

EXPLORING THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF A HERITAGE TOWN IN THE ISLAND PROVINCE OF MARINDUQUE, PHILIPPINES

Cherie Ann M. Luna

College of Arts and Social Sciences
Marinduque State College
Boac, Marinduque
cmluna.msc@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0178-345X>

Abstract – Linguistic landscape studies provide a lens with which the diversity of languages in a sociolinguistic setting can be seen. Through LL, one can see the language preferences in an area and the domains or locations occupied by such languages. This study intends to explore the linguistic landscape in the Boac población, the capital town of Marinduque province and identify the description of its LL and the language preferences that is present. Employing Ben-Rafael's (2006) classification of top-down and bottom-up signs, and Barni and Bagna's (2009) semiotic analysis using the location and domain variables, this study examines the language preference of government agencies and private business establishments that are used in the signs they place in población along with its significance in the locations and domains where they are placed. The findings show that English is the dominant language in Boac población which is primarily because the location is commercial in nature and the seat of government, therefore English occupies the domains of commerce and institutional control with key sectors of economy and civil administration. Filipino is also seen in permanent commemorative signs which are

placed in strategic location in the plaza occupying the domain of locals and even visitors' cultural activities. Marinduque Tagalog, on the other hand, has a very minimal occurrence in the signs and the positioning of these minimal signs are not even central in the heart of the población which implies a dearth in the attempts to cultivate the use of Marinduque Tagalog in such ways like this.

Keywords: *linguistic landscape, language preference, semiotic analysis, Boac, Marinduque*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is used by people not only for communicating and expressing their needs or wants, but most importantly because it sustains people's interaction with other people in the society. Although language is primarily used by people to communicate, it is also "represented and displayed" when it is written on signs, posters and advertisement that people choose to display for various functional purposes (Shohamy & Gorter, 2003).

As language is used in the public signs, advertisement posters, or instructions are seen around the public spaces where people come and go. Language has become an integral part of the domains that people visit such as government institutions, schools, religious sites and commercial establishments. The visibility of language in the public signs displayed in these domains refer to what is called *linguistic landscape*.

Linguistic landscape as a developing field of study in sociolinguistics is concerned mainly with the visibility and prominence of written languages on public spaces in a region, province or area (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Gorter, 2013). For Van Mensel, Vandenbroucke and Blackwood (2016), the study of linguistic landscape (LL) "focuses on the representations of language in public space." The primary definition of what we mean with the term Linguistic Landscape is provided by Landry & Bourhis (1997) in their work, which states LL as:

"The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration" (p.25).

Similarly, Ben-Rafael (2009) adds that linguistic landscape refers to any item that marks the public item from road signs to private names of streets, or shops or schools, and these items are important factors in helping visitors and residents to develop a picture of a certain place (in Yavari, 2012).

Linguistic landscape, therefore, is also regarded as a method to track distribution of

languages through social communication texts such as "signs, graffiti, posters, public notices, advertisements" (Barni & Bagna, 2006) as public spaces continue to present complex sociolinguistic realities that challenge the traditional toolkit (Van Mensel, Vanderbroucke & Blackwood, 2016). This is because the language found in these public spaces whether commercial establishments or government offices are important data that need to be studied, and the absence of such tells something about the "areas which are politically and socially contested" (Shohamy & Gorter, 2007). Meanwhile, for Gorter (2006) LL is a wide domain of communication where speakers are constantly exposed to an "individual communicative occurrence of a linguistic expression".

The confirmation of linguistic landscape, according to Ben-Rafael (2009), is then regarded as an aspect in describing the presence of languages, the linguistic characteristics that may be ascribed to a certain place as well as the intentions why such languages are used, which Jazul and Bernardo (2017) refers to as "the visual representation of a place's linguistic situation".

A. *Linguistic Landscape Research*

Linguistic landscape as an emerging field of research study has earned much interest from scholars who delved looking into the signs and/or texts found in public spaces through different perspectives. Most of the earliest studies investigated the linguistic landscape as an indicator of language policies implemented in certain territories. Rosenbaum in 1977 (in Van Mensel, Vanderbroucke & Blackwood, 2016)

reported the influence of the official language policy on the linguistic landscape where the findings were related to the dominance and promotion of official language as compared with English. Two decades after comes the well-known work of Landry and Bourhis in 1997 which investigated language use in the public space in Quebec wherein results were correlated with language maintenance and ethnolinguistic vitality.

