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Multilingualism in Marrickville: A Multidimensional Linguistic Landscape Study

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Abstract

Linguistic diversity is common in today's urban environments and there is a growing interest in linguistic landscape research as a way of gaining knowledge about language use in multilingual settings. The present study examines the linguistic landscape of Marrickville, a suburb in Sydney, taking a variety of aspects that affect the formation of societal multilingualism into consideration. Photos taken of visual language use in a central area of the suburb were compared to census data on language use in the home domain. Furthermore, the linguistic landscape items observed were categorized based on the involvement of public and private actors in their production and investigated in relation to circumstances that affect sign-makers' choices. The analysis shows that visual language use in the public sphere to some extent reflects language use in the home domain, but some differences are observed, and investigations of the characteristics of linguistic landscape items shed further light on factors affecting what languages appear in the visual environment.

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1. Introduction

The necessity of maintaining a multilingual society is becoming increasingly evident as immigration flows make language communities more widely dispersed throughout the world (Spolsky & Lambert, 2006, p. 567) and as the right to use one's own language has been acknowledged as a basic human right (Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, p. 5). Understanding the structures in complex multilingual settings is vital in order for language planning and policy making to be as effective in maintaining multilingualism as possible. One area where multilingualism is manifested and can be studied in today's society is the linguistic landscape (LL). Visual language use in the public space can give us information about what languages are used in a community, and looking at which languages are used for what and by whom can increase our understanding of the situation of different language groups. The rapidly growing body of research and the variety of ways in which the LL is approached and interpreted shows that there are many factors, such as historical events and economic and sociological structures, at play in its shaping. Consequently, researchers call for multidimensional investigations of both content and context of the LL in order to get a full grasp of the situation (see for example Shohamy & Waksman, 2009, p. 317; Huebner, 2009, p. 84; Lou, 2010, p. 112).

The present study focuses on the suburb of Marrickville in Sydney and investigates the LL both in regards to content and context. Australia has been subjected to immigration from numerous parts of the world, which has made the country a place of rich multilingualism. According to census data, its largest cities have the highest presence of immigrant groups and the most linguistic diversity. The aim of the present study is to see how the LL can contribute to our understanding of the structure of multilingual settings and the situation of different language groups within these settings. The LL is compared to statistical information on language use in the home domain, demonstrating the usefulness of combining information from multiple domains to gain understanding of the sociolinguistic situation in multilingual communities (for a detailed presentation of the research questions, see the methodology section). Furthermore, as many researchers have noted, simply counting languages is not enough to understand the complexity of today's urban LLs (e.g. Muth, 2014, p. 38). Therefore, the present study analyzes the LL items further, drawing on theories of *top-down* vs. *bottom-up* flows (see for instance Ben-Rafael,

Shohamy, Amara & Trumper-Hecht, 2006) and *symbolic* and *informational* value (e.g. Spolsky & Cooper, 1991). In addition, Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) framework for analyzing sign-makers' choices, with three categories: *presentation of self*, *good-reasons*, and *power relations* (and a fourth category, *collective identity*, added by Ben-Rafael in 2009), is used in the data analysis. The analysis shows that for the municipality of Marrickville, multilingualism is mainly a collective identity marker, while private actors use multiple languages for communication.

2. Previous linguistic landscape research and the Australian context

In their pioneering study, Landry and Bourhis (1997) define LL as “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (p. 23). LL research has been conducted from a number of different perspectives. To mention a few, Spolsky and Cooper (1991) and Coulmas (2009) focus on historical aspects, while Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) and Ben-Rafael (2009) approach the LL from a sociological point of view, and Landry and Bourhis (1997) and Huebner (2009) emphasize a sociolinguistic angle. LL is not just a broad term that has inspired research of varying character but is also a concept that is constantly redefined as the urban landscape changes. As Gorter and Cenoz (2008) remark, we live in an “era of visual information” with an abundance of signage in the public space (p. 343). New technology is used to create new types of signs, like electronic and interactive displays (Gorter, 2013, p. 191), and introduce whole new dimensions, the internet being a prominent example (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009, p. 1).

Several researchers have seen connections between the LL and language behavior and argue that the study of LLs gives us important insight into social structures in society (e.g. Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy, 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Collins & Slembrouck, 2004; Backhaus, 2007). Landry and Bourhis' (1997) study, for example, shows that the LL serves as a distinct factor affecting language use and the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups as defined by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) and Sachdev and Bourhis (1993). To Giles et al. (1977) ethnolinguistic vitality is “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations” (p. 308). In another study, Cenoz and Gorter (2006)

investigate signage in multilingual communities and conclude that the LL can reflect the sociolinguistic context as well as contribute to its formation, as people's perceived power relations between language groups are affected by what they observe in the LL (pp. 67-68). In 2003, Scollon and Wong Scollon introduced the term *geosemiotics*, which they explain as “the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world”. They argue that in order to understand the meaning of signs, one cannot just look at their content but must also consider how and where they are placed (p. 2).

2.1 Linguistic landscapes and multilingualism

Due to factors such as immigration, globalization, and tourism, multilingualism is a wide-spread phenomenon in today's society (Gorter & Cenoz, 2008, p. 347) and most LL research is carried out in a multilingual setting (see for example Tulp, 1978; Monnier, 1989; Reh, 2004; Huebner, 2006; Backhaus, 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Hult, 2009; Kallen & Ní Dhonnacha, 2010). Cenoz and Gorter (2009) point to several economic advantages of maintaining multilingualism in the LL, a few being that it is “good for tourists and can solve communication problems and avoid their costs”, and that it helps with avoiding “costs caused by the marginalization of some groups” and with marketing a place as “modern” and “cosmopolitan” (p. 66).

Furthermore, many researchers have emphasized the importance of language maintenance in a multilingual setting by drawing parallels between linguistic diversity, cultural diversity, and biodiversity (e.g. Maffi, 2005; Cenoz & Gorter, 2009, pp. 63-64; Gorenflo, Romaine, Mittermeier & Walker-Painemilla, 2012). In light of this, the LL is emerging as an important field of study in relation to language planning and policy. As Shohamy (2006) explains, “the presence (or absence) of language displays in the public space communicates a message, intentional or not, conscious or not, that affects, manipulates or imposes *de facto* language policy and practice” (p. 110).

