

ENGLISH IN THE CHURCHSCAPE: EXPLORING A RELIGIOUS LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

As one of the official languages of the Philippines, English predominantly figures in the domains of education, government, and the judiciary. This reality has always put English at the top of the linguistic ladder, relegating local languages to lower ranks. This scenario appears to be evident also in the domain of the church. In this paper, I investigate signs posted within the compound of a major Catholic church located in the Philippines in terms of types and language use. Informed by linguistic landscape concepts pioneered by Landry and Bourhis (1997), Spolsky and Cooper (1991), and Ben-Rafael (2009), I analyzed over a hundred signs in the religious linguistic landscape, which I call 'churchscape'. Findings show that English dominates in the churchscape as a language of communication and language of tourism while local languages such as Filipino and Pangasinan assume a secondary role in the churchscape. This study affords us an interesting view and alternative understanding of multilingualism as a phenomenon through the churchscape in question.

Keywords

signs, linguistic landscape, churchscape, English in the church

1 Introduction

In this day and age, it is not uncommon to see signs written in diverse languages. The abundance of these signs only reveals the multilingual nature of almost all societies in the world. Inevitably, due to tides of modernity and globalization, signs written in foreign languages, for example, find their way even in the most expected homogenous and conservative societies in the world (e.g. Japan, Thailand, China). Along with the proliferation of these signs is the richness of potential layers of meanings that are rooted in certain ideologies these signs and their interaction with other signs reflect. It is imperative, therefore, that as dynamic members of these societies, we should be critical of the signs we encounter not only in terms of their immediate functions but also in terms of their subtleties. Linguistic landscape (LL) studies provide us an opportunity to do such critical exercise.

LL studies have been around for more than 40 years now. However, it was only recently that it became prominent as a discipline (Gorter & Cenoz 2015). Landry and Bourhis (1997), whose work on LL received wide reception from

sociolinguists, were instrumental to the introduction of LL studies to the world. In their seminal essay, they define LL as:

The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government building combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25)

One can see how, through their definition, they have already outlined the scope of LL. Landry and Bourhis (1997) lay down two major functions of LL which help in the analysis of signs: (1) to communicate and (2) to express a symbolic function. It is important to mention that the analysis of the latter function affords us to reveal what is not expressed necessarily by or in the signs. This is not to say, however, that the analysis of the former is less important as these two functions are usually inseparable. Spolsky (2009) suggests that if we decide to make a sign to communicate meaning, and in making it, we choose a particular language, our sign does not only carry the first function but the second function as well. Language choice, according to Spolsky, may give us an idea of people's literacy (or illiteracy) through the public signs present in their society. It is safe to say then that in addition to literacy or illiteracy, signs may reflect other social realities.

Language choice in relation to signs is not a random choice but an informed one, more often a political one. Spolsky and Cooper (1991) propose three conditions of language choice: (1) sign-makers use a language they know; (2) sign-makers write in a language people can read; and (3) sign-makers write in a language which they intend to identify with. The third condition echoes the second function proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997). Thus, in language choice, the construction of identity is inevitable. Ben-Rafael (2009) argues that "linguistic landscape formation may be viewed as a structuration process of its own" (ibid.: 44). While the meaning potential can be endless and chaotic, Ben-Rafael asserts that we may be able to understand the linguistic landscape process in terms of informed frameworks to show how LL can be essentially a sign system on its own. Thus, he offers these four principles: (1) Presentation-of-self, (2) Good-reasons, (3) Collective-identity, and (4) Power-relations.

The first two structuration principles above also remind us of the two functions of linguistic landscape by Landry and Bourhis (1997) specifically the function to communicate, that is linguistic landscape items present and introduce themselves to the people and at the same time address their needs. We can also say the same about the last two structuration principles, only that they highlight more the second function 'to express symbolic meanings', which is yet again

being made possible through language choice. Although language choice seems to be an innocent act, it does bring in a power dimension (Clammer 1980).