Other notable studies have looked into linguistic landscapes among cities such as Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) study of the Old Jerusalem; Backhaus (2007) case study of the LL in Tokyo; Collins and Slembrouck's (2007) scaled interpretation of shop signs in Belgium, among others.

As linguistic landscape's fundamental premise is that the ways languages are visually used or not has something to do with the "discursive construction" in a particular place with which language policy researchers investigate the regulations in actual practice of language use among the signs (Hult, 2018). He illustrated two ways on how linguistic landscape is related to language policy. First, it puts into context the language ideologies of people since the "visual representation of linguistic order" provides an insight on how the values present in the policies may be exemplified in everyday experiences. Second, some institutions regulate what languages are used in public spaces, as well as how these languages shall be used.

Puzey (2012) in his chapter cites Cenoz and Gorter (2006) explicating further that linguistic landscape can reflect and influence the relative power and status of different languages. He describes his explorations of the politics of language in

some European countries which has political issues with consequences beyond the sphere of language policy.

Meanwhile, the study of Du Plessis (2012) is another story as he tackled the Anglicization of the public domain in the Free State Province of South Africa. By surveying the linguistic landscape in 2008 and 2009, the findings revealed that there were changes in the linguistic landscape which are characterized by erasure of Afrikaans, coinciding with the increase in monolingual English, and the re-bilingualization of signs using Bantu languages. In his study therefore, he concludes that although there may be roles that language policy has played, it is the lack of language visibility regulations that is most observable as a cause of change.

In the Philippines, there were also studies conducted about the LL in different domains. De Los Reyes in 2014 studied the signs in the LL of two main train stations in Manila where observed that English is more prominent than Filipino. Magno (2017) investigated the LL in the academic context in higher educational institutions in Cebu City. Jazul and Bernardo, also in 2017, studied the LL in Manila Chinatown district which they found to be having a preferential attitude towards English.

Although LL is gaining attention with the number of studies being conducted in past years, much of these researches are conducted on urban locations. Given that the Philippines is a very linguistically diverse country, the linguistic landscapes in the areas around this country, whether urban or semi-urban, would tell something about what language is being favored or preferred by its inhabitant. As this country is rich in local

languages, it is a question in mind if these local languages or varieties thereof are preferred in the areas where they are spoken. Examining the LL in areas where there are varieties of local language may contribute to this field of study in different contexts such as provinces where varieties of local languages are expected to be used by its people.

B. Research Questions

This study aims to explore the linguistic landscape of the capital town of Marinduque and analyze the language preference of Marinduqueños through the signs in the public spaces. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What is the classification of signs in public spaces in the capital town of Marinduque?
2. What languages are predominant in the public signs in the capital town of Marinduque?

C. Scope and Limitation

This study is limited only to signs which are found and can be easily seen in Boac población commercial establishments and government offices found in the streets such as Deogracias St., Nepomuceno St., Gov. D. Reyes St., Lardizabal St., 10 de Octubre St., 10 de Noviembre St., Del Mundo St., Magsaysay St., Livelo St., De La Santa St., Mercader St., and Madrigal St.

Signs placed inside the wet market stalls and 2nd floor stall in the Blue Building are also not included in the data collected for this study.

D. Theoretical Framework

Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) dichotomy of signs – top down and bottom up was employed in the analysis of signs. Top-down signs originates from public agencies of different levels and produce signs to designate agencies or diffuse information depending on the body. These signs are usually produced by public authority to reach common citizens and come from experts who are committed to serve official policies and the dominant culture. The second flow of signs is the bottom-up which consists of signs produced and presented by countless actors such as business owners or private establishments designed more freely to inform the public of what they offer.

This distinction is indispensable as this would show difference in how the linguistic landscape is analyzed, whether the authorities and common citizens share common or differing attitudes or preferences in the choice of language.

Therefore, this distinction is ideal in identifying the language that is predominant in the linguistic landscape of Boac. Through this, the language preference of those who implement policies and impose dominant culture can be verified through the language used among the signs being studied.

Barni and Bagna's (2009) semiotic analysis, specifically variables of location and domain, were also employed in analyzing the signs and their location in the población area. Location is defined as the social space which can be classified as central or peripheral urban areas, industrial areas, commercial areas and rural areas. This indicator shows the degree of distribution of a language over the territory. Domain as another variable involves the spheres of

activity and areas of specific interest into which social life can be divided. This may include the public, educational, and/or work-related. Through the domains, it is possible to establish in which we most frequently find the texts displayed in a language other than the local one.

