

## Linguistic Cityscape of Billboard Advertisements in Mandaue City

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the linguistic cityscape of billboard advertisements found in the selected areas in Mandaue City and the occurrence of linguistic compositions and linguistic landscapes in billboard advertisements. This study used a mixed-method. Billboard advertisements along the highways and flyovers in Maguikay, Subangdaku, Umapad, Banilad, Tipolo, and Guizo, Mandaue City were the corpora of the study. A survey was also conducted to verify the effectiveness of billboard advertisements. Results revealed that the English language was the dominant language in the billboard advertisements, while complementary multilingual writing and phrases prevailed among the other types of writing. On the other hand, the emotional appeal was the commonly used advertising appeal in non-official signs. The results suggest that consumers have purchasing power based on emotion. However, they use logic to justify their decision.

*Keywords:* Cebu, cityscape, composition, linguistic units

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### INTRODUCTION

Advertisement is a vital part of Philippine society (Javillonar, 2017; Dayag, 2008). Advertisers frequently employ strategies and skills in advertising language (Liu, 2012). In fact, Dayag (2008) was also able to examine the discourse of print advertising in the Philippines, specifically on the generic structures and linguistics features. The way languages are displayed vis-à-vis each other will give the people further information on the relative importance given to each language (Degi, 2012). Moreover, the presence of the English language, as well as the presence of the non-English language on public signs, might reflect the society's perception of English and non-English language (Dixson, 2015).

In relation to language use, multilingualism is a common phenomenon that can be studied from different perspectives. One of the possibilities is to analyze languages by focusing on the written information that is available on signs in a specific area. It is evident in the institutionalization of the Bilingual Education Program (BEP) in 1974 that the Filipino language has given equal importance to the English language. However, Filipino could not be considered as sharing equal status with English because it is not widely used in other formal settings (De Los Reyes, 2015). Remarkably, the number of Filipino-only commercials is extremely low (Klimenko, 2016).

Furthermore, advertising uses appeals as a way of persuading people to buy certain products (Clow & Baack, 2010). Simpson (2001) also focused on the types of appeal evident in the discourses of advertisements, while Fill *et al.* (2013) emphasized the advertising appeals designed to create a positive image of the individuals who use certain products. These different types of advertising appeals are

used by advertising agencies to influence the purchasing decisions of people such as *humor, fear, sex, rationality, emotion, and scarcity appeals* (Clow & Baack (2010).

Moreover, studying the linguistic landscape of a given geographical area and analyzing the languages on signs is a relatively new area of inquiry within the broad area of Applied Linguistics (Fekede & Gemechu, 2015). While the use of studying the linguistic landscape has proven to be beneficial in understanding multilingual contexts, there has not been a study exploring the linguistic landscape of the billboard advertisements in Cebu province and cities. Through studying the linguistic cityscape of an area, researchers see the obvious dominant language, but can also find the minority language present in an area (Edelman, 2010). To fill the research gap, this study paid particular attention to the commonly used languages and linguistic cityscape that are present in the billboard advertisements. Specifically, the present study aimed to determine and analyze the linguistic compositions, advertising appeals, linguistic cityscape, and effectiveness of these billboards commonly displaced in the billboard advertisements, and the impact of billboard advertisements along the different areas in Mandaue City. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) Which of the following linguistic compositions are commonly displayed in the billboard advertisements proposed by De Los Reyes (2015), Reh (2004), and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004)?; (2) What linguistic landscapes are embodied in the billboard advertisements postulated by Clow and Baack (2010)? and (3) What linguistic techniques are employed in the

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billboard advertisements posited by Suryasa (2016) and O'Dell and McCarthy (2010)?

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

With the growing interest in the linguistic landscape, several studies have explored and analyzed the significance of the inclusion of the English language on public signages and advertisements in a given area. Al-Athwary (2017) looked into the multilingual written texts of the signboards. The close examination of the public space in Yemen revealed that the linguistic landscape of Yemen is much more multilingual with the dominance of duplicating multilingual writing in advertisements. A local study conducted by Magno (2017) investigated the language distribution and language functions displayed on bulletin boards in Communication departments of selected universities in Cebu. Results revealed that the majority of the respondents preferred reading bulletin boards written in English, Filipino, and Cebuano languages. Concerning the perception of bulletin board displays, all respondents agreed on the boards' usefulness and expressed the need to continue the usage of these bulletin boards.

Furthermore, Akbari (2015) aimed to fill the existing gaps in the marketing literature by providing a comprehensive comparison of rational versus emotional appeals based on high and low involvement products to increase advertising effectiveness. The results of the study showed that both advertising appeals (rational and emotional) have a positive effect on advertising attitude and purchase intention. Akbari (2015) concluded that for low involvement products, emotional appeals have a more significant effect on advertising attitude; for high involvement products, rational appeals are more influential.