An important distinction that is often made in LL research in multilingual settings is that between “official” and “non-official” signs (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010, p. 12), also referred to

as “public” and “private” signs (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy & Barni, 2010) or “top-down” and “bottom-up” signs (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). Shohamy (2006) defines *top-down* as “the state and/or central bureaucracies” and *bottom-up* as “autonomous social actors selected by individuals and representing a number of domains, names of shops, private announcements, businesses, etc.” (p. 115). She argues that distinguishing between the two is important for understanding the LL as an arena that authorities use to strengthen their control and implement policies and where groups and individuals as well as authorities can express identities, hierarchies and ideological beliefs (pp. 110-115).

2.2 Expressions of identity in the linguistic landscape

Some researchers have further investigated to what extent the ways in which LL actors express themselves reflect things like beliefs and identities by looking at factors affecting sign makers’ choices. According to Spolsky (2009), *symbolic value*, or using a language you want to be identified with, is one factor that affects sign-makers’ choices (p. 33, see also Spolsky & Cooper, 1991). Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) use the theory of *presentation-of-self*, introduced by Goffman (1963), as one of their categories that explain sign-makers’ choices. Their other categories are *good-reasons* (taking the client’s behavior into consideration) - a concept introduced by Boudon, (1990) and *power relations* (as defined by Bourdieu, 1983, 1993) (pp. 9-10). Ben-Rafael (2009) adds *collective identity* as a fourth category, as he argues that presentation-of-self reflects individuality while collective identity has to do with presenting yourself as belonging to a group (p. 46).

Some studies focus on the role of LLs in creating a collective national identity (Curtin, 2009; Trumper-Hecht, 2009; Kallen, 2009). Kallen (2009), for example, takes into account the importance of creating a place that attracts tourists as he examines the LL and national identity in Ireland. In today’s urban environments, however, collective identities are not as strongly connected to the concept of a nation-state that often has its own national language, as globalization and more effective communication allows for a more complex situation of “sub-and/or trans-national styles” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 5). Accordingly, Ben-Rafael et al.

(2010) define the collective identity principle as “bound to regional, ethnic or religious particularisms”, and further note that “the more a setting qualifies for the notion of multiculturalism, LLs should comprise items expressing such particularistic identities – in addition to, or on account of, symbols of all-societal solidarity” (p.xviii).

Much LL research today focuses on cities, as society is becoming increasingly urbanized, and some researchers point to the LL as an important part of a city’s distinct character (e.g. Guilat, 2010; Waksman & Shohamy, 2010). Waksman and Shohamy (2010) look at how signage placed by the municipality, intended to create a Jewish-Israeli identity, in Tel-Aviv has been met by counter-reactions from private actors. They argue that the multitude of groups within today’s “global cities” make them unique places with complex situations of multilingualism that deserve attention (p.57). Furthermore, Ben-Rafael (2009) identifies the LL as one of the factors contributing to the perception of a locality’s *personality* both by its inhabitants and by visitors (p. 42). Along the same lines, some researchers investigate how the LL helps create a “sense of place” (Jaworski & Yeung, 2010, p. 177, see also Hult, 2014). Jaworski and Yeung (2010) examine how signage in residential areas in Hong Kong is designed to create a distinct image, and in doing so construct a sense of place. As Hult (2014) remarks, “geographical spaces become places through discursive transformation” (p. 509). His investigations of San Antonio’s LL show that it projects an image of English monolingualism even though the area is multilingual according to census data.

2.3 Comparing linguistic landscape data and census data

Demographic information can be useful in LL studies since it provides information about the space in which place is constructed. Like Hult (2014), some researchers have compared census data with LL data in order to get a better overview of a locality’s linguistic makeup (e.g. Nishiyama, 2010; Macalister, 2010; Muth, 2014; Taylor-Leech, 2012; Kotze & du Plessis, 2010; Brown, 2007; Yanguas, 2009). As Barni and Extra (2008) point out, demographic information mainly concerns the home domain while LL data are usually collected in the public space. Since LL data are usually limited to the public domain they should not be read as a reflection of overall language use in society (p. 3), but when put together with demographic information they can

yield interesting results. For example, Macalister (2010) looks at the LL in New Zealand – a country where the population has gone from being mainly monolingual English-speaking to more linguistically diverse in recent years (p. 55). He concludes that even though census data show a decrease in the proportion of monolingual English speakers in New Zealand, the LL is still very much monolingual English. Moreover, he observes that languages other than English tend to be used more often by private actors than official actors in the LL and suggests a change in language policy in order to strengthen the voices of language minorities (p. 72).

2.4 Linguistic landscape research in the Australian context

In Australia, census data concerning language use have been collected since 1976 “providing a valuable longitudinal perspective on language maintenance and language shift over a large range of community languages” (Kipp & Norrby, 2006, p. 3). According to Kipp and Norrby (2006) this is one of three main reasons why Australia is an interesting object of linguistic studies, the other two being that it is a “multicultural nation with an ever-increasing linguistic diversity”, and that it was “the first English-speaking country of immigration to introduce an explicit language policy aimed at promoting and developing multilingualism as part of a broader social and economic agenda” (p. 3). Many studies deal with the language situation in Australia, and two issues of the *International Journal of the sociology of language* (Issue 180, 2006, and issue 72, 1988) have had a specific focus on Australia.

Clyne and Kipp (2006) use historical documentation along with census data to create an overview of the changing language demography in Australia. They note that since the first settlers arrived in Sydney in 1788, the country has gone from having a clear dominance of English to receiving waves of non-English speaking immigrants who have made the country more linguistically diverse. These immigration waves have brought different languages to Australia at different times and, subsequently, the country’s immigrant language groups have been present for different amounts of time. European languages, mainly Italian and Greek, are the oldest immigrant language groups, followed by Arabic (Clyne & Kipp, 2006, pp. 7-9). At the time of Clyne and Kipp’s (2006) study, census data regarding language use at home had shown a

decrease in European languages, while Arabic had continued to rise, and non-European languages (mainly Chinese and Vietnamese) had increased steadily (p. 12). When looking at specific age brackets it was also concluded that European language groups were ageing, while Arabic, Vietnamese, and Chinese had high proportions of young speakers (p.16).

