	1.00	1%
English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Spanish	1.00	1%
With Combined Hard to define language		
English	13.00	13%
English, and Bagobo	1.00	1%
English, and Filipino	5.00	5%
English, and Cebuano	11.00	11%
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	3.00	3%
English, Filipino, and Cebuano	3.00	3%
English, Cebuano, and Kamayo	1.00	1%
English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Kamayo	1.00	1%
English, Cebuano, Arabic, and Chinese	1.00	1%
Total	99.00	100%

Table 3.1. Languages Used in Top-down Public Signs

Languages of LL Items	N	%
English	10.00	18.52%
English and Cebuano	17.00	31.48%
English and Filipino	2.00	3.70%
English, Cebuano, and Filipino	4.00	7.41%
English, Cebuano, and Kamayo	1.00	1.85%
English, Cebuano, and Chinese	1.00	1.85%
With Combined Hard to define language		
English	8.00	14.81%
English, and Cebuano	5.00	9.26%
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	2.00	3.70%
English, Filipino, and Cebuano	2.00	3.70%
English, Filipino, and Kamayo	1.00	1.85%
English, Cebuano, and Kamayo	1.00	1.85%
Total	54.00	100.00%

Table 3.2 – Languages Used in Bottom-Up Public Signs

Languages of LL Items	N	%
English	13.00	28.89%
English and Kamayo	1.00	2.22%
English and Cebuano	7.00	15.56%
English, and Italian	1.00	2.22%
English, Cebuano, and Filipino	1.00	2.22%
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	1.00	2.22%
English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Spanish	1.00	2.22%
With Combined Hard to define language		
English	5.00	11.11%
English, and Bagobo	1.00	2.22%
English, and Filipino	5.00	11.11%
English, and Cebuano	6.00	13.33%
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	1.00	2.22%
English, Filipino, and Cebuano	1.00	2.22%
English, Cebuano, Arabic, and Chinese	1.00	2.22%
Total	45.00	100.00%

The above presentation demonstrated Gorter's claim that linguistic landscape studies highlight multilingualism ("multilingual inequality" 51) and its presence within a context ("LL as a resource" 167) and as characterized by signs. Landry and Bourhis have established LL as "a marker of the geographical territory occupied by distinctive language communities within multilingual states" (24). This is the substantiation of language being used to label a public space. Even so, the multilingual character of these signs points to the inevitability of differences (Bautista 24) of a language highlighted in the public signage found in the community, consequently causing the ethnolinguistic group its location in space. Employing the first component of the MIPS model, the display of language and signs was diverse in relation to where they were placed and the different ways they were perceived by the community (Gorter and Cenoz 80; "Theoretical Development" 18; "Names in Frisian Language" (122). The situation demonstrated Ben-Rafael et al.'s statement that with the various linguistic players and practices, LL's 'chaotic nature' (8) creates a familiar space, albeit multifaceted realities, allowing cultures to assert their existence in this constructed space. The structure of public signs is coded as to how they organize a given context.

However, it was also noted that the English language is constantly present in both bottom-up and top-down signage, implying that it provided clarity and contextualization of the signs in the area (“LL as a resource” 167; Marten 119; Syrjälä 5). Multilingual signs use more English than the local languages. Particularly interesting is the general disposition to use the language even in combination with all other languages, as shown in the Table 3 series. English, then, is the most frequently displayed language on the signs, further committing it as a lingua franca (“Multilingualism in the North” 5) in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City. Remarkably, even in combination with proper names, English is still evident, thus clearing up the landscape in Bislig City on its visibility, as proven by the public signage.

English, or a combination of other languages with English, often takes center stage in public spaces in urban areas. Top-down signs of government and public institutions, public announcements, and street names frequently adopt a bilingual approach. In contrast, bottom-up signs such as shop signs, offices, restaurants, and private announcements tend to favor English, either as the sole language or in combination with others, further highlighting its pervasive influence.

Curating the public signs according to their displayed languages only serves to point further to the unequal space a local language occupies (“Theoretical Development” 18), an eventual growing presence of English (Gorter 1), and a remarkable effort that pushes multilingualism to the fore (Calvi and Uberti-Bona 29). The City Planning Development Office articulated that the dominant ethnic groups in Bislig City are the Surigaonons, the Visayans, the Kamayos, the Cebuanos, and the Boholanos. From the LL items, there are more signs in English and Cebuano, while signs with only English come second. Public signs have included elements such as the place name (Jaworski and Thurlow 12) or the address where the signs are being photographed, contributing to the survey of the language used and displayed on the signs. In top-down signs, names of individuals who have made significant contributions to the community have been endowed on hospitals and street names. Alongside this, Cebuano is widely used in urban areas; about 47.34% of the population speaks Cebuano (Bislig City Socio-Economic Profile 27). Assigning the place names as Cebuano, except for Maharlika, is consistent with the data presented in the socio-economic profile of the city, which shows that Cebuanos populate the urban areas.