These variables of Barni and Bagna's semiotic analysis were used in determining the locations and/or domains where signs are written with the language that is predominant. Through the identification of the domain, inference can be drawn as to the language preferences that the social actors in Boac población are likely to observe and impose.

II. METHODOLOGY

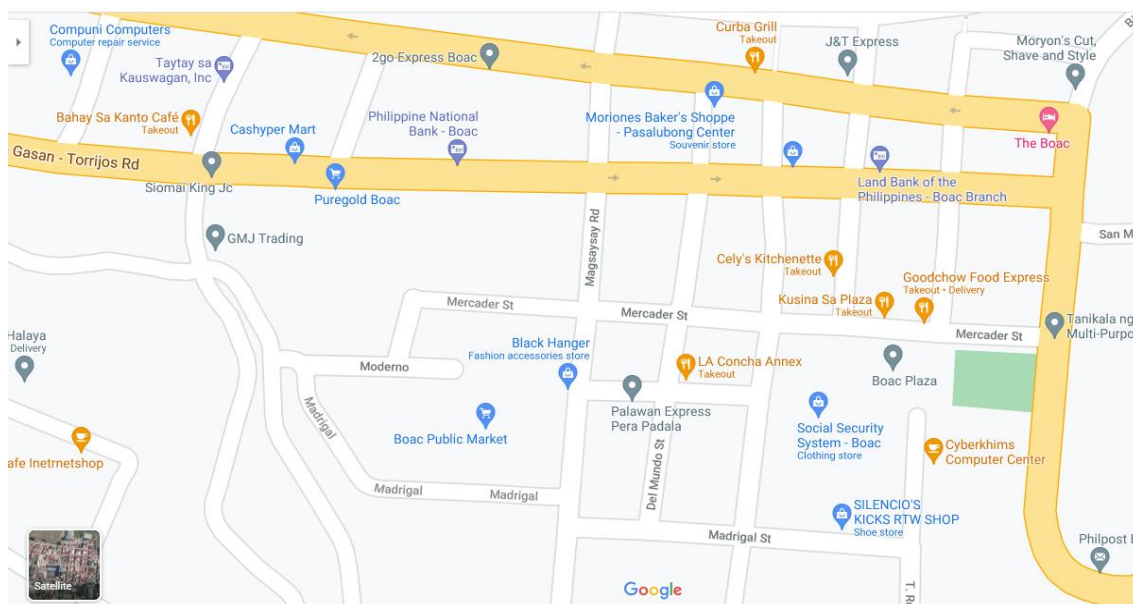


Fig 1. Study site - Map of Boac población (Source: google maps)

This study employs quantitative – qualitative research methods. The quantitative method is employed determining the frequency and percentage of the signs found in the public spaces in the town center of Boac,

Marinduque. The signs considered were classified according to Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) taxonomy which includes informational signs, street signs, building names, advertising signs, warning signs, graffiti, and commemorative plaque. The qualitative method was employed in analyzing the location and domain of the signs where predominant languages are determined following Barni and Bagna's (2009) variables of domain and location.

This study was conducted at the town center, “poblacion” of Boac, Marinduque, the capital of Marinduque which serves as the commercial center where the majority of the commercial establishments are located. The

town is also home to branches of national government offices such as the National Museum Marinduque-Romblon Area and it is also the seat of diocesan power in the province. The town is known for preserving

its cultural heritage as seen in the well-preserved Spanish houses.

Data were gathered by capturing different kinds of signs in the town center of Boac as shown in the figure above. Signs were taken from May 1, 2 and 6, 2021 through camera phones. The system employed in collecting data followed certain criteria that the signs are placed in locations where they are easily visible to passersby. In collecting the data, the pattern followed was the usual pattern of locals as they roam around and traverse every street in the población of Boac.

Data were analyzed by categorizing the signs according to Spolsky and Cooper's (1997) taxonomy of signs. This classification was adopted as the signs collected do not fall under every classification of Landry and Bourhis' (1997) such as advertising billboards which are not present in the población.

While the signs are being categorized, they were analyzed whether they classify as top-down signs, meaning signs which are exhibited by institutions or agencies under the authority of local or central policies, or bottom-up signs which are created by the private individuals or business institutions.

