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Linguistic Landscaping in Singapore: The Local Linguistic Ecology and the Roles of English

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Abstract

The present thesis, adopting the ecology of language as its conceptual orientation as well as employing linguistic landscape as its methodological tool to collect and analyze data, firstly aims at investigating (1) how the four official languages of Singapore namely Malay, (Mandarin) Chinese, Tamil, and English have been deployed on signs by three different social actors, i.e., the Singaporean government, corporations, and individuals. Consequently, it explores (2) the functions, or *niches*, of these languages, especially English, and (3) the potential for a language shift towards English on public signage in light of the *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of Singapore. Analysis of 1,555 photos taken in and around 30 MRT (Mass Rapid Transport) stations of the Circle Line (CCL) demonstrated a preference for English by all LL-actors with an extensively high frequency of use (monolingual signs in English accounted for 63% of the total number of signs) and, for most of the cases, by the occupation of English in the first position in the visual hierarchy of bi- and multilingual signs. (Mandarin) Chinese, Malay, and Tamil were not employed frequently, thus having restricted functions, being mostly utilized for names of streets, stations, etc. and as translations of long and complicated messages written in English. English, on the other hand, appears to have dual identities in the setting of Singapore. When English is used metaphorically, it can still be considered a global language for economic survival, yet when being utilized situationally, English is a local language for the maintenance of racial harmony and inter-ethnic communication. In addition, quantitative results and qualitative analyses indicate the possibility of a language shift from Chinese to English on public signage and suggest that even though *de jure* language policies in Singapore appear to align with the *ecology-of-language paradigm*, *de facto* language policies of this city-state affiliate with the *diffusion-of-English paradigm*.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, the ecology of language, language ecology, linguistic dominance, *niches*, multilingual(ism), English imperialism, diffusion-of-English paradigm, language shift

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
Chapter 1. Linguistic Landscape and Linguistic Landscaping in Singapore	1
1.1 Linguistic Landscape: Another Angle to Multilingualism.....	1
1.2 Linguistic Landscaping in Singapore	4
1.3 Research Aims.....	5
1.4 Thesis Outline	6
Chapter 2. Theory and Method: Ecological Language Planning and Linguistic Landscape Analysis	8
2.1 The Ecology of Language and Language Planning	8
2.1.1 Language ecology.....	8
2.1.2 <i>Diffusion-of-English paradigm and ecology-of-language paradigm</i>	11
2.1.3 Language planning.....	12
2.1.4 The ecology of language and language planning: reciprocal influence.....	15
2.2 Linguistic Landscape.....	16
2.2.1 Language and ideology.....	16
2.2.2 Linguistic landscape: concept and functions.	17
2.2.3 Previous studies and methodological notes.	19
Chapter 3. Methodology	21
3.1 An Overview of Singapore’s (Socio)linguistic Situation and the Role of English.....	21
3.1.1 Official languages and national language.....	22
3.1.2 Bilingual policy: language of education – an indicator of sign readers’ repertoires?	23
3.1.3 Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) and Speak Good English Movement (SGEM)...	24
3.1.4 The media.....	25
3.1.5 English as an official, working, and dominant language.	26
3.1.6 The local linguistic ecology of Singapore and the research questions of this study...	28
3.2 Data Collection.....	29

3.3	Data Analysis	32
3.3.1	Station code.....	33
3.3.2	Order of the photo.....	33
3.3.3	Language(s) used on signs (and their order).....	33
3.3.4	Types of signs.....	34
3.3.5	Sign content.	35
3.3.6	Text and image.....	35
Chapter 4.	Linguistic Dominance in Multilingual Singapore.....	37
4.1	Linguistic Landscape: Multilingual Singapore, or Is It So?.....	37
4.1.1	Language(s) contained.....	38
4.1.2	Language use and general language patterns by different LL-actors.....	41
4.1.3	Code preference.	46
4.1.4	Language use in terms of content.	47
4.2	The Ecology of Language	50
4.2.1	<i>Niches</i> of the official languages in the local linguistic ecology of Singapore.....	52
4.2.1.1	Malay and Tamil.....	52
4.2.1.2	Chinese.	55
4.2.2	From global to local: English imperialism and complexity in Singapore.	58
4.2.2.1	The niches of English in other ecosystems in which it is not the native language.	58
4.2.2.2	English imperialism and complexity in Singapore through the lens of LL....	60
4.2.2.2.1	English – a global language for economic survival in Singapore.	61
4.2.2.2.2	English – a local language for the maintenance of racial harmony and inter-ethnic communication in Singapore.....	63
4.2.3	Possibility of a language shift on public signage?.....	67
4.2.4	<i>De jure</i> ecology-of-language paradigm and <i>de facto</i> diffusion-of-English paradigm.	69
4.2.5	Monolingual Singapore?.....	70
Chapter 5.	Conclusion: Current Trends and Future Directions for the Language Ecology of Singapore	73
5.1	Linguistic Landscape: Language Use and Visual Linguistic Hierarchy	73

5.2	The Local Linguistic Ecology of Singapore: Diglossia among languages on public signs and English-dominant Multilingual Singapore	74
5.3	Limitations of the Current Study.....	76
5.4	Further Research	77
	References	78

List of Figures

<i>Figure 2.1.</i> A multilingual sign at an MRT station in Singapore	17
<i>Figure 3.1.</i> Singapore Train System Map (Singapore Land Transport Authority, 2015)	31
<i>Figure 3.2.</i> Data collection route	32
<i>Figure 3.3.</i> A notice sign	36
<i>Figure 4.1.</i> The proportion of signs in terms of number of language(s) used	38
<i>Figure 4.2.</i> Distribution of the four official languages on monolingual signs	39
<i>Figure 4.3.</i> A quadrilingual sign at Dhoby Ghaut (CC1) station.....	40
<i>Figure 4.4.</i> Combinations of languages and their distribution on bilingual signs	41
<i>Figure 4.5.</i> Use of languages by LL-actors	42
<i>Figure 4.6.</i> A quadrilingual sign at Promenade station (CC4) station.....	45
<i>Figure 4.7.</i> A Malay-English name sign outside Esplanade (CC3) station	53
<i>Figure 4.8.</i> Tamil serves as transliteration of the Malay name of an MRT station	54
<i>Figure 4.9.</i> Monolingual name sign in Chinese.....	55
<i>Figure 4.10.</i> Bilingual English-Chinese sign by ICBC (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China).....	56
<i>Figure 4.11.</i> Bilingual Chinese-English sign at a food stall	57
<i>Figure 4.12.</i> Monolingual English name sign by a corporation	61
<i>Figure 4.13.</i> Monolingual English advertisement by an individual	62
<i>Figure 4.14.</i> Monolingual English poster for Singapore Kindness Movement	65
<i>Figure 4.15.</i> Monolingual English notice sign by SMRT Corporation	66
<i>Figure 4.16.</i> Monolingual English notice sign at an individual food stall	66

List of Tables

Table 4.1. <i>Contribution of LL-actors to LL and their prominent language patterns</i>	43
Table 4.2 <i>Language use and language patterns in terms of content by different LL-actors</i>	48

Chapter 1. Linguistic Landscape and Linguistic Landscaping in Singapore

Language is not just about being and saying but also about doing things (Gee, 2014) since language does not solely reflect society; rather, it works as a tool utilized by a variety of users for different purposes such as expressing oneself, exerting and/ or negotiating power, etc. Language in public space is no exception. Indeed, language in the public space, i.e. linguistic landscape, is among the language policy mechanisms that are “used mostly (but not exclusively) by those in authority” to manipulate and control languages “so as to affect, create and perpetuate “de facto” language policies, i.e., language practices” (Shohamy, 2006, p. xv).