Nevertheless, current city ordinances do not include policy on language; instead, the City Ordinance No. 2007-01 only establishes guidelines for the naming and renaming of public streets, plazas, buildings, and bridges in the city, emphasizing merit and “honor of a person or family or a significant historical event” (2), and “The use of Filipino terminology shall be encouraged in the naming and renaming of streets, plazas, and buildings except names of persons or places” (Section 2, Item g). Subsequent city ordinance no. 2016-02 cites the same guidelines alongside the Revised Guidelines of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines in naming unnamed streets, roads, and alleys in the city of Bislig. In fact, the charter of Bislig City (Republic Act 8804) does not have any provision that mentions language as one of the city’s priorities. Nor does it consider language planning and policy that shapes and allows representations of the different languages, if not ethnic groups (Buchstaller and Fabiszak 6; Gorter et al. 482; Cordova Hernandez et al. 7).

LL in specific localities

The LL items sampled from the urban sites revealed a rich tapestry of languages displayed on the public signs. In barangays Comawas and Maharlika, for instance, the researcher found 18 items each, a departure from Ben-Rafael et al.’s sampling criteria to include signs of street names. These two urban sites, interestingly, did

not have street signs placed within the barangay. However, the residents and participants interviewed confirmed the names and distinctions of the streets in the barangays. Presently, though, Table 4.0 shows that English is the predominant language, either with or without the combination of other languages, in all the urban sites. There were more English-only language displayed on the signage found in barangays Tabon (n = 5), Mangagoy (n = 6), Comawas (n = 6), and Maharlika (n = 4), while mixing of English and Cebuano language displays were common in Comawas (n = 9), Mangagoy (n = 5), and Poblacion (n = 5).

On the other hand, signage with names and in combination only with English is expected in Tabon (n = 3), Mangagoy (n = 4), and Poblacion (n = 4). The signage with names combined with English and Cebuano is regular in Tabon (n = 3) and Mangagoy (n = 3), while signage with English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit is standard in Maharlika (n = 3). Interestingly, this signage with hard-to-define languages attributed to proper names makes up a total of 39 out of 99 LL items, which is 39 percent of the total LL items. Then, there are 19 out of 54 top-down signs, or 35 percent, that have this distinction, while 20 out of 45 bottom-up signs, or 44 percent, also exhibit proper names in combination with other languages besides English.

Table 4.0. LL items in Urban Areas

Languages of LL Items	T	Mgy	C	P	Mk
English	5	6	6	2	4
English and Kamayo	0	0	0	1	0
English and Cebuano	3	5	9	5	2
English and Filipino	0	0	0	0	2
English, and Italian	0	0	0	0	1
English, Cebuano, and Filipino	3	1	0	1	0
English, Cebuano, and Kamayo	0	0	0	1	0
English, Cebuano, and Chinese	0	1	0	0	0
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	0	0	0	0	1
English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Spanish	0	0	0	1	0
With Combined Hard to Define Language					
English	3	4	0	4	2
English, and Bagobo	0	0	0	1	0
English, and Filipino	2	0	0	2	1
English, and Cebuano	3	3	2	1	2
English, Cebuano, and Sanskrit	0	0	0	0	3
English, Filipino, and Cebuano	2	0	0	1	0
English, Cebuano, and Kamayo	0	0	0	1	0
English, Filipino, Cebuano, and Kamayo	0	1	0	0	0
English, Cebuano, Arabic, and Chinese	0	0	1	0	0
Total	21	21	18	21	18

*T – Tabon/ Mgy – Mangagoy/C – Comawas/ P – Poblacion / Mk – Maharlika

In many promulgated laws, the English language has been well thought out; this includes a specific provision from one of the main articles in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. According to Article XIV—Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture, and Sports, Section 7 paragraph 1, “For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law,

English”. This legal provision underscores the importance of language in the Philippines and its role as a medium of communication in the country.

Article XIV, Section 7 par. 1 is non-self-executory and, therefore, needs a law implemented to be fully functional. For that matter, DECS Department Order number 52, s. 1987 has been ratified. This is otherwise known as the Bilingual Education Policy; herein, it states that Filipinos should be the linguistic symbol of unity and identity. English is taught alongside the former. People have become more acquainted with signs written in English because it has since shaped the educational system. Simply put, where there is Filipino, there are instructions translated into English, too. However, in practice, English has become the main language used in the Philippines—from contracts to road signs. Monje has discussed that in the country, English has also been given the same privilege in the academy (16). This is deeply rooted in our relationship, after years of being its colony (Pütz 296) with America, in which the constitution of the Philippines has been highly influenced. Thus, such a tendency toward English equates with how the language is also ascribed its value along with many other languages in the country, leading to a multilingual landscape (Multilingualism in the North 6; Monje 19).