Rubino's (2010) paper focuses on immigrant languages in Australia, and she argues that they are in a vulnerable position, with their members assimilating and giving up their community language in favor of English (p. 17.1). With the help of census data, varying degrees of language shift within different language groups as well as factors affecting the rate of the shift, such as degree of dispersion and marriage patterns, can be distinguished (p. 17.3). However, Kipp (2008) points to limitations when only looking at information that the census questions on language use yield, since they only concern the home domain and do not take into account things like frequency of use and complexity of language. She calls for further research "in order to better understand the ways in which factors work together" (pp. 29-30). Rubino (2010) notes that the home domain has received substantial focus in research into what affects language maintenance and shift among immigrant communities in Australia (p. 17.4). Other domains that have received some attention are the school domain (e.g. Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004; Liddicoat & Curnow, 2009; Lotherington, 2001; Hall 1996; Bradshaw; 2006), the workplace (Clyne, 1991, p. 139), and media (Clyne & Kipp 1999, p. 296, p. 215).

The LL gives us insight into language use in the domain of the public space (Spolsky, 2009, p. 33) and as such provides valuable information that can be used together with observations made in other domains for language research and management. Examples of factors affecting language maintenance that have been mentioned in the Australian context are friendships (Winter & Pauwels, 2005, 2006), social networks (Kipp, 2004, 2008; Winter & Pauwels 2006), language contact (Clyne, 1967, 1972, 1991, 2003; Tamis, 1991), cultural distance from the host community (Kipp & Clyne, 2003, p. 39), the importance of language as an identity marker (Smolicz, 1981, p. 76; Smolicz, Secombe & Hudson, 2001, p. 164), and speakers' attitudes (Callan and Gallois, 1982). The LL is one area where we can examine how factors like these affect language use and therefore it contributes to our understanding of multilingualism in Australia.

3. Methodology

It is against this backdrop that the current study sets out to examine the LL of Marrickville – one of Sydney’s most linguistically diverse suburbs – in order to gain more knowledge about multilingualism in Australia. More specifically, I investigate to what extent the linguistic landscape in Marrickville reflects census data, and from a wider perspective, how observations of the linguistic landscape can contribute to our understanding of multilingual settings. This section firstly explains choices made regarding the research area, secondly, how a unit of analysis is defined, and, lastly, how the units have been categorized.

3.1 The research area

Australia has a long history of linguistic diversity. Before the English settlers arrived, a number of different indigenous languages were spoken, and after the country came under British rule, with English as the *lingua franca*, the country has received immigrants from all over the world making it highly multicultural. English monolingualism was promoted at the start of the 20th century, and as a result, many of Australia’s indigenous languages became extinct (Lo Bianco, 1987, p. 6). Migration programs following World War II helped language maintenance within immigrant communities, and in recent years, policies have reflected a more positive view on linguistic diversity. Although English has not been given official status as the country’s national language, it being the first language of 76.8 % of the population and its use in “major and powerful institutions of the society” makes it the *de facto* national language (Lo Bianco, 1987, pp. 6-7). Major cities and other places where the population density is high have the widest linguistic diversity in Australia (Rubino, 2010, p. 17.3), and the present study focuses on the suburb of Marrickville, situated in the country’s most populated city, Sydney. According to census data, the dispersion of language groups in Marrickville is somewhat different than in Sydney as a whole, and the percentage of speakers of a language other than English (LOTE) is higher, so it is important to note that Marrickville is not representative of Sydney. However, although they are not dispersed in the same way, the four most commonly used LOTEs are the same in Marrickville as in the city as a whole. Moreover, being one of Sydney’s most diverse

suburbs makes Marrickville a suitable object when investigating how multilingualism is structured and can be maintained in Australia.

According to Bloomaert (2013), increasing migration and communication has made the sociolinguistic situation in society more complex (p. 5), which calls for a detailed analysis in order to understand all the factors at play in the LL (p. 8). For a detailed analysis to be possible, the research area of the present study was limited to a section of one of the main roads traversing the suburb, Marrickville Road, where many businesses and institutions are located. As Ben-Rafael et al. (2010) argue, urban areas with a high concentration of businesses and public institutions are typically where the crowd is the densest, and as these areas display much social interaction they are suitable for LL studies (p. xiii).

Furthermore, all languages observed on the LL items are included in the analysis but focus is put on the *de facto* national language, English, and on languages used by groups that have formed due to immigration, and specifically on the four largest groups in Marrickville and Sydney according to census data – Greek, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Chinese. The term *community languages* (Clyne & Kipp, 2006) is used to refer to these language groups. English often receives attention in LL studies, since it is “the language of international communication” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006, p. 78). Its powerful position in the Australian context, being the *de facto* national language as well as the *lingua franca* for international communication, makes it especially important to observe in relation to other languages. Also worth noting is that, as some researchers have done previously, I treat all forms of Chinese language varieties as one (see for instance Lou, 2010), as a thorough examination of different varieties would have been too time consuming to include in the present research. Further examination of different Chinese varieties would be a valuable continuation of the present study.

3.2 The units of analysis

In regards to what counts as a unit of analysis, the present study takes the approach used by Cenoz and Groter (2006) in their research on multilingualism in the LL of two locations in Friesland and the Basque country. They treat individual signs and posters, but also entire

storefronts, as single units of analysis, so in the case of shops and other businesses, each establishment is treated as one unit of analysis. Hence, one storefront and all its signs conveying information about and advertising its products and services is treated as one unit, since it all pertains to the same company and can be viewed as a whole (p. 71; see also Hult, 2009, for this kind of analysis). It follows that when posters and stickers on storefronts advertise goods or services that are not provided by the establishment, for instance when a poster on a storefront advertises a concert organized by a different actor and held in a different venue, they are treated as separate units. This method of specifying a unit is not completely unproblematic, as it is sometimes hard to distinguish between signage that belongs to the establishment and signage that should be treated separately. However, in the present research, there were no instances of uncertainty regarding whether or not items should be treated separately.