Hence, it is in this light that the present thesis aims at investigating how the four official languages of Singapore namely Malay, (Mandarin) Chinese, Tamil, and English have been deployed on signs by three different social actors, i.e., the Singaporean government, corporations, and individuals and, consequently, exploring the functions, or *niches*, of these languages, especially English, and the potential for a language shift towards English on public signage in light of the *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of Singapore. To achieve such aims, this study adopts the ecology of language as its theoretical framework as well as opting for linguistic landscape to be its methodological tool to collect and analyze data.

1.1 Linguistic Landscape: Another Angle to Multilingualism

In recent years, linguistic landscape (LL), which fundamentally relies on the photography of public signs, has been receiving attention from researchers with quite a few studies having been conducted in different bi- or multilingual settings (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Backhaus, 2006; Huebner, 2006; Hult, 2009, 2014; Pietikäinen et al., 2011; Rosendal, 2009; Tan, 2011; Taylor-Leech, 2012; etc.). In most studies, LL, “the scene where the public space is symbolically constructed” (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Shohamy & Gorter, 2008 as cited in Shohamy, Rafael, &

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Barni, 2010, p. xi), is used in conjunction with other theoretical frameworks and/ or methodological tools to touch upon different aspects of multilingualism.

The seminal study by Landry & Bourhis (1997) put forth the proposition that LL “may serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory” (p. 23). Moreover, by employing ethnolinguistic vitality as the theoretical framework of their study, Landry & Bourhis (1997) hypothesized that texts and images that are experienced by members of a language group “may contribute to social psychological aspects of bilingual development” (p. 23).

Some other studies by Backhaus (2006), Huebner (2006), and Taylor-Leech (2012), in spite of dissimilar research aims, viewed the public space as a so-called arena “serv[ing] as a mechanism for creating de facto language policy so that the ideological battles that are taking place in the new nation-state can be turned into practice” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110), thus shedding light on the discrepancies in the utilization of language(s) of official and non-official public signage.

While Backhaus (2006), using the notions of power and solidarity to interpret the different characteristics of official and nonofficial multilingual signs in Tokyo in regard to the language contained and their arrangement, pointed out that “[w]hile official signs are designed mainly to express and reinforce existing power relations, nonofficial signs make use of foreign languages in order to communicate solidarity with things non-Japanese” (p. 52), Taylor-Leech (2012), by discussing the iconicity, indexicality and visual grammar of official and nonofficial public signage in Dili, Timor-Leste, revealed the invisibility of national languages, the presence as well as functions of certain languages like Tetum and English, and a complex multilingual reality indexed by nonofficial signs. Even though also taking the differences between official and

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

nonofficial signs into due consideration, Huebner (2006) aimed at answering questions concerning language contact, language mixing and language dominance by examining the LL of 15 neighborhoods in Bangkok, Thailand. His study highlighted the importance and influence of English as a global language as well as revealing the extent of linguistic diversity and offering evidence of a shift from Chinese to English when it comes to wider communication in the city (Huebner, 2006, p. 31).

Other studies like those by Hult (2014) and Pietikäinen et al. (2011) opted for the synergy between LL and nexus analysis to explore the construction of sense of place. In Hult's study (2014), the focus was on the LL of San Antonio's highway system with nexus analysis and principles of geosemiotics being utilized to explore "the discursive processes through which a particular image of San Antonio's linguistic sense of place, one of English dominance despite its demographic bilingualism¹, is constructed" (p. 507). Pietikäinen et al. (2011), by viewing "LL as a discursively constructed space and consequently signs as 'frozed actions'", argued that "the Arctic LL is multi-layered, containing minority, national and global language orders, each organising and prioritising language resources differently".

Studies by Cenoz & Gorter (2006) and Rosendal (2009) put emphasis on the relation between LL and language policy. By investigating the order of dominance of the languages used in the two multilingual cities in Friesland (Netherlands) and the Basque Country (Spain), Cenoz & Gorter (2006) pointed out the differences in the use of the minority language in language signs with more signs in Basque than in Frisian, which "shows the effect of a strong language policy to protect the minority language on the linguistic landscape ... not only reflected in top-down signs

¹ "[A] general term for the use of two or more languages in a society. The term thus subsumes the idea of 'multilingualism'" (Mesthrie et al., 2009, p. 37)

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

... but also in commercial signs" (p. 78). Rosendal's paper (2009) cast light onto the reflection of the change in the official language policy from Rwanda-French bilingualism to Rwanda-French-English trilingualism on the actual use of languages in newspaper advertisements, shop signs and billboards in Kigali and Butare. Through this study, the competitive position of languages in Rwanda on the linguistic market, an ongoing process "affecting not only the use of national and official language ... but also the position of the non African official languages, was revealed (Rosendal, 2009, p. 19).

1.2 Linguistic Landscaping in Singapore

It can be seen from the previous part that LL has developed as an interdisciplinary field attracting interest from researchers, and following the aforementioned stream of research, the current thesis investigates the LL of Singapore, a linguistically and ethnically diverse city-state. Singapore has four official languages namely Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English, which makes this city-state a so-called linguistic market for *de jure*, i.e., arising from government actions, and *de facto*, i.e., arising from custom and usage, language policies, negotiation of power, assignment of functions, etc. The four official languages of Singapore can hardly have the same social status and/ or perform similar function(s) since they might interact with their users and environment in different manners. As a consequence, it can be said that Singapore is a fertile plain for linguistic investigation.

Moreover, the "planning mentality" (Afendras & Kuo, 1980, p. 40) of the Singaporean government, which has had a major impact on the linguistic situation of this country, is also the rationale behind this choice of setting. Indeed, "[t]his "planning mentality" is reflected not only in economic planning but also in various aspects of social planning such as family planning, urban planning, educational planning, and manpower planning. All of the above have some

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

bearing, directly or indirectly, upon language planning and the sociolinguistic situation in Singapore" (Afendras & Kuo, 1980, p. 40). And when discussing the sociolinguistic situation in Singapore, Afendras & Kuo (1980) referred to it as "[u]nity in [d]iversity" (p. 39), in which case linguistic diversity, to a certain extent, is deemed problematic. As a result, the exploration of one of the manifestations of such a "planning mentality", from both top-down and bottom-up approaches, is also of great interest.

LL of Singapore has received scant attention even though the linguistic situation of Singapore has been extensively discussed and investigated. There was a study by Ong, Ghesquière, & Serwe (2013) examining the use of "Frenglish", the French-English blends, on shop signs in Singapore with English in Singapore being the *de facto* national language and French a foreign language with few speakers. Their study, however, did not touch on the so-called multilingual tension in Singapore when public signs are taken into account. Tan's paper (2011), by contrast, shed some light on the utilization of the four official languages of Singapore, but on name signs only, which leaves quite a few aspects of the signage in Singapore untouched. Consequently, the present thesis aims at partly filling in this gap.