The interdisciplinary quality of LL studies is an absence of an equivalent, resolute framework for LL analysis. Nevertheless, it expands into language planning and policy. Language policy does not have a concrete definition, but more than most are examined together with language planning. Both are deemed to be closely related as each absorbs one another. According to Kaplan and Baldauf, a language policy is a collection of ideas, laws, regulations, rules, and techniques intended to achieve a conscious change in language within a system, organization, or community (3). The policy does not need to be enforced by an authoritative body, and it could sprout from those coming from the bottom. It is not always planned thoroughly (Johnson 3).

As in the case of the model proposed by Gorter on the multilingual inequality in public spaces, the first component of Language Policy Processes conditions the linguistic landscape and all other language mechanisms that make a public space (Cocq et al. 4; “Multilingualism in the North” 2). The LL items in this study are reflections of the policy in place, if any, in Bislig City. Inasmuch as a policy helps control the presence and visibility of languages, especially on public signage, priorities need to be set (“Names in the Frisian Linguistic Landscape” 124), not to mention the commitment to accommodate (Backhaus 160), regulate (“Multilingual Inequality” 60), motivate (Cordova Hernandez et al. 8), reinforce and validate (Buchstaller and Fabiszak 6), all the other extant languages in the area through proper planning for a language policy.

Bislig City, then, can benefit much from language policy on the public signage by mapping its *de facto* ethnolinguistic communities (“Multilingual Inequality” 60) and the different literacies (Spolsky 27) of its people. Finally, the language policy that Bislig City may legislate has to bound top-down or official signs to bottom-up or unofficial signs (Gorter et al., 484; “Multilingual Inequality,” 60). While current ordinances award street names to individuals who have made significant contributions to the city, a language policy may include a section on this to emphasize that names are also languages (Cordova Hernandez et al. 12), albeit that in this study, it is attributed to being hard to define. Furthermore, it should be noted that with the existence of a language policy, the stability and the changing politics (Du Plessis 74; Pütz 298) are not the only factors that shape the linguistic landscape. Gorter et al. note on the dynamics between the hegemonic power, economy, and various identities of the ethnolinguistic communities in place (492); thus, such policy should be conceived in recognition of these factors.

Taken together, the study of linguistic landscapes focuses on the connections between the sociodemographic character of a city and written languages used in public settings, such that it has received a lot of attention,

particularly in sociolinguistics (Jiang 129); however, many of the studies are based on random interpretation of fieldwork data. Language on public signs and spaces then becomes a mechanism in the examination of the current hierarchies, identities, and related issues, as evidenced by the LL. It is the definition of Landry and Bourhis that puts a premium on this field (Backhaus 158; Buchstaller and Fabiszak 2; Gorter 2). Moreover, in their work, they point out that the prominence of one's language is concurrent with its vitality. This means that different ethnolinguistic groups negotiate and haggle on the public space (Buchstaller and Fabiszak 2), reflecting its LL. This marked a territory, a field, which started LL as an area for research.

3.2. Implications of Language Displays in Selected Communities of Bislig City

Written language in a public space has consequences (Cocq et al. 8). The language that marks a public space, the context in which it belongs and identifies itself, reflects its social realities (Barni and Bagna 3; Cocq et al. 6). As reflected in the survey sites of this project, each has its characteristics that made them noticeable, if any, among the people in the barangays. From the street interviews, these essential themes were generated on the implications of the language displays to the communities of Bislig City. The themes were visibility and salience, intelligible language, building connections, positive impressions, and dynamic transformation.

Reiterating Ben Rafael's distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs, those belonging to national or local institutions like public service announcements, street signs with general interest, and street names identify with the former. Expectedly, these are issued by public authorities or agencies. On the other hand, signs issued by individuals or firms on services, commercial establishments, and shops are the bottom-up signs in this case. The sample survey items that have been analyzed are bound to be visible and salient in the areas where they are erected. This would involve considering the features of the signs to be seen immediately by the people, both the target and non-target audience (Calvi and Uberti-Bona 30), providing direction (Yang 122), and even as a form of promotion to the tourists (Cordova Hernandez et al. 7; Kallen 44).