Roughly 2500 photos were taken of instances of language use visible to individuals at street level (Hult, 2009, p. 96) in the research area. In these images, 569 units of analysis were distinguished. The photos included all instances of written language, but graffiti and stickers that only contained *tags*¹ were excluded from the analysis. It was decided that investigations of such items would take too much time and effort to fit within the limits of the present study, but would be interesting to focus on in future research.

3.3 Categorization

After establishing the units of analysis, languages present on each item were noted. However, only counting languages does not tell us much about what they are used for and by whom. As Muth (2014) puts it:

Especially when making assumptions on the spread, function and vitality of a language within a community, counting different languages on shop signs and billboards alone does not necessarily provide new perspectives with generalisable data on the language situation in a given community. Instead such data shall serve as a foundation for a further

¹ The Encyclopaedia Britannica explains *tagging* in graffiti as “the repeated use of a single symbol or series of symbols to mark territory” (“tagging,” n.d.).

discursive analysis of signs and a thorough study of the forms and functions of publicly visible written language in a cityscape. (p. 38)

The items were therefore divided into categories and subcategories. Firstly, a distinction was made between *top-down* and *bottom-up* signage. However, oftentimes it is difficult to make a clear distinction between top-down and bottom-up signage (Huebner, 2006; Coupland, 2010, p. 79), and some researchers have preferred to use a scheme of categorization that reflects more of a continuum (e.g. Spolsky, 2009, p. 28; Barni & Bagna, 2009, p. 134). The present study takes the same approach and the top-down and bottom-up categories have two subcategories each that represent different stages of officialdom. The category that is expected to be most influenced by top-down flows contains signage produced by authorities on a national level, and the category of top-down items that is closer to the bottom-up side is made up of a group of items produced for a community project, where artist and community members were involved in the production. Among the bottom-up signs there is a category of shops, restaurants and other businesses that have permanent establishments in the area (referred to as *static* items), and a category of *non-static* (Muth, 2014, p. 34) items (e.g. posters and stickers placed on lampposts). The sign-makers of the static items are expected to operate under more influence by norms and regulations (Huebner, 2009, p. 83) than the sign-makers of the non-static items.

Since the bottom-up signage observed shows more linguistic variation than the top-down signage and since, as Muth (2014) argues, informal signage holds more variation in function and form (pp. 38-39) it was decided that the items in this section needed further analysis in order to better understand how multilingualism is constructed in the research area. Therefore, what situations different languages are used in is examined further, applying the analytical framework established by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), and further developed by Ben-Rafael, (2009) where sign-makers' choices are dependent on four categories – *presentation-of-self*, *good-reasons*, *power relations*, and *collective identity*. Sign-makers who are driven by *presentation-of-self* use languages they want to be identified with, while those who are driven by *good-reasons* base their decisions on expected effects on clients. Choices can also reflect *power relations* between dominant and subordinate groups (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, p. 10) and some are made as *collective identity* markers, where the sign-makers want to be seen as belonging to a certain group (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p. 46). Additionally, a discussion on *symbolic* and *informational* value in both top-

down and bottom-up items sheds further light on the roles of community languages in Marrickville. As Spolsky and Cooper (1991) explain, signs can have *symbolic* value when they serve as an identity marker (p. 84) and *informational* value when they convey a message to their intended audience (p. 91).

4. Language use in Marrickville

This section presents the findings of the present study. Firstly, immigration patterns and statistics on language use in Marrickville and Sydney, collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' webpage, is presented, followed by a comparison of census data and overall use of community languages in the LL of the research area. Furthermore, I make an in-depth analysis of the observed signage for a better understanding of the sociolinguistic situation in the research area. Here I distinguish between *top-down* and *bottom-up* flows, look at types of business and messages conveyed in relation to sign-makers' choices, and discuss *symbolic* and *informational* value of LL items in the context of multilingualism in Marrickville.

4.1 Immigration flows and linguistic diversity according to census data

According to the 2011² census, 52.8 % of the 24,613 people living in Marrickville were born in Australia. For the entire city of Sydney, the percentage of people born in Australia is 59.9%, and for the entire country, it is 69.8%. Subsequently, Marrickville has a percentage of people born overseas that is slightly higher than that of Sydney, and is fairly high compared to that of the entire country. As Table 1 demonstrates, the most common birthplaces other than Australia, when looking at Marrickville, are Vietnam, Greece, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Lebanon, and China. Census data on country of birth by year of arrival show that people born in Greece arrived in Marrickville early (mainly in the 50s and 60s) while the Lebanese population saw its biggest increase in the 60s and 70s. Both the Vietnamese and the Chinese populations

² In Australia, a national census is taken every five years, and this is the most recent one at present. Data are available via ABS Statistics' website: <http://www.abs.gov.au/>.

Table 1. Other country of birth than Australia, top responses

Marrickville			Sydney		
		%			%
Vietnam	1 539	6,2	United Kingdom	182 227	4.1
Greece	1 260	5.1	China	148 558	3.4
United Kingdom	850	2.8	India	87 874	2.0
New Zealand	491	2.0	New Zealand	84 948	1.9
Lebanon	440	1.8	Vietnam	69 780	1.6
China	428	1.7	Philippines	62 842	1.4

grew largely in the 80s and 90s. The immigration flow of these four groups in Marrickville is in line with that of Australia as a whole. The 21st century has seen a decrease in immigration overall compared to the second half of the 20th century both in Marrickville and in the entire country.

The most common answers when the citizens of Marrickville were asked about ancestry were English, Australian, Greek, Irish, Vietnamese, Scottish, Chinese, and Lebanese. Clyne and Kipp (2006) point out that previous censuses have had a question about parental country of birth of respondents who were born in Australia, but following the introduction of a question on ancestry this specificity was deemed unnecessary, and now, the only information collected is whether the parents of the respondent were born in or outside Australia. They further note that birthplace data can be used together with language data to calculate rates of language maintenance and shift, and that the information about parents' country of birth made it possible to look at language transfer across generations (p.11).