1.3 Research Aims

The aims of the current study are three-fold. Firstly, it aims at sketching a general picture of the utilization of the four official languages of Singapore in terms of language(s) contained on signs, language use and language patterns by different sign producers, code preference, and content of signs by analyzing photos of signs taken in and around 30 Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations of the Circle Line (CCL) in Singapore together with looking at some discourses that might have mediated the actions of putting up these signs as well as deciding what language(s) to include. Thus, the present thesis deals with written data.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Besides, this study, adopting the ecology of language as its conceptual orientation as mentioned previously, also targets at revealing the functions of the four official languages of Singapore, especially English. English imperialism and its complexity in the setting of Singapore, i.e., its dual identities, are also discussed. Last but certainly not least, the current thesis also comments on the on-going language shift on public signage in Singapore as well as the *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of this city-state.

1.4 Thesis Outline

Following the current chapter is the presentation of the theoretical framework and the methodological orientation of this study as well as a review on related literature. To be more specific, Chapter 2 first details the notion of language ecology as well as its relation to language planning and then moves on to discuss linguistic landscape. Related literature is touched upon when possible.

Chapter 3 has three main parts. The first part presents some discourses germane to the sociolinguistic situation of Singapore as well as the role of English in this multilingual setting and then puts forth the research questions of this thesis. The next part provides detailed information about the process of data collection with explanations for certain choices concerning the approach towards data collection, the sites and scope for photography of signs. The last part of this chapter focuses on the development of a coding scheme that best suits the aims of this study as well as quantitative data analysis.

Chapter 4 opens a discussion aiming at answering the research questions presented in the first part of Chapter 3. Quantitative results gained from LL pertaining to language use and

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

language patterns deployed by different LL-actors² and depending on content are firstly presented. Then, based on such quantitative observations, the functions of the four official languages of Singapore are disclosed, stressing English imperialism and the complexity of this language in the multilingual setting of this city-state. Lastly, this chapter postulates the possibility of an ongoing language shift on public signage together with mapping the *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of Singapore to the two language policy paradigms namely the *ecology-of-language paradigm* and the *diffusion-of-English paradigm*.

The last chapter summarizes all the main points being discussed in Chapter 4. Besides, it also discusses some limitations of the current thesis as well as putting forth suggestions for further research that shares the same interest in investigating the sociolinguistic situation of Singapore through the lens of LL.

² The social actors contributing to shaping the LL of a specific area

Chapter 2. Theory and Method: Ecological Language Planning and Linguistic Landscape Analysis

With such targets presented in the first chapter, the current thesis adopts the ecology of language as its theoretical framework as well as deploying linguistic landscape for data collection and quantitative analysis. Thus, this chapter first touches upon the notion of the ecology of language in relation to language planning and then moves on to discuss linguistic landscape.

2.1 The Ecology of Language and Language Planning

2.1.1 Language ecology. There had been quite a few attempts to map language onto another domain that could help to not only enhance understanding but also formulate a mode to work on. Previous metaphors had spoken of the “life of language”, referred to language as a “tool” or an “instrument of communication” like a hammer, a wheelbarrow or a computer, or structurally viewed language as “an organized entity in which … every part depends on every other” (Haugen, 1972, p. 326). However, such biological, instrumental, or structural metaphors, although holding heuristic values, were rejected (Haugen, 1972).

Living organisms interact with each other as well as with their environment, and so do languages. A language does not exist in isolation, independent of its users, other languages used by its speakers and/ or the society in which it is spoken, and other social factors. Nor should it be viewed in this way. Recognizing similar traits between living organisms and languages, Haugen (1972) postulated the notion language ecology. Ecology refers to the way in which living organisms such as plants, animals, and people are related to each other and to their environment. Such a scientific analysis and study of “the interrelations between plants and animals and their complete environments” (Part, 1966 as cited in Haugen, 1972, p. 327) might take interest in the

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

diversity, distribution, amount, number of specific organisms. Likewise, the metaphorical understanding of language put forth by Haugen (1972), i.e., “language ecology”, was defined as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment”, with environment being “the society that uses it as one of its codes” (p. 325).

According to Haugen (1972), part of the ecology of any particular language is psychological, and another part of its ecology is sociological (p. 325). At micro- or individual level, since “[l]anguage exists only in the minds of its users”, a given language interacts with other languages in the minds of bi- or multilingual speakers (Haugen, 1972, p. 325). At macro-level, as language “only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature, i.e., their social and natural environment”, there are interactions between the language in question and the society in which it functions as a means of communication (Haugen, 1972, p. 325).

Also basing on this metaphor, Calvet (1999 as cited in Hult, 2009) discussed different levels of analysis with *ecosphere* being the highest one, which is composed of other lower systems called *ecosystems* within which relationships between languages in contact give rise to *ecological niches* for each of the languages. So *ecosphere* is deployed as a figure of speech for the system of all languages in the world, and within this *ecosphere*, there are linguistic *ecosystems*, or communities of living languages, which can be of any size but, by and large, encompass specific and limited spaces since they are defined by the network of interactions among languages as well as between these languages and their environment. Such interactions are referred to as *ecological niches*. “The “niche” of one language is constructed by its relationship with the other languages, by the place it occupies in the ecosystem, that is to say its function, and by its place in the social environment, essentially the geography that plays a determining role in the expansion of languages” (Calvet, 1999, p. 35 as translated by and cited in

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Hornberger, & Hult, 2008, p. 281). Moreover, linguistic *ecosystems* usually do not appear out of nowhere and remain unchanged, unaffected by factors, both internal and external ones; indeed, “the construction or modification of a specific linguistic ecosystem may be due to a confluence of factors at various levels: individual language choices, migration, language policies, education, and media, among others (Calvet, 1999, p. 61 as cited in Hult, 2009, p. 89).

Pennycook (2004), although addressing the terminology mess among “ecological linguistics”³, “ecology of languages”⁴, “linguistic ecology”⁵, and “(critical) ecolinguistics”⁶ (p. 217, 218) as well as posing problems of such analogies, also stressed the usefulness of the ecology of language as a way to understand the relationship between language and environment, i.e., “the ways in which languages are embedded in social, cultural, economic and physical ecologies, and in relationship to each other” (p. 214). He exemplified the effectiveness of this conceptual orientation by pointing out the bridge it has established between language imperialism and language rights as in the case of English, the discussion it has reopened about potential losses resulted from the death of a language, as well as a political appeal to those who might have overlooked the death of languages.

The ecological metaphor is action oriented. It shifts the attention from linguists being players of academic language games to becoming shop stewards for linguistic diversity, and to addressing moral economic and other ‘non-linguistic’ issues. (Mühlhäuser, 1996, p. 2 as cited in Pennycook, 2004, p. 215)

³ Ecology “is used metaphorically to refer to the relationship between languages and their social and physical environment ... to understand how languages cannot be taken in isolation, but rather must be understood within a broad understanding of context” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 217).

⁴ “Languages exist in a metaphorically ecological relationship with each other” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 217).

⁵ This point of view focuses on “the relationship between languages and the environment in terms of the ability of languages to describe the external world” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 218).