2 Linguistic landscape studies

Inspired by Landry and Bourhis' (1997) work, many researchers then followed suit. Many of them, however, broadened the definition of LL to include new objects of inquiry that are produced or shaped by the ever-changing globalized society. Moreover, LL studies' theoretical and analytical frameworks were enriched because of LL scholars' use of more systematic approaches to signs such as visual grammar (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996) and geosemiotics (Scollon & Scollon-Wong 2003). The former allows for a more organized description of multimodal signs and the latter provides a detailed analytical tool to examine signs in terms of how they are placed socially and culturally. In their words, Scollon and Scollon-Wong (2003) define geosemiotics as "the study of social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world" (*ibid.*: 2). These two modes of analysis, thus, became significantly useful most especially among LL researchers who endeavored to explore semiotic resources that do not seem to fit the definition of Landry and Bourhis (1997). Among those who would be the first to utilize geosemiotics in their studies were Blommaert (2013) and Taylor-Leech (2012). Blommaert turns to geosemiotics in his attempt to historicize his neighborhood through multilingual signs. For his study, Taylor-Leech reveals how language choice indexes social and national identity through a description of official and non-official signs in Dili, Timor Leste.

Quite a few of the notable LL studies were situated in Asia. Backhaus (2006) explores multilingual signs in Tokyo and exposes that Japanese still holds its status as the language of power. Huebner (2006) surveys the multilingual signs in Bangkok and notes the high regard toward English in the community. Lou and Jaworski (2016) investigate the protest signs that proliferated in the Hong Kong umbrella movement. They illustrate how the signs are mobilized to construct a new Hongkonger identity. Coluzzi and Kitade (2015) are among the first to explore signs in places of worship. Set in Malaysia, their study suggests that exploring multilingual signs in places of worship affords an understanding of the regard that is given to each language in multilingual societies.

Although LL studies in the Philippines is relatively new, there have already been local studies initiated given the profusion of signs both in urban and rural spaces. Delos Reyes (2014), for instance, identifies the preference for English over Filipino in signs which signal regulations and directions found in train stations. He infers that sign makers must have the impression that passengers

will function orderly in the stations if the signs they see were written in English as it is associated with certain American ideologies of “self-governance, enlightenment, and democracy” (Lorente 2007, as quoted in Delos Reyes 2014: 43). Magno (2017), in his study, also notes the preference for English in signs in higher education institutions in Cebu, Philippines. He accounts for the strict use of monolingual English signs in the landscape which affirms the regard to English as the language of the academe given the formality of these signs. Similarly, Astillero (2017) also observes English’s prominence in a rural high school, arguing that it is a reflection of the weak implementation of the language policy on multilingualism. In Floralde and Valdez’ (2017) analysis of the signs present in a rural community, it was suggested that teachers can capitalize on the semiotic resources available in the linguistic landscape as they can guarantee authentic English teaching and learning experience.

English’s prominence in the LL is also alluded to in Jazul and Bernardo’s (2017) and Eclipse and Tenedero’s (2018) studies. In their survey of the linguistic landscape of Manila Chinatown, Jazul and Bernardo argue that English remains to be the language of business and globalization. Likewise, Eclipse and Tenedero posit that English’s prestige as the language of authority in the country is reflected in the linguistic landscape of the Manila central post office. Based on her qualitative review of the signs used during the protest against the burial in the ‘Libingan ng mga Bayani’ (Heroes’ Cemetery) of the late President Ferdinand Marcos, Monje (2017) concludes that the varied protest strategies millennial protesters used reflect the multilingual nature of Manila as a linguistic landscape of protest. Finally, Doroja-Cadiante and Valdez (2019) offer their investigation of the signs after typhoon Haiyan. They assert that analyzing the linguistic landscape in question affords us not only an understanding of the behaviors and desires of the typhoon victims but also a discovery of social meanings (e.g. based on business signs that are seemed motivated by capitalist sentiments) that prove demeaning to the victims.

As LL studies is still relatively young as a discipline, it is expected that there are domains that are yet to be explored deeply by researchers. One of these domains is the church. In the studies cited above, only Colluzi and Kitade (2015) endeavored to explore multilingual signs in places of worship. In the Philippines, where religion plays an active role in people’s ways of life, no study has attempted to analyze the church as a linguistic landscape. This exploratory study hopes to fill this gap, focusing on a multilingual religious linguistic landscape and its meaning potential. Specifically, it addresses the following questions:

- (1) What is/are the language(s) used in the religious LL?
- (2) Based on the language use, what is the status and level of prestige of the language(s) used in the signs?