Similarly, a study conducted by Tynkkynen (2013) aimed to develop an understanding of how advertising appeals influence consumers' behavior and to examine the types of advertising appeals effective in generating approach behavior in consumers. The main finding of this study was that consumers feel different degrees of pleasure towards different advertising appeals. Furthermore, Tynkkynen (2013) noted that the emotional appeal induced strong feelings of pleasure; however, as was the case with the interactive advertisement, the felt pleasure did not induce approach behavior.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used the mixed method in identifying the languages used and the linguistic cityscape of billboard advertisements found in Mandaue City. The observation was done in analyzing the text to provide additional insights into the present study. Concerning the quantitative method, frequency and percentage were used to measure the frequency of the languages used and the linguistic cityscape found in the data collected. Analyzing the texts in the billboards was done for the qualitative method, specifically content analysis based on the theories mentioned above.

This study analyzed a total of 30 billboard advertisements found along the different areas of Mandaue

City. The researchers focused primarily on billboard advertisements found along the highways and flyovers in Maguikay, Subangdaku, Umapad, Banilad, Tipolo, and Guizo, Mandaue City. A total of 30 billboard advertisements served as the data in the study. Dayag's (2008) categories were adopted and modified by the researchers; namely: food, fashion, health, transportation, banking/finance, and housing. This study used the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique helped the researchers to identify and select the billboard advertisements that are suited in the researchers' criteria. The following criteria were used in choosing the billboard advertisements: (1) the billboard advertisement mainly consists of a slogan, (2) the billboard advertisement is posted along the selected streets in Mandaue City and (3) the same billboard advertisement posted in several locations will be counted as one. Various themes of the billboard advertisements such as humor, fear, sex, rationality, emotions, and scarcity (Clow and Baack, 2010) were utilized as framework in the analysis and interpretation of the billboard advertisements in Mandaue City.

Smartphones were utilized as tools to take photos of the billboard advertisements. The linguistic analysis of the linguistic cityscape relies on photography and visual analysis (Hult, 2009). Coding sheets were used to list and rank the languages displayed and the linguistic landscape used in the billboard advertisements. The researchers used a nonreactive content analysis technique. Photographs of the billboard advertisements observed in the selected areas in Mandaue City were taken during the whole month of October 2017. The collected photographs of the billboard advertisements were arranged and categorized according to their themes based on Clow and Baack (2010) and Ben-Rafael et al., (2006). The results were presented in tabular forms showing the frequency and percentage. The results of the study were verified by an inter-rater who was selected under the following criteria: a member of the DCLL Faculty or an MA Applied Linguistics graduate and native of either Cebuano or Filipino but proficient in all three languages. The researchers choose the topic on billboard as this is in line with the Department of Communications, Linguistics, and Literature's Research Agenda specifically on the discourse and genre analysis and bilingualism in environment – related semiotics, lexical meaning of advertisements.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the key results of the study in terms of linguistic composition, advertising appeals, linguistic cityscape, and effectiveness.

### Linguistic Composition

Table 1 displays the languages used in billboard advertisements. In addition, the table presents the languages used.

**Table 1**

*Languages used in the Billboard Advertisements*

MONOLINGUAL	TOTAL	
	F	%
English	20	66.6
Filipino	2	6.66
Cebuano	0	0
BILINGUAL		
English-Filipino	8	26.66
English-Cebuano	0	0
Filipino-Cebuano	0	0
TOTAL	30	100%

Table 1 reveals that among the two types of languages, the dominant language used by advertisers is the monolingual English language (20). The dominance of the monolingual English language indicates that advertisers prefer to use the English language, either in full or in combination with the Filipino language, than presenting the advertisement in the Filipino language alone. The result of the present research is comparable to that of a study by Reyes (2015), where the English language was highly preferred in advertisements in LRT and MRT stations. The remarkable difference in the occurrence of English and Filipino language in the billboard advertisements does not imply that the Filipino language is declining. Reyes (2015), also stated that the Philippines, although known as a multilingual country, has generally embraced a bilingual policy where Filipino and English are considered as the official languages. This indicates that the English language is continuously given importance in the Philippines. Magno's (2017) study also supports that English is the preferred language in bulletins and other printed materials found in Communication departments of selected universities in Cebu.



**Figure 1.** Hollywood Trading (BA2)

Figure 1 displayed an advertisement that is expressed in the English language. To become more direct towards the readers, advertisers must convey the message in the shortest and quickest way possible. Thus, expressing the texts in a different language would perplex readers because there is no equal translation for most of the words presented in the advertisement.