Visibility and Salience

Notable sharing from the participants argued for a more visible sign. Going into these LL items from around the urban sites, both the top-down and bottom-up signs have concretely demonstrated the attitudes and feelings of the participants on the presence of the signs (Cocq et al. 1; Gaho et al. 218), particularly on their visibility and readability (Griffin 6).

Proving this point is an overhead structure in Barangay Tabon, the school marker of Plaza Central Elementary School in Figure 2. The school marker is in English, and the name of the donor, "Plaza," is accordingly classified as hard to define because names could not be singularly owned by a specific language (Edelman 120). Yet, it is unsuccessful in creating a distinctive feature in the community since the whole sign blends itself with the surrounding colors of the school sign—the green G.I. roof, the balcony grills, and even the foliage—making it less vibrant and unappealing. And even when suspended midair, the lines from the text are not as visible as they must have been intended.



Figure 2. Public institution sign: *Plaza Central Elementary School*

Another example is this landmark in Poblacion, which is large and imposing in structure and is easily seen by everyone and anyone who goes to Poblacion or just passes by the highway. In agreement with the study by Hulbert and Burg, the signs made should have taken the approach of a motion picture (564), specifically a dynamic-sign reading situation. The closer the distance between drivers and pedestrians alike, the sign size should continuously expand. However, the same is not true with the top-down sign in focus. The archway's size does not complement the text written on the sign (Figure 3), making it indiscernible midair.



Figure 3. Archway in Barangay Poblacion: *Salamatay Kamayo Pagkadi*

The sign expresses gratitude (*salamatay*) in Kinamayo for visiting or coming (*pagkadi*) in the locality. The language displayed addresses the people (*Tamayo*), whether they are Bislig City residents or tourists and individuals who happened to have their activities in Barangay Poblacion. Despite its structure and significance to the locality as a landmark archway, the language displayed on the sign is not as legible as it is intentionally written.

Intelligible Language

The informants across the urban sites pointed out too well that there is an evident lack of uniform, if not standard, characteristics of these signs, whether they were from the top-down or the bottom-up category. From there, the language displayed in the public signs has to be made visible and salient in relation to the physical features of the signs; the language preferred is the language of the community even when English is known (Pütz 312). Thus, the different LL items, though in English, are better understood because they are written in a way that caters to how the community understands the language.

Still, the use of English on public signs becomes a better alternative as it is shorter, and the length of the words can be accommodated within the confines of the space of a public sign (Qudeisat and Rababah 538;

Wang and Liu 94-95). In fact, around the urban sites, several languages were found to be displayed in single signage, sharing the space with other languages being used in the community. Moreover, the street interviews noted the unmistakable presence of the English language and the minimal existence of Cebuano. This, in turn, had participants asserting that a sign should be understood on the unmistakable presence of the English language and the minimal existence of Cebuano. This in turn had participants asserting that a sign should be understood.



Figure 4. Top-down signs of Public institutions and announcement

In Figure 4, the top-down signs in Tabon and Comawas showed how acronyms are used in calling attention to themselves (Qudeisat and Rababah 542) because of their brevity (Wang and Liu 95) and for the community to understand the relevance of the signs. Take the church signage in Barangay Tabon: it is primarily in English, and a few words refer to the church's address, a complex language that is fine in Cebuano. The sign is oriented to people who can also read the language. However, what is peculiar is that just beneath the complete title of the church is the acronym "OBJC," referring to the initial letters of O (live), B (ranch of), J (Jesus), and C (christ) church.

Then, in barangay Comawas, a hospital sign and a government satellite office also bear acronyms across their sign faces. Their unmistakable four-letter word acronyms are their identities, owing to their community intelligence. The PCSO Medical Access Program sign is only in English. However, despite the complete and proper title of the office written on the signage, it is uniquely referred to as just "PCSO," the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, which is the country's fund-generating agency for the various government-led charity programs, health services, and even medical assistance (Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office). Interestingly, the signage also lists the different lottery draws, which all help fund the medical access programs like the ones in the hospital in Comawas.

While the CSWD sign is dominantly in English, the place names of some of the barangays in Bislig City are noted to be in Cebuano. Again, the community knows and understands from the signage that it also provides services to the vulnerable groups in Cluster 4, including Comawas, Burboanan, Mone, Pamaypayan, San Antonio, San Isidro, and San Jose. This government agency acronym helps demonstrate a significant way for the people to remember top-down signs and efficiently communicate the purpose ("Signs of multilingualism" 176; Qudeisat and Rababah 538; Calvi and Uberti-Bona 30).