3 Data and Method

3.1 Manaog

The Philippines is known to be the only Christian nation in Asia (Miller 2020). With 85 million Catholics, it is home to the third-largest Catholic population in the world (World Population Review 2020). It is not surprising that the church has been a salient aspect of Filipinos' lives. The church then can also be seen as a mobilizer of meaning-making activities among the people, and it is this very reason that I decided to center my inquiry on a religious linguistic landscape.

The linguistic landscape in question is located in Manaog town, a first-class municipality in the central part of the province of Pangasinan, Philippines (Figure 1). With a land area of a little over 5,500 hectares, it has a population of more than 69,000 people (Province of Pangasinan 2011). Like other towns in the Philippines, Manaog is multilingual. People speak Pangasinan (the word 'Pangasinan' may also refer to the province and the people) which is the native language of the province, but a large number of the population speaks Ilocano. It is very typical of the people of Manaog to speak both local languages either as a mother tongue or as a second language. Aside from Pangasinan and Ilocano, expectedly, English and Filipino/Tagalog are also spoken by the locals, making them multilingual.



Figure 1: The map of Manaog (Source: <https://zaraalexis.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/manaog-map.png>)

Manaoag is an agricultural town, not known for its produce but rather for its church, or at least for the Catholics given that Manaoag is dubbed as the “Pilgrims Center of the North” (Province of Pangasinan 2011). Believed to be the site where the Virgin Mary made an apparition before a farmer on top of a hill where the church lies now, the Manaoag Church (Figure 2) is considered miraculous by its many devotees. Built in 1600 by the Augustinians, the Manaoag Church has since become a pilgrims center and at the same time a tourist spot. In 2015, the Vatican elevated the church’s status into a minor basilica and is now formally called the Minor Basilica of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag. This elevation of the status of the church attracts even more local and foreign devotees and tourists alike (Austria 2018, Bravo 2020). In a 2018 report by the provincial tourism and cultural affairs office of the province of Pangasinan, seven million devotees from nearby towns and provinces in the country and also from other countries visited Manaoag (House Bill 4080 2019). Because of this, formal legislation was initiated in the Philippine Congress declaring Manaoag town as a tourist destination (House Bill 4080 2019). This house bill will guarantee Manaoag’s development and allocation of funds for tourism purposes.



Figure 2: The façade of the Minor Basilica of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag

Manaoag's being multilingual initially inspired me to explore the church and I have since considered it as a very interesting linguistic landscape. I figured that if the town is considered a pilgrims center, the church then is abundant with items that potentially speak about social meanings that are not necessarily religious in nature. It may not be a microcosm of religious linguistic landscapes in the Philippines given the country's diverse religious profile but the Manaoag Church as a religious linguistic landscape, which from hereon I call 'churchscape' (church + landscape), may reflect similar items and scenarios which are equally worth exploring and analyzing.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Drawing on aspects of multimodal analysis, this study is essentially qualitative in nature. One hundred and seven (107) digital photos of signs gathered were treated as data for this study. After collecting the signs, I classified them in two ways. First, I purposely categorized them into five general classifications: (1) warning signs, (2) directions/maps/place names, (3) announcements/advertisements, (4) markers/manifestos/declarations, and (5) prayers. Second, the signs were classified according to language use. The representative signs I presented in the discussion, most especially the bilingual and multilingual signs, are those that best exemplify the nature of the churchscape in question as a multilingual religious linguistic landscape as well as the interaction between the languages in the church.