Contrary to the findings of the present study, the survey reveals that the majority of the respondents are in favor of the English-Filipino (i.e., Taglish) language (8) as a means of communication in billboard advertisements in the different areas along Mandaue City. This indicates that viewers are accustomed to speaking two or more

languages. Exposure to English-Filipino language in the academe could be a factor in the language preferences of the respondents. This supports Reyes' (2015) claim that the Philippines embrace a bilingual policy. English had continuously been given importance, either as a subject from elementary to college levels or as a language of instruction from upper elementary to college levels (Reyes, 2015). Researches on the linguistic landscape have established the importance of the English language as a tool for international communication. Because of its dynamic role in globalization, English has enjoyed privilege and status not only in European countries but also in Asia (Magno, 2017).



**Figure 2.** Coke Studio (BA6)

Figure 2 displays the Filipino term *Pinoy* as a reference to the Filipino people's music genre, which is Original Pilipino Music, commonly known as OPM. *Pinoy* is considered as an informal expression. Coke Studio is a television series and international music franchise which features live studio-recorded music performances by established and emerging artists. This suggests the advertisements' attempt to create a sense of belongingness. In the text, "Taste the sounds of Pinoy music," the word *Pinoy* is considered as a Filipino language term among the words.

Table 2 illustrates the multilingual writing information employed in billboard advertisements:

**Table 2**

*Types of Multilingual Writing Information*

	TOTAL	
	F	%
Complementary	7	87.5
Fragmentary	1	12.5
Overlapping	0	0
Duplicating	0	0
TOTAL	8	100%

As illustrated in Table 2, the complementary multilingual writing (7) is the most utilized in terms of

the billboard advertisements that consist of bilingual English-Filipino languages. The presence of the English language on both official and non-official signs reflects conscious language decisions on the part of the state and the local community to support the presence of English in the linguistic landscape (Al-Athwary, 2017). Moreover, the presence of more than one language on commercial signs is due to the mutual relation between the English language and success in marketing. Contrary to the findings of Al-Athwary (2017), there was no instance found in the billboard advertisements consisting of duplicating multilingual writing.

advertisements is to ensure that readers can read their message in just a short span of time. The data suggest that that slogan messages are supposed to be readable, easy-to-understand, and therefore likely-to-be-memorized pieces.

In general terms, it is apparent that the results of the present study have an association with the English language being extensively used in the Philippines setting, particularly in Mandaue City, as nearly all billboard advertisements presented contain the English language. This corresponds with Maslova et al., (2013), where they mentioned that the words in billboard advertisements should not be more than seven. The occurrence of the linguistic units in the present study is similar to the study carried out by Pilátová (2015), where she mentions that a vast majority of slogans use phrases and sentences in advertisements.



Figure 3. Magnolia (BA9)

Figure 3 features an advertisement for Magnolia Whole Chicken displaying the English-Filipino language (i.e., *Pambansang Manok*), that is, *National Chicken*. The advertisement is considered as an example of complementary multilingual writing since it provides additional detail in a different language.



Figure 4. McDonald's (BA19)

In Figure 4, the advertisement presented an expression that is noticeably written in a large font to make it visible for the viewers with a brief statement. McDonald's is one of the top long-running fast-food chains in the Philippines and worldwide. The advertisers presented the advertisement in a short yet straight to the point statement. For instance, BA 19 shows McSaver Meals, which is short and straight to the point phrase that informs the readers about the affordability of the meal of McDonald's.

Table 3 presents the instances of different linguistic units used in billboard advertisements.

Table 3

*Linguistic Units in the Billboard Advertisements*

	TOTAL	
	F	%
Phrases	13	43.33
Sentences	10	33.33
Clauses	7	23.33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows that phrases (13) are frequently employed in the billboard advertisements along the selected areas in Mandaue City. Following is the use of sentences (10). Among the three types of linguistic units, phrases prevalence suggests that billboard advertisements have text constraints and should be able to create a slogan consisting of brief statements. It is noteworthy that the advertisements contain short and simple sentences to catch the reader's attention in a short span of time. The main purpose of writing phrase form slogans in billboard

**Advertising Appeals**

Table 4 shows the frequency and percentage of the different types of advertising appeals in billboard advertisements.

Table 4

*Types of Advertising Appeals in Billboard Advertisements (Clow and Baack, 2010)*

	TOTAL	
	F	%
<b>Emotion</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>54.83</b>
Rational	12	38.73
Humor	1	3.22
Scarcity	1	3.22
Fear	0	0

Sex	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	31	100%

Emotional appeal (17) is prevalent in billboard advertisements because emotions greatly affect the consumers' purchase decision. This indicates the significance of not only demonstrating the stopping power but also creating an effect on the behavior of consumers towards a certain product. Since those emotions ranked as the most prevalent appeal in the billboard advertisement, the main reason why advertisers employ emotions in advertisements is that they want customers to captivate the consumers in liking the brand easily.