⁶ “This is a form of environmentally-oriented critical discourse analysis, with a focus on how grammar or discourse lead to assumptions about the environment” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 218).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Hult (2012) points out that “the ecology of language” or “language ecology” or “ecolinguistics” has become “an umbrella term for a wide range of perspectives that seek to make connections between language and environment: using concepts related to ecology to understand social environments for multilingualism, analyzing discourses of environment and environmentalism, and describing relationships between biological and cultural diversity” (p. 1). Also advocating this metaphorical understanding of language, Hornberger (2002) showed her interest in three main themes present in Haugen’s original formulation namely *language evolution*, *language environment* and *language endangerment* (p. 33). The first two themes refer to the fact that “languages, like living species, evolve, grow, change, live, and die in relation to other languages and also in relation to their environment” (Hornberger, 2002, p. 33). Moreover, that “some languages, like some species and environments, may be endangered” and that, as a result, “the ecology movement is about not only studying and describing those potential losses, but also counteracting them” (Hornberger, 2002, p. 33) constitute the third theme.

In a sense, it can be said that unlike the focused mode, like that of a camera, having been used to look at certain aspects of a given language such as phonology, grammar and lexicon, a combination between the focused mode and a more diffuse one is employed to investigate the language in question to reveal its social status and functions.

2.1.2 *Diffusion-of-English paradigm and ecology-of-language paradigm.* In their article entitled “English Only Worldwide or Language Ecology?”, Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1996), besides pointing out the different natures of the multilingualism of the United Nations, the European Union, and postcommunist Europe as well as English’s key role in each and its being actively promoted, put forth two language policy options namely a *diffusion-of-English paradigm* and an *ecology-of-language paradigm* (p. 429). According to Phillipson &

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Skutnabb-Kangas (1996), “[t]he first is characterized by triumphant capitalism, its science and technology, and a monolingual view of modernization and internationalization. The ecology-of-language paradigm involves building on linguistic diversity worldwide, promoting multilingualism and foreign language learning, and granting linguistic human rights to speakers of all languages” (p. 429).

As regards the characterizations of these two paradigms, Tsuda (1994 as cited in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, p. 436) postulated that the *diffusion-of-English paradigm* is characterized by capitalism; science and technology; modernization; monolingualism⁷; ideological globalization and internationalization; transnationalization; Americanization and homogenization of world culture; linguistic, cultural, and media imperialism, the *ecology-of-language paradigm* is typified by a human rights perspective, equality in communication, multilingualism, maintenance of languages and cultures, protection of national sovereignties, promotion of foreign language education.

2.1.3 Language planning. Language planning is the term used to refer to “sweeping intervention and control of language behavior. In terms of language, it means determining exactly the language(s) that people will know in a given nation” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 49). Language planning, hence, is interventionist with the governing body determining, to a certain extent, not only a person’s linguistic repertoire but also the path leading him or her there.

Back to the 1960s and 1970s, the evolution of language planning was put in a peculiar context when the state structures of multilingual and/ or multi-ethnic third world and first world states like Singapore, whose “structures and institutions were perceived as less fossilized and

⁷ “[T]he existence of one majority language per territory, adhering to an ethos of ‘one state – one language’” (Mesthrie et al., 2009, p. 37)

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

static than those of the metropolitan countries”, were being constructed or reconstructed (Blommaert, 1996, p. 201). In most countries, social structures and institutions were (re)constructed “against a historical context of colonial dominance, with its correlates of social inequality, restricted access to education and other forms of upward social mobility, and rapid socioeconomic transformation” (Blommaert, 1996, p. 201). The tendency was to undo such colonial legacy and create a more equal society. Language or language usage in education and administration, thus, served as a mechanism to realize the egalitarian ideology; moreover, language was also tied to culture, bearing symbolic significance during the anticolonial struggle (Blommaert, 1996). Consequently, “many new states started programs for the indigenization of language use in the public sphere … In some cases, local languages were introduced in the lower levels of the education system; in others, the whole state system was made to function in one (or various) local language(s)” (Blommaert, 1996, p. 201). Yet, it was not always the case since as Blommaert (1996) also pointed out that challenges like lack of time and money to transform the curriculum, the teaching materials, the teacher training, etc.; the risk of awakening the centrifugal forces when the use of local languages was stimulated and institutionalized; ethnic favoritism when some languages were selected while others were deleted; etc. The case of Singapore, which will be detailed in the first part of the next chapter, is an exemplar even though not all of the points presented above are applicable to the context of this island city-state.

Mühlhäusler (1996) argued that “language planning until the 1980s was based on the premise that linguistic diversity is a problem” (p. 311, 312 as cited in Hornberger, 2002, p. 32). Indeed, Blommaert (1996) remarked that “most cases show an *oligolingual* target, in which the plethora of languages spoken in a country is being reduced to an as small as possible number of languages” (p. 210). A distinction between national and official languages was also made with

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

the former, in most cases, being one of the most widely spoken local languages serving symbolic or ceremonial function and the latter being chosen for practical reasons concerning domains like administration, education, business, etc. and usually including the former colonial language (Blommaert, 1996).

Even though Hornberger (2002) remarked that the previous view of linguistic diversity as a problem is undergoing a conceptual shift toward recognizing it as an asset, the two assumptions having guided language planning efforts in the direction of reducing sociolinguistic complexity to a “workable” number (Blommaert, 1996, p. 210) might still remain quite well grounded. The first assumption is the *efficient assumption*, which by and large stresses that linguistic diversity might hinder smooth and efficient management of state business like government, administration, education, media, economic life, and so forth due much to translation and interpretation. Spoken languages also need downsizing when public functions are assigned to those languages. This assumption also accounts for choice of the former colonial language, like English or French, as (one of) the official language(s) of the independent state (Blommaert, 1996, p. 210, 211). The other assumption is the *integration assumption*, which can be summarized as “too many languages would be an obstacle to the creation of national unity” (Blommaert, 1996, p. 211).

Besides, there have also been other frameworks postulated within this field of research. Appearing to be a response to the two aforementioned assumptions, Phillipson’s model of *linguistic imperialism*, which aims to explicate how the choice and promotion of languages of current and former empires might have adverse effects on indigenous languages, “has also stimulated research and theorizing on ways to neutralize or minimize the purported negative effects of the spread of “big” languages on minority languages and their speakers world-wide”

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

(Ricento, 2009, p. 17). One such approach is language rights or linguistic human rights.

Moreover, what Fishman (1991) referred to as *reversing language shift* (as cited in Johnson, 2013, p. 47) has also been attracting attention from people “interested in preserving linguistic diversity … hav[ing] devoted entire careers and lives to Indigenous and minority language maintenance, development, and education” (Johnson, 2013, p. 47).

Also elaborating on this, Shohamy (2006) took an expanded view when discussing top-down and bottom up, *de jure* and *de facto* language policies, which, as McCarty (2011) put, places “official policy or government acts … in context as part of a larger sociocultural system” (p. 2). Different mechanisms such as rules and regulations, language education policies, language tests, and language in public space are “overt and covert (i.e., hidden) devices used as means of affecting, creating and perpetuating language practices, hence, de facto LPs”, and “it is via these different mechanisms that ideology is meant to affect practice”, yet “it is also through these mechanisms that practice can affect ideology and that different language policies can be rejected” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 57).