4 Languages in the churchscape

The church, like other institutional domains, is a strong force in Philippine society. As an independent institution, it has its own policies when it comes to language use. Although Latin is particularly favored, the church has allowed other languages to be used such as the vernacular to be able to better reach out to people (De Marco 2020). Given this, being an essential component of society, the church then has a pivotal role in a community's language vitality because it has the capacity to maintain language use. In the case of a multilingual community such as Manaoag, by choosing a language over other languages to celebrate masses or conduct Sacramental ceremonies, the church is enabling language use among the people. In turn, it also empowers the language it uses. Thus, the church has indirect control over the linguistic order in the community. As Clammer (1980: 108) puts it:

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Language is power: he who controls the linguistic and literary systems of a society is in a position to control the means and content of expressions, access to outside material, and is able to manipulate and direct the symbolic and communicative aspects of culture.

Five languages figured in the signs found in the churchscape in question. Expectedly, English and Filipino, being the country's official languages, are used. Out of 107 signs, however, 83 or 77.6 per cent of the signs are written in monolingual English compared to only 5 or 4.7 per cent which are in monolingual Filipino. In six signs, these two languages are mixed. In addition to these two languages, Latin and Spanish are also used although only with four signs each in a monolingual fashion. There are two signs, however, where Spanish and Filipino are mixed, although the latter is more dominant in terms of structure and lexicon. Interestingly, Pangasinan, the native language of the town only figured in two bilingual signs and one multilingual sign. In two signs, Pangasinan is mixed with English and in one sign with English and Filipino. See Table 1 below for complete results.

| Language Choice | Distribution | |
|--|--------------|-------|
| Monolingual English | 83 | 77.6% |
| Monolingual Filipino | 5 | 4.7% |
| Monolingual Latin | 4 | 3.7% |
| Monolingual Spanish | 4 | 3.7% |
| Bilingual English-Filipino | 6 | 5.6% |
| Bilingual English-Pangasinan | 2 | 1.9% |
| Bilingual Filipino-Spanish | 2 | 1.9% |
| Multilingual English-Filipino-Pangasinan | 1 | 0.9% |
| TOTAL | 107 | 100% |

Table 1: Language used in signs

The signs are fairly distributed with 35 out of 107 (32.7%) being directions, maps, or place names, 26 (24.3%) announcements or advertisements, 19 (17.8%) warning signs, 17 (15.9%) markers, manifestos, or declarations and 10 (9.3%) prayers. It can also be said outright that the types of signs found in the churchscape are not surprising considering that it is a place of worship and at the same time a tourist spot. See Table 2 below for complete results.

| Type of Signs | Distribution | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Warning Signs | 19 | 17.8% |
| Directions/Maps/Place Names | 35 | 32.7% |
| Announcements/Advertisements | 26 | 24.3% |
| Markers/Manifesto/Declarations | 17 | 15.9% |
| Prayers | 10 | 9.3% |
| TOTAL | 107 | 100% |

Table 2: Types of signs in the churchscape

Looking at which language figured in which type of signs in the churchscape, monolingual English outnumbers all other languages in all five sign categories. Although Filipino is also an official language, the difference between its use and English use in signs is wide. In total, English figures in 92 out of the 107 signs or 85.9 per cent of the signs, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. All prayer signs found in the churchscape are written in English. See Table 3 below for complete results.

| | Monolingual English | Monolingual Filipino | Monolingual Latin | Monolingual Spanish | Bilingual English-Filipino | Bilingual English-Pangasinan | Bilingual Filipino-Spanish | Multilingual English-Filipino-Pangasinan | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--|-------|
| Warning Signs | 11 | 5 | - | - | 2 | - | - | 1 | 19 |
| Directions/Maps/Place Names | 34 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 35 |
| Announcements/Advertisements | 21 | - | - | - | 3 | 2 | - | - | 26 |
| Markers/Manifesto/Declarations | 7 | - | 4 | 4 | - | - | 2 | - | 17 |
| Prayers | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| | TOTAL | | | | | | | | 107 |

Table 3: Language choice according to sign categories

Latin and Spanish, although foreign languages, are not surprising to figure in the churchscape. Although Latin is exclusively used in Latin rites of the church (Vatican Council 1963), it is still being used for other purposes such as what is manifested in the declarations found in the church. An example of this is the

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declaration made by the Vatican which grants the Manaog Church a “special bond of spiritual affinity with the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome” (Figure 3). Spanish, on the other hand, figured in three tombstones which are inscribed on one of the walls of the church. In one of the tombstones, we read the familiar phrase “In Memoriam,” followed by the date of death (Figure 4). The phrase “In Memoriam” is, of course, Latin by origin. After all, we know through the linguistic family tree that Spanish like many other Romance languages is Latin-based. As noted above about the use of Latin in the church, the use of Spanish in the signs is also unsurprising. The church, after all, was built in 1600 by the Augustinians and the Spaniard occupation did not end until 1898. Spanish signs in the churchscape reflect the history of the place, although one can say that the use of Spanish also suggests prestige and status since those who could read and write in Spanish were those who were able to afford education.