However, from the interviews, it was emphasized that to see signs means to see a language that is understood and comprehensible by the public (Spolsky 33). The public has been accustomed to and has recognized how English has been chiefly preferred on signs for better impression and recall of commodities on business and shop signs, programs and institutions from public signs, and traffic regulations from road signs. As shared during the street interviews, the Bisliganon people are educated. Hence, English is prevalent. Still, it was mentioned that there may still be people who do not comprehend what is in the signs.

Building Connections

The LL items of Bislig City are all intended to be consumed; they may be in English or in all other languages found in the community (Calvi and Uberti-Bona 30) in order to make sure these people also understand what is being communicated (Wang and Liu 95). Exciting findings from among the different signs in the urban sites of barangays Tabon, Mangagoy, Comawas, Poblacion, and Maharlika point to a sign-production process that accommodates languages that offer the public conventional means to understand what is on the signage.

From the top-down signs, it can be observed that the language displays were in English; yet, even the public subverts the language by using words or concepts attributed to the sign's referent, thus steering clear of possible misrepresentation of the signs. These only point further to the communicative intentions of the signs (Pütz 296). But all in all, the different signage in different languages has created the landscape of Bislig City. Moreover, predictably, the signs have displayed how languages facilitate communication and rhetoric processes for and by the people who see and read them (Spolsky 33). For instance, in Figure 5, the signs explicitly display the institutions or buildings's names. But the top-down signs, as understood in the community, have all been called names related and attributed to these same institutions, not really what was explicitly displayed by the scripts.



Figure 5. Top-down signs: Public institutions and public announcement

The "Adolescent Friendly Health Facility" signage in Comawas included pictures of children and the text. Indeed, the signage is mostly in English, except for the city's official seal indicating the name Bislig. It is an exciting name for the public institution, but one of the informants shared that the barangay health center sign is in English. She confirmed the language displayed on the sign but also gave it another name: *health center*. And she continued, "*Naa pud signage diha sa slaughterhouse. (WPSAT.C5)*" (There is also signage for the slaughterhouse.")

As a teacher in the senior high school in Comawas, the researcher was surprised to know that the people refer to Bislig City Abattoir as the slaughterhouse, contrary to its French origin displayed on the parapet wall. Interestingly, the way the people in Bislig substitute the French term with a more familiar and conventional English word suggests their metacognitive process to understand the signs (Wang and Liu 94). Attribution and substitution of the language displayed on the public signs, then, suggest that a public sign should be understood by the public (Qudeisat and Rababah 538; Wang and Liu 95). The words they use, like "health center" and "slaughterhouse," affirm how public signs impact the community.

Moving toward barangay Poblacion, the same phenomenon is evident in the Poblacion Sports Center. Two signs appear on the front gabled wall of the sports center: one is on the wall itself, and the other is on the strip of tarpaulin, listing the reasons not to use illegal drugs. The faded, almost defaced notice on illegal drugs is in Bisaya (Mga Rason Nganong Guinadili ang Pag Gamit sa Iligal Nga Droga). But of the two displayed signs, the inscription is more noticeable than the latter. The name of the building, Poblacion Sports Center, is in English, and Cebuano is the place's name. However, like the slaughterhouse and the health center, people refer to the structure as the Poblacion Gym or Gymnasium. This prominence of English in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City affirms its vitality and presence in the community (Marten 117; Pütz 301).

Positive Impressions

Understanding a sign ensures that the public also understands the language (Edelman 120). Aside from condensing the scripts on the sign, simplicity in the expression of a language warrants that the public undoubtedly understands what the sign contains (Wang and Liu 95). Sign visibility and legibility largely contribute to how the public reads one (Du Plessis 82; Calvi and Uberti-Bona 27), not to mention the choice of language displayed (Spolsky 33), especially on welcome Signage which the local language can positively impress those transient individuals as in the presence of tourists and visitors.

English, Cebuano, Filipino, and a multitude of other languages coexist in the vibrant linguistic landscape of Bislig. Even names that are difficult to define carve out their own space, each unique and distinct, with no single language able to fully capture their essence (Edelman 120). A store sign, as depicted in Figure 6, proudly displays these diverse languages, underscoring the significance of linguistic diversity. This tarpaulin, hoisted in Barangay Comawas, humbly expresses words of gratitude (Daghang Salamat).



Figure 6. Bottom-up sign: *Public announcement*

The sign in Cebuano is intended for the Bisaya speakers in the barangay. In all its simplicity, what remains for the public is "Daghang Salamat," which speaks more volumes than the reiteration of the same idea, expressed lengthily in the sign's face.

Dynamic Transformation

Then, operating in the conciseness of the language displayed on the sign, the public has been creative in its sign processes. The different LL items have shown how initials or names are most conveniently identified on the signage rather than the entirety of the label (Qudeisat and Rababah 538). Using the language creatively on the public signs equates to how the public asserts their identity in the public space (Edelman 121).