2.1.4 The ecology of language and language planning: reciprocal influence. As mentioned just above, among other factors, language policies are said to possibly play a role in constructing and modifying a particular linguistic ecosystems (Calvet, 1999 as cited in Hult, 2009). In turn, as remarked by Hornberger (2002) in her article discussing multilingual language policies and putting forth the continua of biliteracy, the ecology of language, which views multilingualism as a resource, serves as a metaphor to “reflect a multilingual … approach to language planning and policy” (p. 32). She also touched upon Kaplan & Baldauf’s work (1997), which expanded upon the *language evolution* and *language environment* themes with regard to language planning: “Language planning … is a question of trying to manage the language

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

ecology of a particular language to support it within the vast cultural, educational, historical, demographic, political, social structure in which language policy formulation occurs every day” (p. 13); “language planning activity must be perceived as implicating a wide range of languages and of modifications occurring simultaneously over the mix of languages in the environment – that is, implicating the total language eco-system” (p. 296 as cited in Hornberger, 2002, p. 34).

I have opted to apply the ecology of language in the present study since this approach, as mentioned above, enables the grasp of the interaction between the four official languages of Singapore as well as between them and their users and environment, thus disclosing the *niches* of these languages, especially English. So, in order to investigate their status and functions within such a multilingual setting like that of Singapore, the current study took account of certain ecological questions postulated by Haugen (1977, p. 336) concerning the classification of a given language in relation to other languages; its users; its domain(s) of use; concurrent language(s) being employed by its users; and the kind of institutional support it has won, either in government, education, or private organizations, either to regulate its form or propagate it. However, even though the ecology of language is deemed to be a popular and productive approach, it can hardly serve as, as Hult (2009) put, a method. Hence, linguistic landscape is utilized as the analytical tool of the current study.

2.2 Linguistic Landscape

2.2.1 Language and ideology. Since ideology is “located” in both language structures and language events (Fairclough, 1995, p. 70) and language is claimed to be “a reality-making social practice” (Fowler, 1985, p. 62 as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2013, p. 309), in spite of the supposedly “dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries” nature of language (Shohamy, 2006, p. xv), it is, more often than not, deployed as one of the covert tools

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

of social control and power exertion, especially symbolic power, due to its being closely intertwined with political, social, economic, and even personal ideologies.

2.2.2 Linguistic landscape: concept and functions. When looking at a multilingual sign such as the one in Figure 2.1, one can extract a certain amount of information about the producer(s) of the sign; the languages utilized and their order, which might help to reveal their relative importance in the society as well as their interrelationship to one another; the intended readers of the sign in terms of their linguistic repertoires, and even the status of the ethnic group that each of the languages appearing on the sign represents (Backhaus, 2007).



Figure 2.1. A multilingual sign at an MRT station in Singapore

Although relatively new, linguistic landscape (LL) has been attracting attention of researchers, especially those working in the field of sociolinguistics and taking an interest in multilingualism. Issues related to the concept of LL first emerged from the field of language planning (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) when boundaries of linguistic territories needed delineating like in the case of Belgium (Verdoot, 1979 as cited in Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and Québec (Corbeil, 1980 as cited in Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

There have been quite a few understandings of LL postulated; however, the definition put forth by Landry & Bourhis (1997) remains widely recognized by LL researchers (Huebner, 2006; Backhaus, 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006, etc.)

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

Linguistic landscape refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. It is proposed that the linguistic landscape may serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory. (p. 23)

Shohamy (2006) viewed LL as “one domain within language in the public space”, i.e., “all language items that are displayed in a variety of contexts in the environment” (p. 110), thus “a mechanism of language policy” that usually acts in accordance with other mechanisms from a top-down approach (p. 112). By deploying specific languages on government signs and having strict laws and/ or regulations imposing the utilization of particular languages in the public space, LL from above affects or even manipulates language behavior. Yet, as also pointed out by Landry & Bourhis (1997) and Shohamy (2006), the public space is not the playground monopolized by governments but an arena for governments and a plethora of other social actors such as corporations, companies, NGOs, individuals and so on to conduct their “battles for power, control, national identity, recognition and self-expression” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 111). Thus, the contribution of the non-governmental sign producers to LL in a given territory should not be overlooked.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Through the inclusion or exclusion of languages as well as their order on signs, not only is LL, as a language policy mechanism, “capable of creating language policy that upgrades the status of one language, it also enables the downgrading of other languages (Shohamy, 2006, p. 124). The use of LL in public space, consequently, “reaffirms power relations” since “as a language manipulation mechanism, it clearly marks who is dominant and who is not” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 124). Furthermore, by using languages of high status, LL “has the potential to reaffirm the languages and groups in power while marginalizing the groups that are not” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 124, 125). However, the use of LL, simultaneously, “is instrumental in upgrading the status of certain language groups” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 125).

2.2.3 Previous studies and methodological notes. Studies of LL have been being carried out around the world adopting different orthodoxies or theoretical cores such as *ethnolinguistic vitality* (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), *language ecology* (Hult, 2009), etc.; opting for diverse settings and scenes for data collection (Backhaus, 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Huebner, 2006; Hult, 2009, 2014; Rosendal, 2009; Tan, 2011; etc.); developing coding schemes suitable for the purposes of the studies, and so forth. Fundamentally and as often as not, LL analysis methodologically relies on photography and visual analysis (Hult, 2009, p. 90). Indeed, while discussing LL, Gorter (2006) also mentioned and suggested that the problems of sampling, unit of analysis, and categorization of signs be taken into consideration (p. 2, 3). In reality, while collecting and analyzing LL data, quantitatively, different researchers, bearing different aims and objectives, have put forth reasons and paid attention to dissimilar aspects germane to the number of languages appearing or not appearing on signs; their order, font, and size in relation to each other; translation; etc. Hence, as it has been well put by Hult (2009), “[i]t is through the analysis of these kinds of data that LL analysis serves the needs of an ecological approach to the study of

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

multilingualism by providing a window into the niches of specific languages in a linguistic ecosystem” (p. 91).

Chapter 3. Methodology

As discussed in the previous chapter, theoretically, the ecology of language was chosen to serve as the framework of this study, and methodologically, linguistic landscape would be employed to collect, analyze, and interpret data. So in the light of these theoretical and methodological considerations, this chapter first sketches out the (socio)linguistic situation in Singapore by investigating the discourse cycles circulating in this specific society and then details processes of data collection and analysis.

3.1 An Overview of Singapore's (Socio)linguistic Situation and the Role of English

Singapore, officially the Republic of Singapore, is a young nation, which, in 2015, just marked 50 years since independence. Singapore is a city-state in Southeast Asia, located at the end of the Malayan Peninsula between Malaysia and Indonesia with a population of 5.5 million (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2016). The population is comprised of 74.1% Chinese Singaporeans, 13.4% Malays, 9.2% Indians, and others 3.3% (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010), which reveals the ethnically heterogeneous background of the country.

In Singapore, language planning is connected to government planning. There are a myriad of language policies, either *de jure* or *de facto*, that manifest the two prominent language ideologies adopted by the Singaporean government namely internationalization, i.e., adopting a non-indigenous language as an official language for practical reasons, and linguistic pluralism, i.e., recognizing and supporting native languages of different ethnic groups within the society. Such policies, influencing the acquisition of languages and assigning functions for languages, include what is stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore concerning official languages and national language, the Bilingual Policy, certain language movements and campaigns, and language use in the media.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

3.1.1 Official languages and national language. As Meyerhoff (2006) pointed out that “the negotiation of official status for languages in multilingual communities or nations involves a number of social, political and attitudinal factors” (p. 107), the situation in Singapore is no exception. As regard the state policy on language, the constitution states:

153A. – (1) Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English shall be the 4 official languages in Singapore.