Figure 3: A photo of the declaration granting the Manaog Church a special bond of spiritual affinity with the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major, Rome



Figure 4: A photo of a tombstone inscribed on one of the walls of the Manaog Church

The use of English in the churchscape is equally predictable. Its dominance in the signs only affirms its prevailing function in the churchscape. Colluzi and Kitade (2015) revealed this similar status of English in their study. They argue that English, as the language of communication, is a highly valued language and this is transpired in the signs found in places of worship in Malaysia, even though English is not even considered as an official language of the country. In contrast, English is one of the official languages of the Philippines, and the proliferation of English in the signs in the churchscape in question is all the more expected. Based on the findings, all prayer signs are written in English, and I see this as reflective of practicality on the side of the sign-makers (referring here to those who write and/or approve of the content and design of the signs). The prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer, can be easily translated into Filipino or even in the vernacular languages, but to translate all the prayers could mean more work on the church management's part. Perhaps a more feasible reason behind

this is that the language choice was governed by the sign-makers' knowledge about the churchgoers or motivation to identify with them. Invoking Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) conditions of language choice, aside from the sign-makers' deliberate decision to use the language that they speak, they may also employ the language that they know the churchgoers know and understand. In this sense, we understand that aside probably from convenience, they use English in the signs because they are well-aware that the people who will get to see these signs will understand the signs. After all, the language in which the signs are written is available in their linguistic repertoire. On the one hand, we can argue that potentially, the target audience of the signs are not the locals who would have not minded if the signs were written in Filipino or the vernacular, but the tourists who may only know English. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the locals are not illiterate in English and thus can grasp the meanings of the signs in English. Either way, what is more certain, however, is the preference given to English in the churchscape, which suggests that the church management communicates mainly to English-speaking churchgoers (locals or otherwise). This finding is also consistent with other types of signs in the churchscape such as warning and directional signs (Figure 5).

In addition to the prayers, all the rest of the sign categories are dominated by English and this only implies the high regard accorded to it. Also, one potential motivation behind the sign-makers' decision to choose English over other languages in the churchscape is tourism. As mentioned above, Manaoag prides itself as the "Pilgrims Center of the North" and on the website of the province of Pangasinan, Manaoag is listed as a key "faith tourism" destination. In fact, in 2019, seven million out of the nine million tourists that came to visit the province went to Manaoag alone to visit the church (Valenton 2019). Following this, it is not hard to comprehend why English is the top choice of language in the churchscape. One can say that the presence of English could be due to the effort of the sign-makers "to create a pleasant mood of cosmopolitanism" (Haarmann 1986: 110). More than this, however, I contend that since the church is a prime tourist destination not only in this part of the province but also in the country and that English has an undeniable role in the promotion of the tourism industry (Irimiea 2018), this is one way the church capitalizes on massive tourist arrival. The more visitors the church gets, the more income it gains for its maintenance and operation. Thus, English is empowered not necessarily as a language used for evangelization purposes but as the preferred language for communication purposes. Moreover, that the churchscape is represented by the signs as a tourist place can be attributed to what Ben-Rafael (2009) calls the principle of presentation-of-self. As the churchscape operates as a sign-system on its own

and presents itself as a place of tourism in addition to being a place of worship, it endeavors to symbolically construct this identity. Such construction of identity is consistent with the political and economic agenda of the government (Skënderi-Rakiplari 2020); in the case of the churchscape in question, the local government of Manaoag and the provincial government of Pangasinan which directly benefit from the income generated from tourism.