The most frequently used languages other than English (LOTes) in the home domain in Marrickville, according to the 2011 census, are Greek, Vietnamese, Arabic, Portuguese, Cantonese, and Mandarin. This is demonstrated in Table 2, where the most commonly occurring languages in the LL of the research area are also listed. As previously mentioned, this essay treats all Chinese varieties as one language group, and when combining statistics for Chinese languages their number of speakers in the home domain exceeds that of Portuguese. In Marrickville, 45.9% of the population speak two or more languages at home (a percentage that is higher than Sydney's 35.5% and more than twice as high as for Australia as a whole, where this number is 20.4%). Importantly, the question in the census regarding what languages are used at home only takes one language other than English into account per respondent, disregarding the

Table 2. Most common LOTEs spoken at home in Marrickville and Sydney and total number of occurrences of the most common LOTEs on LL items in the research area

Marrickville	%	Sydney	%	LL, research area	Occurrences
Greek	2 222 9.0	Chinese languages	266 023 6.0	Chinese	45
Vietnamese	1 982 8.0	Arabic	178 663 4.1	Vietnamese	21
Arabic	1 025 4.2	Vietnamese	85 028 1.9	Greek	11
Chinese languages	938 3.8	Greek	80 780 1.8	Italian	10
Portuguese	568 2.3	Italian	68 532 1.6	Arabic	9

possibilities of additional languages being used. Moreover, statistics do not cover potential complexities such as additional languages used in other places than one’s home and situations where persons living alone do not use their native tongue at home (Clyne & Kipp, 2006, pp. 11-12). It is obvious that census data do not cover the whole language situation, and the LL is one possible source of further information.

4.2 Language use at home and in the linguistic landscape

When looking at the overall use of LOTEs in the linguistic landscape of Marrickville, it can be concluded that the most common language used at home, Greek, does not appear as frequently as the second and fourth most common languages in the home domain – Vietnamese and Chinese, respectively. The third most common language in the home domain, Arabic, is also superseded by Chinese in the LL. This may be due to the fact that the Greek and Arabic language groups arrived earlier than the Vietnamese and Chinese language groups and have reached a higher degree of assimilation, thus being more prone to using the *de facto* national language for communication in the public domain, while still using their community language at home. Moreover, census data show that in Sydney as a whole, Chinese and Vietnamese are used in the home by a higher percentage of people than Greek is, which could explain the higher frequency of use of Chinese and Vietnamese in the LL of the research area, since shop-owners and billposters operating in the area need not necessarily live in the area. It should also be mentioned that the most recent census is from 2011, and it indicates that the Vietnamese and Chinese populations are increasing while the Greek population is decreasing in Australia. It could be the case that this trend has continued in the last four years and that the proportions of speakers of

Vietnamese and Chinese are larger than what is shown in Table 2, while the proportion of speakers of Greek is smaller.

Worth noting is that Arabic, which is the second most common LOTE used at home in Sydney, and the third most common in Marrickville, appears less frequently than the three other community languages in the LL of the research area. When Arabic is observed, it is on multilingual signage where a number of different languages convey the same message or on signs directed at a specific audience (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p. 46), an example being signs assuring halal-certification (see Figure 1). Thus, Arabic is only used rarely, to orient messages to individuals who would understand the language. Interestingly, many reports show that Arabic immigrant communities in Australia are often met by hostility (see for instance Poynting & Tabar, 2002; Poynting & Noble, 2004; Mansouri & Trembath, 2005). Negative connotations could explain why the Arabic language is not visible in the public space even though it is present in the privacy of people's homes. Furthermore, Clyne and Kipp (2006) note that cultural distance from the host community can affect the rate of language shift in an immigrant group. They argue that "high-shift groups tend to be ones for whom there is not a big cultural distance from Anglo-Australians". Arabic groups are perceived to have less in common with Anglo-Australian groups than other immigrant groups in regards to culture, and hence, show low levels of shift in the home domain (Clyne & Kipp, 2006, p. 18). However, this cultural distance could also explain why these groups cannot coexist with the host community in the public domain and therefore are less visible than other groups. This is certainly not an exhaustive analysis, and an interesting subject for further research would be to explore the situation of Arabic communities in Australia in order to better understand patterns of language maintenance. Due to time limitations and size-restrictions of the present study, such investigations are not made here. However, it is noted that attitudes of the host community is one of many factors that may affect language use by immigrant communities.



Figure 1. Sign assuring halal-certification

4.3 An in-depth analysis of multilingualism in the linguistic landscape

Not surprisingly, English dominates the LL of the research area as a whole, but when distinguishing between top-down and bottom-up flows further conclusions can be drawn as community languages become more prominent in certain areas.

4.3.1 Top-down signage

As shown in Table 3, the top-down signage observed comprises 220 official signs, such as road signs and public notices, and 20 mosaics along the pavement designed by community members and artists for a community arts project (Marrickville Council, 2009). The official signs are all in English except for one that is bilingual English and Aboriginal, and 15 of the mosaics are monolingual English while three are multilingual – one displaying English and Greek, a second Italian and Latin, and a third displaying 24 different languages – and the remaining two are monolingual Chinese, and monolingual Arabic. The official signs convey information while the mosaics were created as a celebration of “Marrickville’s diverse community” and “explore themes such as acceptance, teamwork, culture and diversity” (Marrickville Council, 2009). Interestingly, the three public institutions found in the area (a post office, town hall, and a fire station) all have signage that is monolingual English. Moreover, when looking at the council’s website³, a vast majority of the information is in English, with one page each conveying information about some services and activities in the area in the LOTEs most commonly spoken at home according to census data (Greek, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese, and Portuguese).