(2) The national language shall be the Malay language and shall be in the Roman script

(Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, Article 153A)

The first three official languages were selected not only to correspond with the major ethnic groups present in Singapore, as in the case of Tamil, but also to fulfil quite a few other functions, as regarding Malay and Mandarin. Besides being one of the four official languages, Malay was also chosen to be the national language of Singapore. Yet in spite of this status, it remains a minority language as it is the native language of only 12% of the population and is only treated as one of the compulsory “Mother Tongue” subjects at schools. This can be well explicated by the fact that Malay was selected to be the national language after Singapore’s independence from Britain in the 1960s just because of its historical background as well as to avoid tension with Malay-speaking neighboring countries, i.e., Malaysia and Indonesia. As a result, Malay can be said to perform “a role that is more ceremonial than functional” (Afendras & Kuo, 1980, p. 42).

Mandarin Chinese was designated an official language for economic, social, and cultural reasons even though it was neither the mother tongue nor the dialect spoken by the majority of the Chinese ethnic group in Singapore (Kuo & Jernudd, 1994 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 342, 343). Economically, it would help to enhance trading with Mainland China, where Mandarin is a

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

predominant dialect; socially and culturally, it would act not only as a lingua franca to bridge the gap between Singapore's diverse non-Mandarin speaking groups but also as a tool to forge a common Chinese cultural identity. In this sense, Mandarin can be said to be a means deployed by the government aiming at the unification of the Chinese in Singapore.

3.1.2 Bilingual policy: language of education – an indicator of sign readers' repertoires? Before, Singaporeans belonging to different ethnic groups separately attended Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil-medium schools. However, later, modern Singapore has adopted an English-based bilingual education system in which English is chosen to be the medium of instruction in schools and the other three official languages are made to be required "Mother Tongue" subjects regardless of the fact that students' heritage dialects might be other varieties of Chinese or Indian in lieu of Mandarin Chinese or Tamil. Malay also gets taught as a mother tongue subject to those of Malaysian backgrounds. Pakir (1994, p. 159) remarked that "Bilingualism" in Singapore has thus come to be uniquely defined as 'proficient in English and one other official language', which Kachru (1982, p. 42 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 342) referred to as "English-knowing bilingualism".

As a result of this bilingualism in education policy, most Singaporeans are bilingual in English and another official language; however, degrees of fluency in both English and the other language vary greatly. As regards literacy amongst Singaporeans in 2010, English ranked highest with 80%, Mandarin 65%, Malay 17%, and Tamil 4% (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011b). This is a quite dramatic improvement in comparison to 1990 when 40% of the population were illiterate in English (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2001), and with literacy, it means "the ability...to read with understanding a newspaper in a language specified" (Swee-Hock, 2012, p. 44). This reveals the language background of potential sign readers whose

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

repertoires might partly affect the choice of language(s), especially English, to appear on signs from both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

3.1.3 Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) and Speak Good English Movement

(SGEM). Among the four official languages, English and Mandarin Chinese receive great attention from the Singaporean government.

While the government had been heavily promoting the use of Standard English for fear that Singlish, which was in 1999 deemed to be “English corrupted by Singaporeans” and “broken, ungrammatical English” by then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (Agence France Presse in Singapore, 1999), might adversely affect the established image of Singapore as a world class financial and business hub, the reality was that the majority of Singaporeans took up Singlish and considered it to be their identity marker and a language of solidarity. On keeping this perspective, in 2000, the government launched the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) with the hope that Singaporeans would ‘speak grammatically correct English that is universally understood’ (Speak Good English Movement, n.d.). The movement have had different yearly targets with taglines such as ‘Speak Well. Be Understood’ from 2000 to 2004, ‘Speak Up. Speak Out. Speak Well’ for 2005 and 2006, ‘Be Understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam’ for 2006 and 2007, and ‘Rock Your World! Express Yourself’ for 2007 and 2008 as well as have been strongly supported by its partners like the British Council, National Library Board, Singapore Teachers Union (STU), and so forth. A website was also created by the government (<http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/>) so that Singaporeans can consult about ways to have their English improved.

Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC), though being mounted much earlier in 1979, can be considered to be not dissimilar to the SGEM mentioned above, showing the government have

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

placed more emphasis on the “valid issues of social identity and cohesiveness” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 341). With slogans changing throughout the course of time aiming at different target audience, the year-round campaign has deployed publicity as well as conducted activities in the community to create awareness and encourage people to learn Mandarin.

3.1.4 The media. The media in Singapore, to a certain extent, are closely associated with the government. For example, concerning the Speak Good English Movement, in his speech in 2001, then-Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong stressed that:

The media also have an important part to play. Our English language television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines must set exemplary standards of English. Their approach should not be just to mirror how people speak, but to set norms which are better than the language we use in our daily lives, but which viewers and listeners can still identify with and aim for.

Our mass media have generally been supportive of the SGEM. Channel NewsAsia has been supportive of the SGEM, and has committed to continuing its support. The New Paper has also come on board to provide regular tips on good English. (p.3)

Much of the domestic media in Singapore, with a specific emphasis on English, is controlled by companies linked to the government. An exemplar is MediaCorp, a group of commercial media companies operating most free-to-air television channels and radio stations. Among the eight free-to-air TV channels offered by this group of companies, 3 are English channels including Channel 5, Channel News Asia, and Okto; 3 are in Chinese which are Channel 8, Channel 8 International (extension of Channel 8) and Channel U; 1 in Malay, and 1 in Indian (Mediacorp, n.d.).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Furthermore, other aspects of language also receive due consideration from the government, the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) when it comes to providing news and information for the public. For example, as Singlish is not supported by the government, it is discouraged to be utilized in TV and Radio advertising. Other Chinese vernaculars also have to suffer a similar fate for fear that they will be more of a hindrance than a help with the acquisition of English and Mandarin (Ng, 2014), yet Indian languages besides Tamil such as Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Telugu and Urdu are handled differently. There is no restriction on the use of these languages in the national media.

3.1.5 English as an official, working, and dominant language. Unlike the other three official languages, English was not the native language of any major ethnic groups in Singapore by the time it was chosen to be one of the official languages. Such selection of English is two-fold. English was introduced into Singapore as a lingua franca by the British and made the main language upon Singaporean independence. It remains as one of Singapore's official languages owing to its functions both as a tool to unify all ethnic groups owing to its being “not Asian in origin ... hence regarded as “neutral” for in-group relations in Singapore” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 343) and as a bridge to the world since it is tied to new knowledge that helps the nation stay abreast of developments.

Taylor-Leech (2012) remarked that “[i]n many post-colonial countries where the former colonial language was used as a high status language in a diglossic situation a language can function as an icon of nationalism, particularly in cases where it is taken up as a symbol of independence” (p. 16). Singapore is highly diverse in terms of ethnic groups and languages, so having a lingua franca to enhance communication among groups speaking different mother tongues and developing a “supra-ethnic Singaporean identity, for a population who speak

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

different mother tongues and who come from divergent traditions, is the pressing question” (Kuo and Jernudd, 1994, p. 28 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 344). Hence being a neutral language, as explicated just above, made English an ideal candidate for such functions (Rubdy, 2001).