English remains at the foreground of the public signs in Bislig City (Marten 117), and ultimately, the public naturally augments how they understand these signs, especially those announcements for septic tank cleaning service, a coffee shop, and paint service, which could all be given truncated and condensed terms as "Septic" to refer to JB Septic Tank Services, "Iced Coffee" to Don Macchiato Iced Coffee, and "Car Tinting" to refer to all the tinting jobs listed on the sign, as shown in Figure 7. Nevertheless, though the signs are predominantly in

English, it did not take much for the public to circumvent the language into a simplified and rememberable label for the sign and the institution or entity it refers to.



Figure 7. Top-down signs: *Public institutions and public announcement*

This assembly of the whole linguistic landscape caused the generation of the themes in consideration of the sign-making processes in Bislig City (Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces 11). Remarkably, most of the signs listed in this project are found along the national highways or on roadways. Essentially, these signs are made to convey a message (Wang and Liu 94), to command attention (Calvi and Uberti-Bona 29), and to talk to a specific group (Syrjälä 8). As such, there has to be clarity in the arrangement, organization, and process within these signs (Du Plessis 80; Multilingualism in the North 1).

As typical as English has been in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City, the absence of a set of conventional rules and ideologies in the sign's production subjugates the whole linguistic landscape (Kallen 47; Du Plessis 80; Pütz 296) — in these, the message of the sign remains of primacy as it is presented by the language (Calvi and Uberti-Bona 29-30). The production of these signs, especially in Bislig City, constitutes varied and diverse LL items.

Also, it further reveals issues emergent from the appearances of the different languages in the physical signs and the eventual inequality of space occupied by the extant languages. Yet, in the words of Landry and Bourhis, the linguistic landscape and the organization of the public signs yield a multilingual context (26), multi-literate communities (Spolsky 25), coexisting and co-constructing (Ben-Rafael et al. 8). In this study, Bislig City has shown to agree that multilingualism on the public signs is already everywhere and has occupied the public spaces.

This study shows that Bislig City needs to organize its linguistic landscape and should start with proper planning and policy next (Du Plessis 92). It is a suggestion to prioritize the placement of top-down signs. Aside from that, he stated that there is a relationship between language policy and the linguistic landscape of an urban setting. Even Kallen has emphasized the significance of prescribing the creation of signage, in particular the non-official and bottom-up signs, to make them valid (47) and ensure that they are appropriate to be placed in a public area. Signage often uses English as an international communication medium (Ben-Rafael 24), but this does not imply that there is no room for other languages in Bislig City. In the framework of Gorter, the dominant space some languages occupy in signage is consequential to the sign standards or the sign-production process. As there is a clear absence of a language policy in Bislig City, the signage accounted for in the study also represents the landscape, reinforcing the unequal language on the signs.

3.3. *How LL Shapes the Identities of the Bisliganons*

English has a significant presence, even in combination with other languages displayed, on the signs (Du Plessis 82; Pütz 316). Thus, the language's impact on signs hints at the identities shaped among the peoples of

Bislig. For Backhaus, heterogeneity in the language displayed and written on public signs suggests how the different linguistic communities, even official agencies, accommodate all the other languages (160), such as the case in the LL items in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City. Furthermore, this demonstrates that multilingualism is the eventual direction of the sign inscriptions, and language policy should also be prioritized. These align with the views of the informants during the street interviews. From the signage, this study also considered views from the participants, thus generating these themes as *Institutionalizing Functional Language*, then *Raising Public Awareness*, and lastly, *Manifesting Novel Intentions*.

Institutionalizing Functional Language

For top-down signs, putting different languages requires organizing the space to ensure enough room for the orthography of the different languages (Du Plessis 80; Kallen 47). Top-down signs have a specific linguistic layering that takes on a bilingual approach. Consequently, signs are better understood if there is an organization between languages, prioritizing the language most understood by the community (Pütz 301). Take this example in Figure 16, the Philippine National Bank building signage in Mangagoy. It has English and Cebuano languages in the same Romanized script. English filled up a large portion of the sign, while the appropriate place name was beside it. Then, the Chinese inscription on the other end of the sign translates into the English name “Philippine National Bank.”



Figure 8. Top-down signs: *Philippine National Bank in barangay Mangagoy*

The LL item shows the English script taking a much larger space than the in the fine print of the Chinese characters (Alomoush 34). This offers a unique distinction to the signage, as it is the only public institution sign with a script different from the Romanized characters. Interestingly, the public instinctively directs its gaze to the larger scripts. Some participants even commented on this, highlighting a shift in their perception of the Chinese scripts during the interview.