Figure 5: Photos of some monolingual English signs in different sign categories

The bilingual and multilingual signs offer interesting insights into the dynamics of the languages present in the churchscape. The dominance of English over other languages is very apparent in these signs. In two bilingual English-Filipino signs, for example, Filipino is shown as a secondary language (Figure 6). The first sign in Figure 6, which is written in all caps, reads “PLEASE

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR BELONGINGS”. Below is another English line, “DO NOT LEAVE YOUR THINGS UNATTENDED”. What comes below the English lines are statements written in Filipino. The first, also in all caps, reads “INGATAN AND INYONG MGA KAGAMITAN”, which can be an indirect translation of the first English line in the sign. Also, below it is an enumeration of valuable things people need to be mindful of (although, again, written in English). At the bottom is the Filipino line which reads, and this time not in all caps, “Siguraduhing naka-lock ang pintuan ng inyong mga sasakyan”. The sign ends with another English phrase “Thank You”. This sign may seem to be a display of balanced language choice, but the placement of the lines may suggest otherwise. The English texts are placed above the Filipino texts putting more primacy on English. The font used for the English texts is bigger than the Filipino texts, not to mention the decision to uncapitalize the second Filipino line, putting less importance on Filipino. A similar finding is also found in Delos Reyes (2014) and Magno (2017). Because of the apparent preference for English over Filipino, it seems that Filipino is relegated to a secondary role even when both languages are supposed to have an equal status in the linguistic ladder being the two official languages of the country. Astillero (2017) sees this as a weak implementation of the multilingual language policy of the country.

The second bilingual English-Filipino sign appears very innocent, but this direction sign deserves a second look. As shown, there is an arrow sign which leads to the direction of the comfort room expressed by the English line, “This way to the C.R.” (C.R. is an acronym for comfort room). Below it is a Filipino translation of this line, also in all caps, which reads, “DOON ANG CR”. It is interesting to note, however, that the Filipino text is not the same as the English text in terms of quality. It is very telling that the Filipino line is not part of the original sign, or at least the first version of it because it appears that somebody just scribbled the words using a black marker as if the action was done out of afterthought. Surely, the intention is to provide a Filipino translation for better understanding. However, one cannot deny the secondary role of Filipino relative to English. English, through these signs, becomes the handy and neat code whereas Filipino becomes secondary, backup, and temporary. I argue that this display of the dynamics of the languages in the signs analyzed, is, again, suggestive of the two functions of LL that Landry and Bourhis (1997) posit. On the one hand, the signs merely try to get across a message to the readers, i.e. warning and direction. On the other hand, they become a platform where symbolic meanings are expressed; in this case, the status of the languages used in the signs relative to the other languages they come in contact with.



Figure 6: Photos of bilingual English-Filipino signs

Two other bilingual signs are a combination of English and the local language Pangasinan. Interestingly, the language choices for these signs are English and Pangasinan despite the fact that there is not a single sign in monolingual Pangasinan found in the churchscape. Pangasinan only figures in two bilingual announcements and one multilingual warning sign. Figure 7 shows these two bilingual signs.

The first sign states the proper conduct in the holy water station located in the back of the church just behind the candle lighting prayer station. It enumerates, first in English, six rules to observe to show respect to the station which is a 'holy place'. Below the English text follows a Pangasinan translation of the rules. Surprisingly, the language chosen for the translation is Pangasinan because English texts normally get translated in Filipino first before Pangasinan. In any case, it cannot be denied that the sign, although bilingual, is English-dominant. We see in the sign the logo of the church followed by the title of the sign, "HOLY WATER DISPENSER" but below it, there is no Pangasinan translation. Below the Pangasinan translation of the rules, one can read "Thank you and God bless! The Administration Shrine of Our Lady of Manaoag", which essentially tells who made the order. This time, however, we no longer see a Pangasinan translation.