Then the signs were also analyzed based on the language used in them whether English, Filipino, Marinduque Tagalog, Spanish or Chinese. Signs with combination of languages were also considered such as English-Filipino, English-Chinese and Filipino-Spanish.

To have a visual representation of the distribution of languages used in the signs, principles of Barni and Bagna's (2006) mapping technique were employed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the classification of signs based on Spolsky and Cooper (1991) and Ben-Rafael's (2009) top down and bottom-up flows. Distribution of signs based on which language is predominant is also presented along with a visual representation patterned after Barni and Bagna's (2006) technique.

Classification of Signs

A total of 252 signs were collected. Based on this classification, the linguistic landscape of Boac población is laden with advertising signs (31.74%), building names (30.15%) which ascribes to the place being a commercial center that people all over the province frequently visit every day for official or commercial transactions. As stated by Ben-Rafael (2009), the overwhelming majority of items in business areas is brought about by the "predominance of consumption culture" which refer to services or goods that target mostly local clients who reside in the area.

Table 1. *Description of linguistic landscape based on Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) taxonomy*

Taxonomy of Sign	F	%	Top Down	%	Bottom Up	%
Advertising sign	80	31.74	5	1.98	75	29.76
Building names	76	30.15	7	2.77	69	27.38
Informative sign	40	15.87	18	7.14	22	8.73
Warning signs	28	11.11	8	3.17	20	7.93
Street Sign	16	6.34	13	3.15	3	1.19
Commemorative plaque	8	3.17	8	3.17	-	

Murals	4	1.58	4	1.58	-
TOTAL	252	100	63	22.9	189
				6	

Moreover, informative signs (15.87%) are also scattered all over the población which are particularly about directions or COVID-related public advisories about the safety protocols the public must observe when going outside the house (See Figure 2 and 3 below). These informative signs during this time of pandemic are also what Tabajunda (2021) considers public signage that tracks local practices in disseminating health protocols.



Fig 3 Public ad sion from LGU



Fig 2. Public ad sign from local PNP



Fig 4. Warning sign about parking

Meanwhile, warning signs (11.11%) are also evident in establishments that include delivery services for the goods they sell that they warn the public about parking or to not block their driveway, or warning about sanitation and proper waste disposal. Some restaurants and commercial shops also post warning signs that entry is not allowed to those who are not observing proper health and safety protocols (See Figures 4-7).



Fig 5. Warning sign about driveway blocking

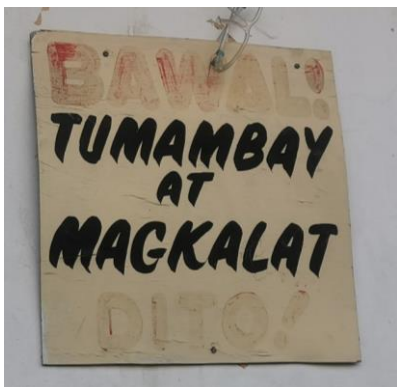


Fig 6. Warning sign - sanitation and bystanders



Fig 7. Warning sign in a restaurant entrance

Predominant Language among Signs

municipal level which are mostly in the form

Table 2. Distribution of signs according to language based on top-down, bottom-up flows

Language	Frequency	%	Top Down	%	Bottom Up	%
English	190	75.39	29	11.50	161	63.88
Filipino	23	9.12	15	5.95	8	3.17
English & Filipino	24	9.52	5	1.98	19	7.53
Marinduque Tagalog	8	3.17	3	1.19	5	1.98
Spanish	4	1.58	4	1.58	-	-
Filipino & Spanish	1	0.39	-	-	1	0.39
English & French	1	0.39	-	-	1	0.39
English & Chinese	1	0.39	1	0.39	-	-
TOTAL	252	100	57	22.59	195	77.34

Among the 252 signs collected, majority (75.39%) are written in English, while 9.12% are written in combination of English-Filipino (9.52%) and those written in Filipino are only 9.52%. Although there is presence of Filipino in the signs present in the linguistic landscape of Boac, the percentage of use is quite far as compared with the signs written in English. It can also be noted that the province's own variety of Tagalog is used with merely 3.17%. These findings present that English has a stronger presence in the LL of Boac población as compared with Filipino which is the country's official language.