The dominance of English on official signs, exemplified in Figure 2, and the preference for English shown by the municipality in instances where it is communicating with its citizens indicates that this is top-down actors’ preferred language when conveying information and that there are *power relations* (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006) favoring English at play in the LL of Marrickville. The multilingual character of the mosaics, demonstrated in Figure 3, indicates that other languages carry symbolic meaning in the promotion of Marrickville’s *collective identity* (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). The mosaics do not convey information in the same way as the official signs do, but rather contain a few words, often serving as a compliment to an image. What is

³ <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/>

important here is not the meaning of the words, but that they are in multiple languages and contribute to the “sense of place” (Hult, 2014, p. 519) that LL actors help construct. Furthermore, a comparison of the languages used on the mosaics and census data shows that the mosaics do not reflect which languages the citizens use at home. For instance, they do not contain any Vietnamese, which is one of the most common LOTEs spoken at home. This further strengthens the claim that the main function of the mosaics is a symbolic one in the construction of a multilingual place.

There are also historical aspects that add to Marrickville’s sense of place. The fact that the mosaics were created in the 90s and the 00s (Marrickville Council, 2009), after the times of large scale immigration had made Marrickville more linguistically diverse, while for instance road signs have a longer history can explain the difference in languages used. Moreover, the name “Illawarra”⁴ that can be seen in Figure 2 was originally the Aboriginal name for an area on the south coast of New South Wales (“Illawarra,” 2015). As Edelman (2009) argues, proper names in the LL have symbolic rather than informational value (p. 144), and according to census data, people residing in Marrickville do not commonly speak aboriginal languages at home. Thus, this occurrence of Aboriginal in the LL reflects a historical element, and the sense of place it helps create, rather than the linguistic repertoire of Marrickville’s citizens.

Table 3. Top-down signage along Marrickville Road

Language combinations	Official	Mosaics
Monolingual		
English	219	15
Chinese		1
Arabic		1
Bilingual		
English and Aboriginal	1	
English and Greek		1
Italian and Latin		1
Multiple languages		1
Total	220	20

⁴ The most likely meaning is “high pleasant place by the sea” (“Illawarra,” 2015).



Figure 2. Two monolingual English road signs and one multilingual English and Aboriginal road sign



Figure 3. Multilingual mosaic as part of community arts project

4.3.2 Bottom-up signage

The bottom-up signage in the present study contains 213 static items, such as storefronts, and 116 non-static items, such as posters, stickers, placards, and notes. As demonstrated in Table 4, the greatest language variation is observed on the static items, 33% of which are multilingual. The dominance of English, however, is still undisputed, as all the monolingual items in this category are in English and as all the multilingual ones contain English and additional languages. The most common additional languages are Chinese, occurring on 35 items, Vietnamese, occurring on 20 items, Greek, Italian, and Spanish all occurring on 9 items, and Arabic, occurring on 7 items.

Table 4. Static bottom-up signage along Marrickville Road

Language combinations	Static items		
Monolingual		Three or more languages	
English	142	English, Chinese, Vietnamese	12
		English, Greek, Italian	2
Total, monolingual	142 (67%)	English, Vietnamese, Arabic	1
		English, Spanish, Japanese	1
Bilingual		English, Vietnamese, Greek, Arabic	1
English and Chinese	20	English, Chinese, Greek, Arabic	1
English and Vietnamese	5	English, Chinese, Italian, Spanish	1
English and Greek	5	English, Italian, Spanish, French, Japanese, German	1
English and Italian	5	English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish, and multiple additional languages	1
English and Spanish	5		
English and Arabic	3		
English and Thai	3		
English and Swedish	2		
English and Filipino	1		
English and Indian language	1		
		Total	21 (10%)
Total	50 (23%)	Total, multilingual	71 (33%)
Total			213

Table 5. Non-static bottom-up signage along Marrickville Road

Language combinations	Non-static items
Monolingual	
English	101
Chinese	5
Greek	1
Russian	1
Total	108 (93%)
Multilingual	
English and Chinese	4
English and French	2
English and Vietnamese	1
English and Arabic	1
Total	8 (7%)
Total	116

Table 5 demonstrates the languages observed on non-static bottom-up signage, and it can be concluded that mere 7% of the 116 items in this group are multilingual. However, in this group there are more monolingual items in an LOTE than in the other groups. One monolingual Greek item, one monolingual Russian item, and five monolingual Chinese items were observed as well as 101 monolingual English items. All the multilingual items were bilingual containing English and an additional language. Among the additional languages, Chinese occurred on four items, French on two items, and Arabic and Vietnamese both occurred on one item.

4.3.3 Types of business and sign-makers' choices

Analyzing signage in its context is crucial for our understanding of why the signage is constructed the way it is and how it contributes to a locality's sense of place (Hult, 2014, p. 516). A closer look at the situations in which different languages are used in the LL can give an idea of the intended audience and to what extent *good-reasons* (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006) affect sign-makers' choices. As can be seen in Appendix A, LOTEs are mainly used on shop-fronts of food stores and restaurants in the research area. Other types of business that frequently use multilingual signage are cafés and stores selling homeware products, while real estate agents and

businesses that provide financial services rarely use LOTEs. The frequency of community languages used by food stores and restaurants, demonstrated in Appendix B, is in line with Ben-Rafael's (2009) claim that some stores, such as those selling daily goods, are aimed at a local audience. He further states that the signage of these types of business often holds many "sociocultural clues" (p. 50). In the example provided in Figure 4 of a shop-front at a local butcher, we see a clear dominance of the two community languages Chinese and Vietnamese and a marginalization of English. English can only be seen in the address, which is written at the bottom of the sign in small letters (see Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 120 and Hult, 2014 for discussions about the meaning of how languages are positioned on signs). The sign is likely intended for an audience that has knowledge of the two community languages, as they convey information about what kind of establishment it is. In contrast, the sign in Figure 5 is dominated by English, with a short text in Chinese that can be roughly translated into "great profit". In this example, all important information is conveyed in English while the Chinese text has symbolic meaning in the company's *presentation of self* (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006).