English does not only outnumber Pangasinan in terms of the preponderance of words in the sign. Visually, Pangasinan is positioned at the bottom of the sign, which may suggest also its secondary role in the churchscape despite the sameness of the texts in terms of the font size. Looking at the second bilingual sign, however, we see a different case. Below the logo of the church, we learn that the sign is about the use of the lift for the elderly and people who are

physically challenged who would like to get upstairs at the back of the main altar and touch the dress of the image of the Virgin Mary. Below the bulleted items which bear the guidelines in using the lift are yet again the guidelines' Pangasinan translation. This time, however, the font size is incomprehensibly smaller than the font size of the English text. We can always suspect that this could be due to the space limitation in the sign but this, in turn, may suggest the lesser importance of Pangasinan in the churchscape.

What is crucial to invoke here, as it is in the previous signs analyzed, is Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) concept of visual semiotics, which aids us to reveal representations created by visual designs. An analysis of the interaction between the elements in the signs, therefore, could afford us an understanding of symbolic meanings constructed by the sign. For instance, visual designs can represent participants. By participants, they are not only referring to images of a person, but also texts, charts, graphs, or logos (Scollon & Scollon-Wong 2003). As such, in the case of the bilingual signs in the churchscape, the texts written in specific languages (English and Pangasinan) intend to represent a specific target audience. English targets an audience who are proficient in English, while Pangasinan targets the Pangasinan speakers. Curiously, however, the placement and composition of the English and Pangasinan texts seem to tell us that English is more favored than Pangasinan. In the first bilingual English-Pangasinan sign, it appears that English is the base language while Pangasinan was placed at the bottom half of the sign functioning as a translation. In the second sign, the Pangasinan translation was even written in smaller texts, which even stresses the inferior status of Pangasinan over English.

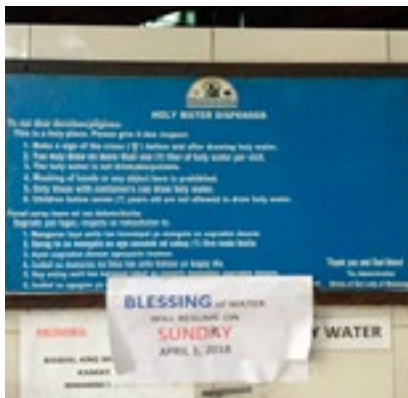


Figure 7: Photos of bilingual English-Pangasinan signs

In Figure 8, we also see a rather interesting mix of three languages. This is a sign about the proper trash disposal in the church. English is strikingly dominant in the sign. The first two lines read “Please Help us keep the Shrine of Our Lady of Manaoag CLEAN and Beautiful”. On the right side immediately below this, we read another English text, “Throw your garbage (candy wrappers, cigarette butts, etc.) properly at the garbage can”. Below this comes the Filipino translation and below the Filipino translation is the Pangasinan translation. Lastly, at the bottom of the sign, we read the Filipino text “Maraming Salamat Po!” with no English or Pangasinan translation. The mix of these three languages is not surprising as it only accounts for the multilingual linguistic profile of the churchscape. It is interesting to note, however, following Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) visual semiotics, the layout of the sign and the positioning of one language relative to other languages present in the sign. Like in the previous data analyzed, English is undeniably the preferred language in the sign. Filipino and Pangasinan are of less importance but Pangasinan is of lesser importance than Filipino having the least lexical items and having been positioned at the bottom of the sign. Although the three versions seem to have the same font sizes, their positioning is very telling of the sign-makers’ language choice. What is clear here, as it is in all bilingual signs previously discussed, is the fact that the local languages are reduced to carry subordinate functions in the churchscape most especially the vernacular. The displayed supporting role of Pangasinan in the sign is consistent with what the 1987 Philippine Constitution declares about the roles of regional languages, i.e. they are considered auxiliary languages. The positive regard toward English, meanwhile, is supported by the notion of stable diglossia (Ricento 2000), which is widely apparent in the Philippines. What this suggests is that favoring English as the language of education, judiciary, business, and government, other languages, which also have the potential to carry all these roles, are subordinated (Gonzalez 1998, Mahboob & Cruz 2013). Likewise, the presence of a dominant language, such as English, may pose a challenge to the use of other spoken languages in the multilingual society (Jazul & Bernardo 2017).