Looking into the flow of these signs, top-down signs which are from public authority intended for common citizens are predominantly written in English as seen in 29 signs, while Filipino language is used in 15 signs. This result implies that English is preferred by government offices in the provincial and municipal levels as the signs written in English are informative signs about the local government public service announcement and public advisories (See figures 8 and 9). Meanwhile, Filipino is used in 15 signs which are from the provincial and

of commemorative plaques or markers (See figures 10 and 11).



Fig 8. Public service announcement sign



Fig 9. Public advisory sign

Although Filipino language is seen in only 15 top-down signs, it is worth noting that Filipino is the language used in the commemorative markers which are placed permanently in locations that have significant historical value to the establishments where they are placed. Similar with the findings of Jazul and Bernardo (2017) language used in markers are suited for long term use and that reflected permanence. For example, Figure 10 is placed in what we call *Casa Real* which served as the government building during the Spanish occupation in the province and it is also the same location where Marinduqueno heroes who fought during the Filipino-American war were slain during the war. Also, commemorative markers in Filipino is placed in the now Marinduque-Romblon Area Museum which is an integral landmark in the preservation of the town as well as the province's cultural heritage. Filipino is also used by the municipality in putting up a slogan marker placed in a strategic location in the plaza where locals frequently visit and spend time leisurely (See Figure 12). Signs in place for a name of a barangay hall is also written in Filipino (See Figure 13) which means that the Filipino language is not only preferred by locals in the barangay level but also in the municipal and provincial levels. Although this is quite different from the findings of Jazul and Bernardo (2017) that in Binondo Chinatown, the language preference differs in the municipal and in the barangay level, these findings may not be enough to support the claim that the municipal and barangay levels in Boac also share the same preference in language used in the signs.



Fig 10. Plaza commemorative marker



Fig 11. Museum commemorative marker



Fig 12. Plaza slogan marker



Fig 13. Barangay hall name sign

In terms of the bottom-up signs, it dominates the población with 77.34% since the area under investigation is where majority of commercial areas are located. Bottom-up signs are those originating from private sector such as businesses and commercial establishments which are controlled by their owners rather than authorities. Data showed that English was the predominant language in the bottom-up signs which are composed of shop or building names and the services offered in these shops (See figure 14 and 15). This implies that English is placed on a pedestal when it comes to commerce similar with the findings of Jazul and Bernardo (2017) which describes that LL in English reflects the power and prestige of the language.



Fig 14. Printing press shop sign

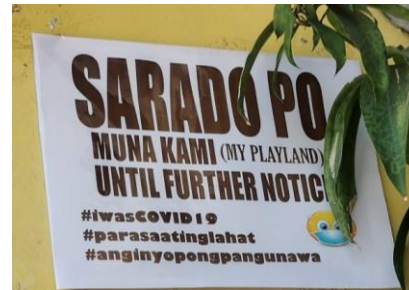


Fig. 22. Public advisory about shop closing



Fig 15. Tea shop and restaurant sign

Filipino language is also present mostly in informative signs or warning signs (9.12%) which implies that it is the language preferred by shop owners. by means of using the language spoken by the public, it makes local clients understand and comprehend the announcements and warnings easily. Some examples of informative signs about store relocations or temporary closing of a shop are provided below:

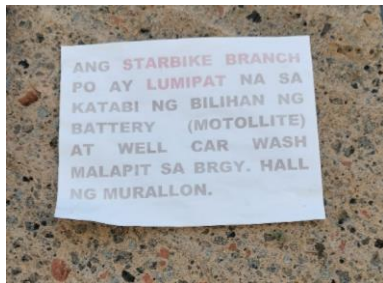
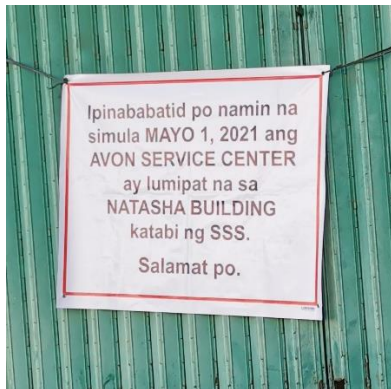


Fig. 20 and Fig. 21. Informative signs about relocation

Similar with some top-down signs from barangay level which are written in Filipino, these private signs also target the local clientele as it is the language easily understood by them. Since these signs may refer to locals' recurrent needs, the use of this language has more "sociocultural clues" in them (Barni & Bagna, 2009).