Besides helping with the development of a new national identity, English “serves the government’s vision of economic, social and cultural development” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 344) as Ferguson (2006) contended:

The most important of these, exceeding the national unity factor in explanatory power by far, is the economic power and attractiveness of English. It is a language that is perceived to be, and manifestly functions as, a gatekeeper to educational and employment opportunities, to social advancement. No wonder then that competence in English and English medium education is highly valued by parents, students, and the wider public, all of whom see it as a form of ‘linguistic capital’. (p. 185)

English as a “working” language has been utilized in domains germane to those of a “high language”, i.e., a highly codified language or variety that is used in certain situations like literature, formal education, etc. (Ferguson, 1959), and appears to overshadow Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil to become “the language of public administration, education, commerce, science and technology, and communication”, thus “the medium by which most Singaporeans gain access to information and knowledge from around the world” (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2001). The importance of English can be realized through its use in business by public bodies in Singapore as well as English translation from non-English official documents in order to be eligible for submission. Moreover, the use of English as home language has witnessed an increase over the past few years. This official language was, in 2011, reported to be spoken at home by 52% of the Chinese, 50% of the Indians, and 26% of Malays (Singapore

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Department of Statistics, 2011b), which might raise a possibility that English has become the “native language” for some members of the aforementioned ethnic groups.

3.1.6 The local linguistic ecology of Singapore and the research questions of this study. Taking the four official languages and such a policy of bilingualism in education into consideration, it can be said that Singapore manifests multilingual at the national level and bilingual at the individual one (Rubdy, 2001). Concerning English, within the specific context of Singapore, its role has been exerted at three different levels:

At the national level, English is the pragmatic choice to meet the government’s larger economic objectives. And economic viability has always been equated with the viability of the polity. At the community level, English is seen to be the obvious choice for inter-ethnic communication. And at the individual level, since all members of society would have access to English, the gap between the English- and Asian-language-educated would narrow. All individuals would have equal access to the benefits that a knowledge of English offered. (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998, p. 290 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 344).

The role of English, as presented above, has been heavily promoted by Singaporean government and exerted in various domains and through a diversity of tools. So, besides casting a look at the general language use at public places in Singapore, this study also aims at investigating the utilization of English, in relation to other official languages of Singapore, by a diversity of social actors through the lens of linguistic landscape. Hence the questions addressed by this study are as follows:

1. How have the four official languages of Singapore namely Malay, Chinese, Tamil, and English been deployed by different LL-actors on signs in and around the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations of the Circle Line (CCL)?

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

2. What are the *niches* of the four official languages of Singapore, especially those of English, through the lens of, mostly, LL and other related discourses?

The first question takes aspects like the number of languages used on signs, dominant language(s) and language patterns deployed by different LL-actors, their order in case there is more than one language employed, and language use in terms of content into consideration. As for the second question, results obtained from answering the first question can be utilized to disclose the status and the function(s) of the languages being discussed with particular emphasis on English. Consequently, the dominance of English in the LL might be linked to the language shift on public signage suggested and the natures of *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of Singapore.

3.2 Data Collection

There are quite a few approaches having been utilized, depending on the focus of the studies, to collect data for linguistic landscape analysis. For instance, the ‘main street’ approach has been opted for by quite a few researchers like Cenoz & Gorter (2006), Huebner (2006), Hult (2009, 2014), etc. Others chose to collect their data at sites central for language activities in the community investigated like schools, grocery shops, post office, museums, hotels, and so forth (Pietikäinen et al., 2011), residential buildings (Jaworski & Yeung, 2010), train stations (Backhaus, 2006), and so forth. At times, a combination of different approaches like main streets, main boulevards, and leisure and shopping areas (Waksman & Shohamy, 2010), etc. within both urban and rural contexts is also an option. Considering the infrastructure of Singapore as well as the focus of this study, the train station approach, of which the study of Tokyo’s train stations by Backhaus (2006) is an exemplar, was adopted.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

In Singapore, there is a variety of forms of transportation ranging from bus, taxi to rail, etc. There are two public-transport companies, ComfortDelGro and SMRT Corporation, operating the aforementioned forms of transportation. Among such possibilities, train stations were chosen since, in Singapore setting, they are architecturally bigger and more fixed than bus stations, thus providing more space for linguistic contact, especially when the two public – transport companies lease commercial and advertising spaces. Moreover, facilities of train stations, especially big ones, such as ticket sales offices, automated ticket machines, fast-food stores, restaurants, shops, convenience stores, etc. can be sources of linguistic data. However, the limited scope of the current study cannot cover the whole train system of Singapore, so as regards locations for data collection, all 30 stations of the Circle Line (CCL) operated by SMRT Corporation and their surrounding areas were chosen.

Among the current running lines, CCL was selected instead of others since it is an orbital circle route linking all radial routes leading to as well as covering many parts of the Central Area or the Central Business District (CBD). The diverse environments of the CCL, including not only business and shopping districts but also less busy sites like parks and residential areas, provide a multilayered picture of the center as different social actors might have taken part in shaping the linguistic landscape of these areas. Although CCL does not cover specific ethnic communities like Little India and Chinatown, it suits the target of the study sketching the local linguistic ecology, thus revealing the *niches* of the four official languages, and investigating the role of English in relation to other languages. Other future studies might wish to choose other MRT lines that reach Little India or Chinatown; the results yielded, consequently, might be different from those obtained from this study. CCL is the line colored orange on the rail map shown in Figure 3.1 below.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

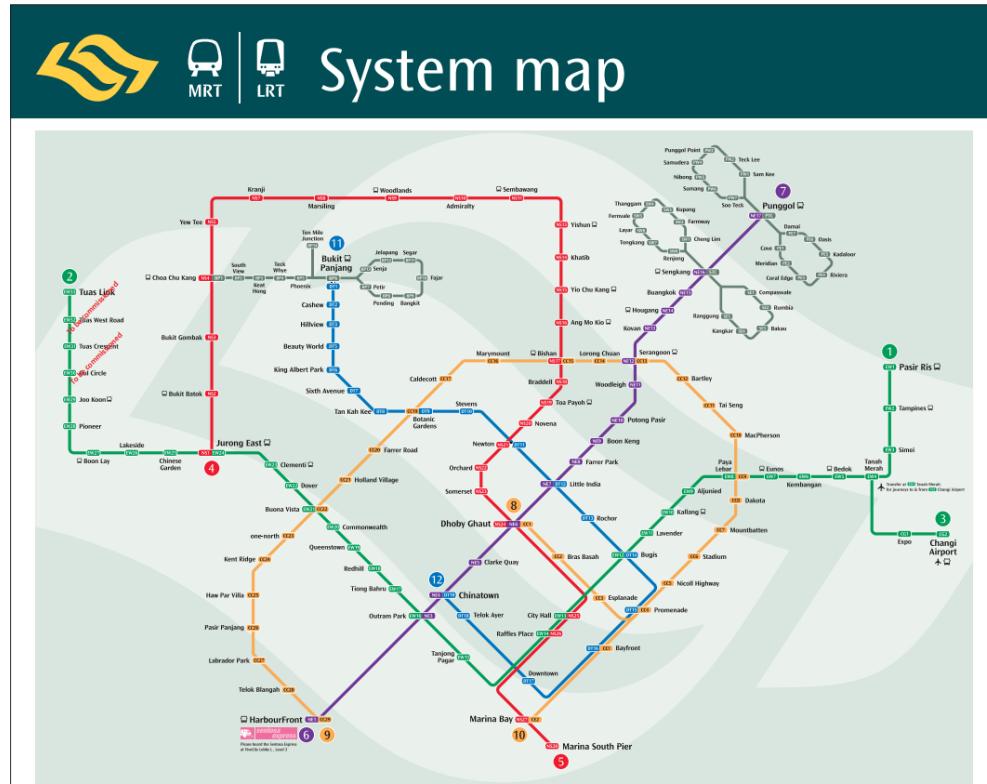


Figure 3.1. Singapore Train System Map (Singapore Land Transport Authority, 2015)