Raising Public Awareness

While the LL items included in this study were collected given Ben-Rafael's sign dichotomy of top-down and bottom-up signs, the functionality of these same signs had been ascribed to have communicated their informational function (Yendra et al. 100) as their basic message expressed by the languages displayed on the signs (Pütz 301). As evidenced in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City, the researcher is mainly concerned with the presence of the signs of street names in the urban sites of barangay Tabon, Mangagoy, and Poblacion, much like those in Figure 9.

All these signs of street names emphasize the direction and demarcation of a particular area. Their primary function is to guide individuals, whether they are residents or visitors in Bislig City, ensuring they can navigate easily within the barangay. It is worth noting, too, that aside from English, which refers to the term street, the other half of the sign is that of a person's name, which has been attributed to be hard to define as no specific language owns up to the name (Edelman 120; “Global and local forces” 196). Bilingualism, in the case of these signs of street names, is characterized by the suffix “St.” for Street, or “Blvd.” for Boulevard.” Du Plessis contends this process, indicating the tendency towards English (82) on public signage.



Figure 9. Signs of Street Names in Barangay Tabon, Mangagoy, and Poblacion

The guidelines for naming public streets, plazas, buildings, and bridges in the city of Bislig are appropriately outlined in its City Ordinance 2007-01. The case of Herculano S. Basañez is the result of his significant contributions. Similarly, the street names Laurente Street and Alvar Street were awarded in much the same manner. However, unlike the former, the two latter names have been known to be a large clan and owners of most of the parcels of land in Poblacion.

Street names render themselves instruments in constructing the narrative of the history and identity in Tabon, Mangagoy, and Poblacion. In their informational function, these signs of street names distinctively mark those who live in the said locations. Accordingly, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines published the "Revised Guidelines on the Naming and Renaming of Streets, Public Schools, Plazas, Buildings, Bridges, and Other Public Structures" in 2011, emphasizing cultural and historical significance in naming public structures. As a public structure, street names refer to significant events that help shape a city's historical and cultural activities (Buchera et al. 24), thus explaining the patterns of human experiences about his environment. These are representatives of hegemonic structure and social constructs (Azaryahu 314), which the city adapts and forms its identity.

Yet, as much as these street names raise public awareness of the territories they represent, they also function symbolically. These signs of street names symbolize the strength, or vitality (Landry and Bourhis 28), of an ethnic group in the demographic of other language groups. Between the use of English and an individual's name, English is a minor language compared to the symbolic presence conjured by the names of local and significant community persons.

Manifesting Novel Intentions

It is now apparent that with most of the LL items having already been analyzed, the researcher could deduce that the identities of the Bisliganons are motivated by language. Yet, the linguistic landscape in Bislig City empirically lacks coherence and organization mechanisms in the absence of a language policy as otherwise proposed by Pütz (296). The lack of such a language policy has created a conflict between different groups as

there is no specific language that the ethnolinguistic communities in Bislig City abide by, thus making English a convenient choice.

Even the top-down signs are yet to find order among themselves and within the sign faces, notably in the languages. The languages displayed on the signage permeate the community's literacy (Spolsky 27) and its communicative identity (Calvi and Uberti-Bona 29-30). Linguistic landscape is often used as a means of public communication. Public signage, much as any medium for communication, contains language that has this specific trace in the roots of a community. The roots mentioned include that of being political and nationalistic (Vandenbroucke). Given this argument, these bottom-up signs will have bolstered the ethnolinguistic identity of Cebuano (Figure 10); English, though it frequents the linguistic landscape of Bislig City, has no traction among the people.



Figure 10. Bottom-up Signage: Shop sign and business sign

These shop signs in Mangagay indicate that Cebuano or Bisaya deserves a space in the compactness of the sign (Kallen and Dhonnacha 19). English, in its brevity, is limited to the words “street,” “City,” and “Sale.” On the other hand, the Laundry Shop sign in Maharlika displaces the name “MC Laundry Shop” by pushing it farther into the margin. While the sign's aesthetics are not the concern of a linguistic landscape study, the numerous scripts of the language in this sign have contributed to its intelligibility by including all the languages commonly used in the community alongside English.

The languages displayed on the signs, indeed, have impacted the different people in Bislig City. Signs provide information (Pütz 296), influence perception, appeal for action, regulate movement, and even express identity (Edelman 121). For the participants, these are possible with the languages used on the signs and whether the population can understand these same languages. They further concluded that even the simplest of terms can be misinterpreted, some misunderstood, especially in a language they do not understand. Thus, a language policy for multilingual signage, a priori, in the landscape of Bislig City could have redressed how the LL items have been.