Generally, the LL of Boac población is dominated by signs written in English and signs written in Filipino only come secondary. It can also be noted that Marinduque Tagalog, the province's variety of Tagalog language is seen only in few bottom-up signs. As shown in Fig. 24 which is a restaurant sign, the name of the establishment features a Marinduque

Tagalog term "mandin", an enclitic adverbial which implies confirmation (Soberano, 1977).



Fig 24. Restaurant sign

The signs written in Marinduque Tagalog were seen in only 3.17% of the linguistic landscape of Boac población which implies that this language is not commonly considered. This may mean that the government authorities who put up top-down signs and local business establishments owners who post bottom-up signs may not have considered yet the "socio-symbolic value linked with the people's own identity being recognized" when their own variety of local language is used (Barni & Bagna, 2009, in Jazul & Bernardo, 2017). The symbolic function of a language as seen in the linguistic landscape is an indicator that their own language is being valued. As Landry and Bourhis (1997) asserted, "having one's own language is enshrined on most private and government signs, it contributes to the feeling that the in group language has value and status relative to other languages within the sociolinguistic setting." (p.27)

In order to have a clearer view about the language preference as it is used in the signs in the Boac población, a map was crafted following the principles of Barni and Bagna's (2009) mapping techniques. The map of the población was from Google maps, and then the locations of the signs considered

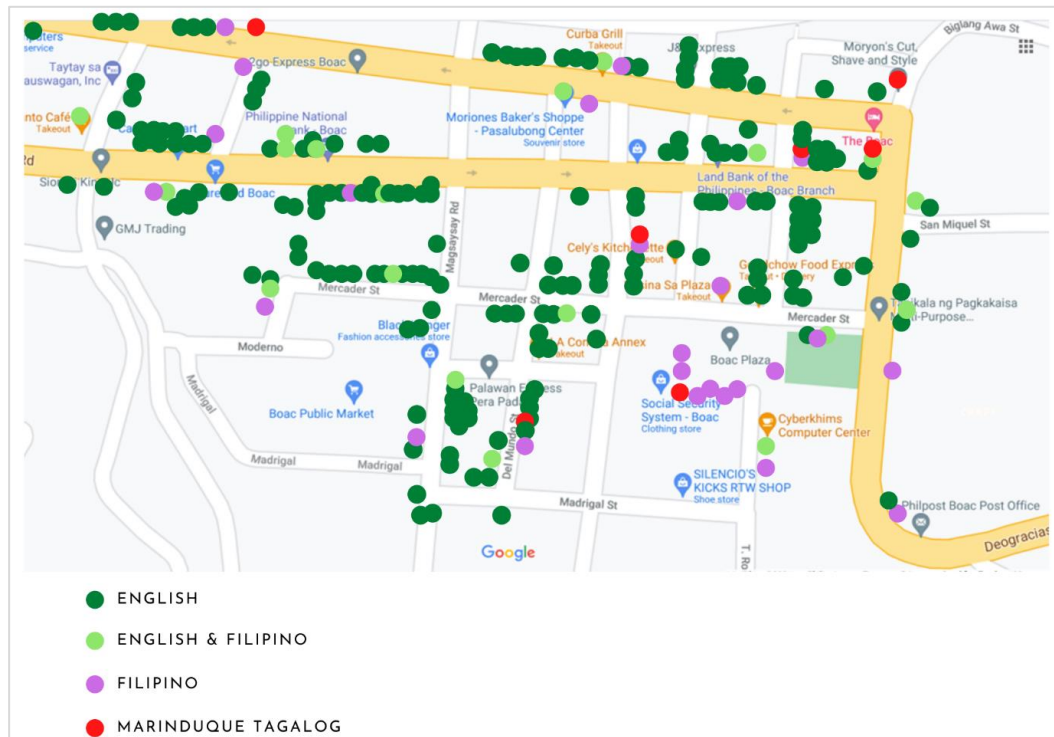


Fig. 25. Distribution of languages in Boac poblacion

in this study were plotted on its specific locations. The colors are ascribed to every language present in the LL signs. Green dots represent signs written in English; light green dots are signs written in combination of English and Filipino; purple dots are signs written in Filipino, while the few red dots represent signs written in Marinduque Tagalog.