According to Malinowski (2009), LL analyses should acknowledge that there is a difference between large-scale businesses that operate on a national or international level and local businesses (p. 109). In the present research area, financial institutions that belong to nationwide chains and restaurants that operate around the globe use only English on their signage. Since English is the global language of communication it indexes power and holds high economic value (see Cenoz & Gorter, 2009, for a discussion on language and economy), and being the *de facto* national language of Australia also explains its use by businesses operating across the nation. Furthermore, the exclusive use of English by international businesses (See the storefront of Subway in Figure 6 for an example) may be due to a preference for mass-producing the same version of a sign in order to be as cost-effective as possible (Reh, 2004, p. 35).

The analysis of types of business also sheds some light on why Italian and Spanish have similar numbers of occurrences as Marrickville's community languages on static bottom-up signage in the research area. Most of the instances where these two languages are used are for proper names at cafés and restaurants, reflecting trends in marketing these types of business (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p. 50). For example, an Italian name of a café or a Spanish name used for



Figure 4. Multilingual English, Vietnamese, and Chinese storefront at local butcher



Figure 5. Multilingual English and Chinese storefront



Figure 6. Monolingual English storefront of international chain of restaurants

a traditional Mexican dish does not necessarily mean that people from these countries have produced the signage or that the signs are supposed to be read by speakers of these languages but rather reflects influences from these cultures (Barni & Bagna, 2009, p. 137). Furthermore, Edelman (2009) argues that language choices for proper names in the LL are intended to affect the customers' emotions in order to make the product look appealing rather than convey information (p. 144). In Figure 7, the word "coffee" is in English and since it gives information about the product the intended audience is likely English-speaking. The word "vittoria" is Italian for "victory", and since it does not add any important information, the language choice is in all probability meant to add an effect. Kelly-Holmes (2005) explains this as "affective switching", where a foreign language is used because of its connotations to certain ideals or stereotypes (p. 11). Proper names are also more prone to being adopted by other languages and thus often belong to more than one language (Edelman, 2009, p. 145). The words "huevos rancheros", "burrito", and "empanadas", seen in Figure 8, all derive from Spanish but can also be found in the Oxford Dictionary of English ("huevos rancheros," n.d.; "burrito," n.d.; "empanada," n.d.). This makes it possible to classify these words as English, which would make the sign monolingual English. As Edelman (2009) points out, it is difficult to arrive at a clear-cut solution for the classification of proper names, but it is important to at least be specific about what method has been used in each study so that a comparison of results is made possible (pp. 152-153). It should therefore be noted that in the present analysis, proper names have been assigned to their original language.



Figure 7. Multilingual Italian and English name of Australian manufacturer of coffee products



Figure 8. Spanish names of traditional dishes on menu

4.3.4 The content of non-static bottom-up signage

Kallen (2009) explains that “*language choice* includes not only the selection of a language, but the relationships between language and message” (p. 277). Many of the non-static items in the LL posted by private actors, such as stickers and posters, convey political messages. These texts are often monolingual English, which strengthens its position as the preferred language when communicating important information intended for a broader audience. The category of non-static items posted by private actors is also where the most monolingual items displaying an LOTE are found. This is an important observation, as the category of temporary signage on a grass-root level is where private actors operate most freely. In an article about graffiti, Pennycook (2009) describes *transgressive* bottom-up signage where authority is confronted and where private actors are “claiming the space” (p. 307). Figures 9 and 10 both depict posters that convey messages of anti-oppression and anti-establishment, and are likely aimed at people in general in order to spread certain ideologies, but the poster in Figure 9 is monolingual English while the poster in Figure 10 is monolingual Greek. As the intended readers in each case must have knowledge of the language used in order to understand the message, it reflects a communicative value attached to both languages by sign-makers (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009, p. 66) and a multilingual reality of the citizens rather than a symbolic sense of place.



Figure 9. Monolingual English political poster



Figure 10. Monolingual Greek political poster

4.4 Symbolic and informational value in top-down and bottom-up signage

The LL provides insight into both private and public language use, and comparing similarities and differences gives us a better understanding of both sectors (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009, p. 64). The dominance of English on top-down signage reflects a clear “dominant culture” that permeates language use by public actors. Since signage on this level is meant to convey information, such as names of streets and information for bus-travel, elements of competition or presentation-of-self that may inspire for example store-owners to use other languages than the one used by the majority of the population are not as relevant for actors operating at this level (Ben-Rafael, 2009, p. 49). The multilingual character of artwork funded by the municipality, however, suggests that the suburb of Marrickville is being promoted as a multilingual community by the municipality. Here languages other than English are given symbolic significance, while English is the preferred language of communication by official actors.

Language use by private actors contrasts the monolingualism of the official signage, as community languages are used together with English on signs that carry information about businesses and products, and when looking at signage at the very grass-root level we find instances where English is completely absent, giving other languages high informational value. As aforementioned, this analysis shows that multilingualism is not just a symbolic construction, but also a fact of everyday language use by community members.

5. Conclusion

This essay has investigated the LL of Marrickville in relation to census data, and in doing so it has provided an overview of language use in the suburb. Both the context in which languages are used and the content of specific items have proven useful sources of information. A comparison of the LL and census data shows that information from different domains can be used together in a complementary way. The languages most commonly spoken at home according to census data also appear in the LL, but their prominence differs in the two domains. It is suggested that these

differences can be explained by looking at factors such as year of arrival and attitudes of the host community, although it has not been possible to cover all aspects in the present analysis. However, this essay demonstrates that LL research adds a new dimension in observations of language use in Australia and that looking at the content and context of LL items helps us understand how they are affected by and affect the sense of place that is created in a certain space.

Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the LL items observed supports the claim made by Spolsky (2009) and Barni and Bagna (2009) that top-down vs. bottom-up categorization needs to include subcategories, since a clear distinction between public and private is not always possible. Top-down and bottom-up flows influence LL items to various degrees, and two subcategories of top-down signage as well as two subcategories of bottom-up signage have been applied in this essay. When solely distinguishing between top-down and bottom-up signage, it is observed that community languages are used more often in the bottom-up category, and when applying subcategories this observation becomes even more evident. Furthermore, as previously argued by Malinowski (2009), it is necessary to make a distinction between businesses that operate on an international or national level and local businesses (p. 109), and it has been demonstrated that in the research area of the present study, community languages are more commonly used by the latter type of business.