The findings validate the preceding result that emotional appeals are customarily utilized in the billboard advertisements in Mandaue City. Evidently, the fact that humans have the innate capacity to feel emotions can be a great factor in the consumers' purchase decision. Murray (2013) inferred that people rely on emotions, rather than information, to make brand decisions and that emotional responses to advertisements are more persuasive to consumers. Furthermore, Murray (2013) reckoned that, in reality, emotions greatly influence and, in many cases, even determine customers' decisions.

Bernstein (as cited in Simpson, 2001) also proposed those distinctions of advertisements into reason advertisements (i.e., those which suggest a motive or reason for purchase) and tickle advertisements (i.e., those which appeal to humor, emotion, and mood). It will be argued that Bernstein's distinction can be accommodated relatively systematically within contemporary frameworks of language and discourse. The results of the survey also bear a resemblance to the findings of the present research, where the emotional appeal is the dominant appeal, followed by rational appeals.



Figure 5. Mang Inasal (BA8)

Figure 5 is a *Mang Inasal* advertisement where it presented an example that is immensely connected with Philippine culture and tradition. *Mang Inasal* is the leading *Pinoy* branded outlet in the country. *Mang Inasal* is known for its authentic fusion of traditional Filipino cuisine, especially native-style chicken inasal.



Figure 6. Tambuli Resort Residences (BA7)

As shown in Figure 6, the advertisement features a slogan that says *Seaside living*. For readers who are not familiar with Tambuli, it could be interpreted as merely residential. Thus, it is shifting towards becoming a residential resort.

Table 5 shows the frequency and percentage of appearance of official and non-official signs in the billboard advertisements.

### Linguistic Cityscapes

Table 5

*Types of Linguistic Cityscapes that are Employed in the Billboard Advertisements*

	TOTAL	
	F	%
<b>SIGNS</b>		
Non-official Signs	29	96.66
Official Signs	1	3.33
<b>TOTAL</b>	30	100%

Non-official signs (29) are commonly seen in the city of Mandaue since almost the entire billboard advertisements being displayed are owned by private enterprises like *Coca-Cola* and *Mang Inasal*. According to Wang's (2015) point of view policy implementation, non-official signs are local establishments that develop their own programs and implement them.



Figure 7. Timex (BA21)

Figure 7 is an example of a non-official sign since it is implemented by private sectors that encompass all

for-profit businesses that are not owned or operated by the government. An American company manufactured the billboard advertisement about Timex Production.

On the other hand, official signs (1) are seen less in billboard advertisement because these signs are public signs that municipal institutions have to put up. Wang (2015) mentioned that official signs are the starting point of the authoritative decision; as the name implies, government officials are seen as the most relevant to producing the desired effect. These people are regarded to be the decision-makers who are responsible for formulating an efficient statute that suits the kind of existing problem. According to Shohamy and Gorter (2019), the messages delivered by the billboards are about societies, people, the economy, policy, class, identities, multilingualism, multimodalities, forms of representation, and additional phenomena.

Figure 8 is an example of an official sign since barangay officials implemented it and the sign itself is for the people who are living in the community. It is self-evident that the billboard sign is intended for the public because it serves as awareness for people that they are entering a particular



Figure 8. Barangay Umamad (BA13)

city in Mandaue. The sign is for everybody, and it indicates that everyone should be responsible and united in keeping the place clean.

Overall, based on the text analysis and responses specified by the respondents, the monolingual English language dominated in the billboard advertisements, while English-Filipino language dominated in the linguistic landscape of the selected six areas along Mandaue City. Substantially, the superiority of the monolingual English and English-Filipino languages appeared to be most commonly found on highways such as in Maguikay, Mandaue City, to cater to the international target market. Hence, emotional appeal and non-official signs appeared to be the most utilized appeal in the billboard advertisements.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the researchers have come up with the following conclusions. First, although English is considered as the effective language used for business success, English is more persuasive and easily understood

in promoting the products very well and is the language of globalization, the viewers of the billboards still prefer to see the Filipino-English languages. These could be attributed to the contexts of the Filipinos, who are basically multilingual. Thus, the target audience also prefers to see billboards with at least two languages such as Filipino as the national language while English as their second language since these two languages are considered official languages in the Philippines.

Second, consumers have purchasing power based on emotion. However, they use logic to justify their decision. Emotional appeal is the most used appeal of advertisement because it gives customers perceived value, making them attracted and interested in buying the product. It also influences consumer's buying behavior and their taste and preferences as their bases in their decision-making process.

Third, the non-official signs are commonly-seen in billboard advertisements because private sectors mostly own the advertised product, and the city of Mandaue is known as the *Industrial Heartland* of the Island, where many of the industries are located.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are considered. First, Linguistics majors should look into the prevalence of the Cebuano-Bisaya language in other areas in Cebu province, especially small localities. Second, advertisers should often use the local language of the city in making advertisements to maintain and for culture and heritage. Third, future researchers may include assessing the effectiveness of the different types of appeals in non-official signs.

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