English and Filipino signs' location and domain

As can be seen in Figure 25, majority of the main streets are lined with green dots which represent signs written in English; secondary are light green dots representing



Fig 26. Clusters of business establishments with English signs

signs written in English-Filipino as well as purple dots representing signs written in Filipino only. The very minimal red dots represent signs written in Marinduque Tagalog or use of Marinduque term. This map shows the diversity in both public and private signs which, according to Landry and Bourhis (1997) it most realistically reflect the multilingual nature of a particular territory, region or area in this case. Moreover, the dominance of the green dots which represent signs written in English (See Figure 26) highlights its role as language used for economic prosperity which business establishments use to attract potential customers (Jazul & Bernardo, 2017). The business establishment owners have seen the function of English in crafting advertisements which are about the services or goods they offer. Moreover, other advertisements written in English are public

notices for rental spaces or job vacancies or promotion of products and services which are addressed to larger audience aside from the locals residing in the area. Meaning to say, in the case of Boac población the concept of Landry and Bourhis (1997) applies to English since it has gained some kind of measure of institutional control within key sectors of the economy and civil administration which relates to Barni and Bagna's (2009) definition of commercial areas that influences the meanings, as well as the language used with the signs being put up in the area. This also imply that English occupies the central areas in Boac población and are vital in the public and commercial domains as these signs in English language are constantly seen from the public perspective.

In the case of Filipino, although very few signs are written in this language, it is

quite worthy to note that its placement in the linguistic landscape of Boac población has a significant value with respect to its location. As can be seen in Figure 28, a cluster of signs written in Filipino language are placed strategically in the town plaza where heritage landmarks are located such as the *Casa Real* which served as the government building during the Spanish occupation in the province and it is also the same location where Marinduqueno heroes who fought during the Filipino-American war were slain during the war. Filipino signs are also seen in the adjacent museum of Marinduque-Romblon Area which is an integral landmark in the preservation of the town as well as the province's cultural heritage. Filipino is also used by the municipality in putting up a very visible slogan marker placed in the other end of the plaza where locals frequently visit and spend time leisurely. This finding implies that Filipino is used in a social space that is also central to the public activity of the locals and tourist visitors as well. This also means that Filipino occupies a certain domain in the public activity of the locals as this area is where they usually spend time for leisure and amusement activities. And most notably, the placement of signs in Filipino in these areas occupies the domains of cultural heritage and preservation as this location is where institutions preserving cultural heritage are located. Therefore, the placement of Filipino in this location implies that it is highly regarded, and it is intended to be there for a very long time for locals and for visitors who come and go may see anytime they visit the place.



Fig 27. Filipino signs clustered at Boac plaza

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the linguistic landscape gives us a glimpse of how language is regarded in a certain areas, region, provinces or territory. As the study showed different preferences especially in the use of language in different domains or locations, indeed language has a key role in shaping the LL (Jazul and Bernardo, 2017). Through the classification of signs based on Ben-Rafael's top-down and bottom-up dichotomy, differences are seen on how actors prefer language in creating signs depending on their intended functions.

The study showed that English is highly regarded in business-oriented or commercial areas while Filipino, although appearing in minimal number of signs, is used in placing LL items in permanent

locations that are domains or cultural heritage and activity.

It also revealed very minimal occurrence of signs written in Marinduque Tagalog, and the positioning of these minimal signs are not even central in the heart of the población. This implies that there is dearth in the attempts to cultivate the use of Marinduque Tagalog in ways like this, which can be an attempt in promoting this variation.

Through analyzing the language use in the signs present in an area's linguistic landscape, the linguistic diversity can be seen and the competition among languages spoken in the sociolinguistic area.

Hence, this study provides a glimpse of the language preference in an area on what language(s) is favored and has control over

institutions and domains in a semi-rural area such as Boac población.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study was limited only to the linguistic landscape in Boac población, future researchers may consider a study on the entire town being the capital of Marinduque and as the gateway to tourists who visit the province.

Since the findings present a dominance of English and indexed presence of Marinduque Tagalog in Boac población

LL, these findings may be considered by the government agencies concerned with the preservation of culture which includes the Marinduque Tagalog language. The choices in the language that are functional in an area's linguistic landscape may be linked with what languages are being promoted or cultivated in a specific area. Since all Marinduqueños are speakers of the variety, which indicates that it is widely disseminated, what needs much effort is in terms of the language planning efforts pushing for embracing this variety which would hopefully lead to cultivation, in hopes that it can reach corpus planning level.

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