Figure 8: A photo of a multilingual sign (English-Filipino-Pangasinan)

Furthermore, while Pangasinan is the native language of the town, its minimal presence in the churchscape is an obvious indication that it is not formally used in the church given the function it serves. This could be because Pangasinan is more of a spoken language than written. While one can argue that Pangasinan has a rich literary and writing tradition, the fact remains that the language is barely used in formal writing and it is only recently that Pangasinan is taught formally in schools through the implementation of the mother tongue-based-multilingual education curriculum. Through the signs, we see Pangasinan's low

status in the churchscape being a vernacular language. However, one can also see the minimal use of Pangasinan in signs more positively than negatively. This effort by the sign-makers recognizes Pangasinan as the native language of the town and in effect, the church identifies with the local churchgoers, although given the linguistic profile of the town, a large number of the population accounts for Ilocano speakers who may not be proficient in the Pangasinan language. This process operates on what Ben-Rafael (2009) calls the collective identity principle. Through this, the signs are created and designed as they are to assert the churchscape's 'pluralistic' identity, i.e. it also identifies with the linguistic group that the Pangasinan language indexes. Meanwhile, the absence of Ilocano, in the churchscape may suggest the non-recognition of Ilocano native speakers in Pangasinan given that Manaoag is partly an Ilocano town. These people are those who may have been born and lived in Pangasinan but acquired Ilocano as their mother tongue but also assert their Pangasinan identity (Esteron 2013). This could be another area of inquiry worth pursuing.

5 Conclusion

Gorter (2013: 191) posits that LL studies intends to provide another way of understanding multilingual societies through the notions of "language choices, hierarchies of languages, contact-phenomenon, regulations, and aspects of literacy". Equally, in this paper, I explored a linguistic landscape that is religious and multilingual. Specifically, I presented my findings on my survey of the public signs inside and around Manaoag Church in terms of language use and choice. This was done to identify what languages figure in the churchscape and through the analysis, identify the status of these languages relative to other languages present in the churchscape. A few interesting insights regarding the status of the languages found in the churchscape were drawn from the analysis.

The expected use of Latin in signs indexes the church's (or at least its officials) exclusivity as an organization given that Latin signs are incomprehensible for ordinary churchgoers. The occurrence of Spanish in the signs indexes the antiquity and the long history not only of the church but of the town and the country as a whole. Moreover, the use of the two local languages, Filipino and Pangasinan, is not surprising either. The presence of Filipino in signs acknowledges the language's status as the national and official language of the country. As in many societies in the Philippines, Filipino serves as a *lingua franca* even in places where a common and distinct native language is spoken by many. Despite this, Filipino still carries a supporting role in the churchscape. Like Filipino, Pangasinan also takes a secondary function in the churchscape. Nevertheless, its presence in signs, however minimal, equally recognizes the

language as the native language of the town and the province. This is also indicative of the church's identification with the local churchgoers although I argue that this tends to marginalize the Ilocano native speakers in the town, who like the native speakers of Pangasinan, strongly assert their Pangasinan ethnic identity. The church, for instance, may consider putting up Ilocano translations of signs to recognize the influx of Ilocano-speaking churchgoers. The municipal government may follow suit and see this as an effective way to preserve both local languages which are heavily spoken by the locals of Manaoag town.

English stands on the highest rung of the church's linguistic ladder. English's dominance in the churchscape is nothing but a confirmation of its status as the most preferred medium of communication in the church in addition to its status as an official language of the country. After all, it would be more practical to create signs in English considering the tourists that flock to the church especially now that the Vatican elevated its status as a minor basilica. Fairly, English then is also regarded as a language of tourism, an insight worth exploring further in future research endeavors. While all the languages in the church can be considered important in their own ways, it is undeniable that English appears most important because of the roles it carries. Through this, we clearly see the prestige that is accorded to English.

Lastly, it can be said that the amount of data used in this paper may be very limited. However, the signs analyzed are just enough to provide us good insights on possible goings-on in our society. These signs index what Scollon and Scollon-Wong (2003: 2) call "larger discourses", which need to be analyzed and often need to be challenged. The churchscape in question is surely reflective of the dynamics between the different languages, hence its multilingual linguistic condition. More importantly, however, it is what these dynamics lead us to see or not see which we need to be critical about.

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