Types of business and content of signage have been investigated drawing on Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) theory of what inspires sign-makers' choices. In regards to *good-reasons*, it is observed that some businesses are directed at a local audience, as Ben-Rafael (2009) has previously argued, and these types of business often use community languages. Furthermore, *power relations* are observed, as English dominates the LL overall and is the only language that holds communicative value on all levels while community languages are only used for communication by private actors. Moreover, community languages are part of the *presentation of self* for both public and private actors, as they hold symbolic value on items found in both categories. The use of community languages in the LL helps create a *collective identity* of a multilingual suburb that stands out in a seemingly monolingual larger context. Thus, Marrickville is a suitable example of Ben-Rafael's (2009) theory that the LL helps contribute to a locality's personality (p. 42).

The present study also shows instances where theories about language choices reflecting marketing trends (Ben-Rafael, 2009), attempts to evoke certain emotions, and proper names belonging to several languages (Edelman, 2009) are supported. Italian and Spanish occur frequently in the LL, but since they are not commonly used in the home domain, their appearances in the LL likely exemplify these theories rather than reflect the languages of the sign-makers or target audiences. A closer look at the LL items further supports this claim, as Italian and Spanish are mainly used for proper names of businesses and products that can be associated with specific cultures where these languages are used.

From a larger perspective, this essay demonstrates that knowledge about the roles of different languages in a multilingual setting can be gained by multidimensional LL research. At first glance when walking down Marrickville Road, the use of multiple languages on storefronts and the multilingual character of the mosaics on the pavement give the impression of a suburb where multilingualism is a characteristic of the population that is being supported by the municipality. However, further observations show that although it is true that the population is multilingual, the municipality uses this fact as a marker of collective identity rather than actively supporting the use of different languages. It seems the municipality is more concerned with creating a “sense of place” than improving the space for its inhabitants. This could be used as an argument for increased support for the use of community languages in Marrickville and a higher presence of community languages in public institutions.

Moreover, it can be concluded that many factors are at play in the shaping of LLs, and it has not been possible to cover all aspects in the present study. However, this opens up a vast number of possibilities for further research. For instance, the comparison of different domains can be extended, and include for example language use in schools and workplaces. Language use in public institutions would be an important area to investigate further in order to support the claim that for the municipality, multilingualism is an image rather than something that is actively supported. Extending the research area would also be an interesting way forward, as the present study only covers one small area in the suburb of Marrickville. Future research could cover more areas within the suburb in order to see if the characteristics observed in the present research area can be seen in all parts of the suburb. It would also be useful to compare Marrickville’s LL to

that of other suburbs in Sydney to see from a larger perspective if Marrickville succeeds in creating an image of multilingualism that stands out.

In order to further investigate the roles of different languages, future investigations could look more closely at the relationship between languages on multilingual signage. Additionally, some items that were excluded from the present study because of time constraints, such as graffiti and moving LL items, could be included in future analyses in order to cover all aspects of the LL. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the situation of specific language groups could be investigated, looking at factors that likely affect language shift and maintenance. Importantly, the present study has only looked at the signage, making assumptions about sign-makers' choices, and an interesting way forward would be conducting interviews with both sign-makers and observers to see what inspires choices made and how the signage is interpreted.

The possibilities for future research are many, and although the present study does not give a full account of the sociolinguistic situation in Marrickville, it provides information that can be useful for both community members and authorities. Understanding how LL items are shaped by and help shape the community can inspire LL actors to make conscious choices in order to create their preferred sociolinguistic environment. Furthermore, as mentioned before, knowledge of who uses which languages for what purposes improves our understanding of what roles different languages have and what specific areas require attention in language planning and policy making. Even though multiple languages are visible in the public space of Marrickville, the main function of languages other than English is symbolic. Increasing the communicative value of community languages in the public space could encourage people to use them and thus help maintain a multilingual society.

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Appendix A

Businesses along Marrickville Road, monolingual or multilingual

Type of business	Monolingual English	Multilingual English and additional	Total
Services			
Restaurant / bar	12	18	30
Finance	17	4	21
Health and beauty	14	5	19
Medical	13	5	18
Real estate	8		8
Café	2	5	7
Teaching	3	3	6
Travel	3	1	4
Employment service	3		3
Legal	3		3
Auto	2		2
Social	1	1	2
Church	1	1	2
Media / digital	2		2
Political	2		2
Various ⁵	5	1	6
Goods			
Food	13	10	23
Clothes / shoes	9	2	11
News Agent	4	2	6
Homeware	2	3	5
Hardware	5		5
Convenience store	2	2	4
Textile	2	2	4
Charity shop	2	1	3
Chemist	1	1	2
Building supplies	2		2
Healthcare	1	1	2
Mixed	2	2	4
Various ⁶	6	1	7
Total	142 (67%)	71(33%)	213

⁵ dry cleaner, gallery, brothel, photo studio, aquarium, payphone

⁶ florist, liquor store, bookstore, sex shop, gift wrapping products, sporting equipment, accessories

Appendix B

Most common LOTEs on static bottom-up signage, types of business, and number of occurrences

Chinese		Vietnamese		Greek	
Food store	7	Restaurant	6	Restaurant	2
Restaurant	6	Food store	4	Food store	2
Financial services	4	Financial services	2	Medical services	2
Medical services	2	Medical services	2	Travel agent	1
Clothing store	2	Health and beauty services	1	Homeware store	1
Homeware store	2	Social services	1	Chemist	1
Textile store	2	News agent	1		
Health and beauty services	1	Convenience store	1		
Teaching services	1	Textile store	1		
Travel agent	1	Chemist	1		
Social services	1				
Church	1				
News agent	1				
Convenience store	1				
Charity shop	1				
Healthcare store	1				
Mixed store	1				
Total	35		20		9

Italian		Spanish		Arabic	
Café	4	Restaurant	3	Restaurant	2
Food store	4	Café	1	Teaching services	1
Payphone	1	Health and beauty services	1	Travel agent	1
		Social services	1	Social services	1
		Payphone	1	News agent	1
		Food store	1	Chemist	1
		Teaching services	1		
Total	9		9		7