In this LL study, what is found among the signs is a multilingual space for the different languages to thrive. Yet, the image and identity of Bislig City projects of its people are fragile without proper documentation. The prevalence and frequency of English displayed on the different signage tilts the balance. Bislig City offers its ethnic groups the opportunity to reclaim the space it shares with English. This, in turn, also means that these multitudes of languages influence a Bisliganon. The different languages displayed on the signage in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City represent the people and its culture. As much as there is a need for a language policy, awareness of these languages, as shown in the LL items, indicates their lawful presence.

In view of Gorter's Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS), the presence of English on the signs used in this project infers that the signage is inherently unequal. But calling for a multilingual space, as also

reflected in the sharing of the participants, appropriates and recognizes the multilingual realities of the Bisliganon. However, one does not discount the hard-to-define language on signs. The research finds the presence of shop signs with place names or just the names of individuals displayed on the business signs, and even those in public institutions, an issue that needs to be resolved in the context of linguistic landscape research. Furthermore, signs with these hard-to-define languages may find their penultimate resolution in the presence of a potential audience, but it is not the definitive indicator of its inscription.

Signs with names and identities of local individuals allude to a much deeper issue, which Gorter's MIPS would have adequately explained. In the statistics provided, 39 out of 99 LL items are signs with hard-to-definition language, whether in combination with English or other languages. This points out that sign production in Bislig City is not regulated and only points further to the commodification of signage. The inequality in public spaces is not just about the use of English. The appearance of those names of local individuals reflects the dynamics of the struggle for ownership of the public space. While English is openly accepted, there is no ethnic community in Bislig City, unlike other local languages like Cebuano, Kamayo, or Suriganonun. These local, minority languages make up the core and identity of the people and the symbol of the culture they represent (Blommaert 201). Thus, inscribing names on signs is a means for these ethnic communities to mark their territories.

Bislig City, then, can benefit much from Gorter's MIPS by first establishing its own language policy to regulate, provide guidance, and monitor and evaluate the languages on the public signs. Considerably, a multilingual space is a much-awaited attraction in the linguistic landscape of Bislig City.

Concluding Remarks

If language has its consequence, in linguistic landscape studies, the language display on public signs builds and deconstructs the context where it populates. The decision to do LL has been prompted by the multiple turning points.

Its distinction from Semiotics is that the latter emphasizes an intentional effort to understand a place by looking into the relationship of language to history, stories, and other physical structures. Simply put, the analysis of signs and symbols and their meanings (Myers 198) is what comprises semiotic discourse.

In LL, a synonymous field, the language displayed on public markers, like advertisements, billboards, road signs, tarpaulins, highway markers, and even street signs, all contribute to the linguistic landscape of a place. Coincidentally, these public markers and signs are apparent in multitudes in Bislig City.

As to finding a framework that accommodated both numerical and textual methods, Gorter's Multilingual Inequality in Public Space (MIPS) is a leap from the traditional quantitative-only and qualitative-only approaches. I think deciding to utilize Gorter's model is ambitious and subversive. Its currency in the LL literature means more readings and critical thinking on its merits as a valid theoretical framework. Having only found two related studies by the proponent himself also proves a challenge for me to risk and attempt to use the model for my dissertation. And ambitiously, for my birthplace, Bislig City. I believe this is the first of its kind to truly investigate the dynamics of language displays on the public signs.

Being decisive on the choice of model also reflects a kind of subversion for me. I realize further that for Gorter's MIPS model to gain applicability, it is to "make a clearing" out of what has been commonly expected

for the linguistic landscape. One has to subvert whatever canon of theories there are. And Gorter has helped pioneer the move for a more multilingual public space.

English and other languages in Bislig City will have benefited more from language planning and policy. I have truly gained from this paper that linguistic landscape study helps describe and analyze public signs. Employing Gorter's MIPS model contributes to understanding the empirical evidence of the visible languages on the signs. However, an urban place like Bislig City can still do more after an LL study. The local government can legislate language laws to support or recognize Kamayo, Cebuano, Surigaonon, and all other languages that have disparagingly become the minority, as evident in our LL. In turn, this legitimizes the presence of the different ethnic groups and their contribution to Bislig's progress.

Lastly, this LL study has been abounded by names with which a Bisliganon identifies. I agree that a name is not owned by a specific language ("Names in the Frisian language" 122), and in this study, it has been attributed as "hard to define." But names, especially those on public signs and even streets, reflect varied identities. My journey in this LL project has allowed me access to private information about these names and their inclusion on public signs.

Quite clearly, Bislig City is characterized by a multilingual space. Through this linguistic landscape study, all the other languages reclaim a space, find relevance, and ensure legitimacy, along with English.

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