Firstly, all signs inside each MRT station were photographed. On heading out, since there is more than one way out of each station, one specific exit was chosen to make sure that a diversity of environments, e.g. commercial areas, residential areas, parks, schools, etc. were covered in order for the data to be representative of a general sense of Singapore. Consequently, if there was a choice between commercial areas and other types of areas, the exit leading to the latter was selected. In case all of the exits at a certain MRT station led to commercial areas, the one leading to the more crowded area or the main street was chosen. The survey area was only part of the street between two consecutive traffic lights outside each station as in Figure 3.2, and the reason behind this scope of survey area is that for convenience, people prefer to stay close or establish their business close to the stations, which makes these areas an arena for linguistic contact and conflict. Backhaus (2007) remarked on such a scope of data collection that “[t]he

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

advantage of this selection principle was that it guaranteed a unified and non-biased determination of survey areas” (p. 66). Within this space, all signs containing text only, text and image(s), and image(s) only were photographed and counted.

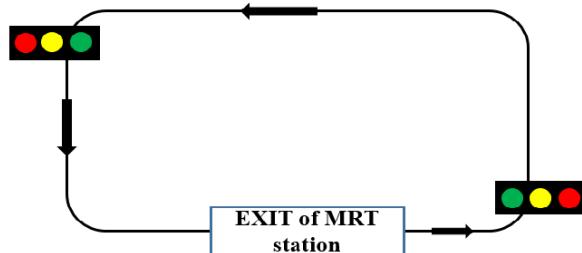


Figure 3.2. Data collection route

Data collection took 5 days, with approximately 9 hours spent taking photos each day. A Canon PowerShot S90 was used for photography of signs. However, since time spent in and around MRT stations was relatively long, another camera, Fujifilm X-E1, was brought along in case the other camera ran out of battery power. When it comes to, for example, shops with numerous signs, close-up pictures of all signs were taken individually because each sign might convey a different message as well as aiming at certain sign readers.

3.3 Data Analysis

For this synchronic study, data were collected in July, 2015, and the corpus of signs is comprised of 1,555 photos. However, the question concerning what constitutes a unit of analysis should also be addressed since different researchers have proposed as well as adopted dissimilar approaches. While Backhaus (2006) defined his unit of analysis as ‘any piece of text within a spatially definable frame ... Each sign was counted as one item, irrespective of its size’ (p. 55), Cenoz & Gorter (2006) decided, in the case of shops, banks, and other businesses, to take all texts together as a whole, and thus each establishment but not each individual sign becomes the unit of analysis. So after due consideration, this study opted for the former since even though all

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

the signs found in one place should come from one so-called producer, the content of the signs might be diverse, which could also possibly affect what language(s) used on them, thus targeting at different sign readers. Furthermore, similar signs reappear at different stations would be still counted since they contribute to the general sense of place at each station.

Moreover, depending on the purpose of the studies, different researchers have come up with different coding schemes, and for this study, a coding scheme that includes six variables was developed as follows.

3.3.1 Station code. Photos were firstly marked by the code of the stations in and around which they were taken. So the first variable would range from CC1 to CC17 and then from CC19 to CC29 together with CE1 and CE2. CC18 was closed down; CE1 and CE2 are Circle Line Extension. CC30, CC31, CC32 were under planning when the data were being collected, thus not being taken into consideration.

3.3.2 Order of the photo. This variable was germane to the order of the photos taken in and around each station to facilitate the management of the photos, especially for reference.

3.3.3 Language(s) used on signs (and their order). Scollon and Scollon (2003, p. 116-128) and Backhaus (2006, p. 60) referred to the order of languages appearing on signs as *code preference*. Besides the presence or absence of a language, positions of languages on multilingual signs create a visual hierarchy with the first language utilized being considered to be prominent, and to a certain extent, the original version of the message that the producer of the sign wants to convey. As Scollon and Scollon put it, ‘The preferred code is on top, on the left, or in the center and the marginalized code is on the bottom, on the right, or on the margins’ (2003, p. 120). In this study, the four languages in question, i.e., English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, Tamil, would be coded as E, C, M, T, and their order was also taken into consideration during

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

the coding process. Other languages like Japanese, French, German, Italian, Korean, etc., which only appeared with extremely low frequency⁸ were not counted since they are not prominent and also irrelevant to the focus of this study.

3.3.4 Types of signs. Other studies do distinguish, to some degree, between official (government) and nonofficial/ nongovernment signs (Backhaus, 2006; Huebner, 2006; etc.). In his study, Backhaus counted signs produced by the ward offices, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and agencies of the national government such as the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport as well as signs related to public transport facilities operated by private companies (2006, p. 56) as official ones and regarded the rest as nonofficial. Pietikäinen et al. (2011), instead of having only two seemingly dichotomous categories, postulated a continuum onto which three social actors are mapped. Public authorities that are supposed to conform with specific language laws when producing signs like road signs, names of (public) schools and other public buildings lie at one end of the scale; individuals who are producers of private signs and, to some extent, can be said to be free to use any languages they want are located at the other end of the continuum; in between are organizations, companies, and businesses that are referred to as semi-official actors since even though they are not as tightly tied to language regulations as public authorities, they are still under expectation to align themselves with a generally accepted framework (p. 286, 287). Moreover, because they also have to appeal to customers, their language use as well as the language(s) they use can be seen as the compromise between the ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ social actors. The current study opted for categorizing signs according to the framework deployed by Pietikäinen et al. (2011),

⁸ Japanese appeared on only 13 out of 1,555 signs collected; French on 5; German on 1; Italian on 12, and Korean on 3.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

and for coding, GO stands for governmental signs; CO for signs from corporates or formal store signs; IN for signs from individual producers. When top-down and bottom-up concepts are taken into consideration, it can be claimed that GO is top-down, IN is bottom-up, and CO is somewhere in between. In some cases, there is not always a clear-cut distinction between governmental and non-governmental signs as in Figure 3.3. Even though the quadrilingual notice sign in Figure 3.3 was found at an MRT station and indeed was produced by the SMRT Corporation, it was counted as a governmental sign due to the fact that the sign was produced aligning with the quadrilingual language policy promoted by the Singaporean government as stated in the constitution.

3.3.5 Sign content. Sign content has been overlooked or unmentioned in some studies (Backhaus, 2006; Huebner, 2006; Taylor-Leech, 2012, etc.) but thoroughly discussed in others (Pietikäinen et al., 2011). Sign content also corresponds to types of signs, thus social actors and specific language use to a certain degree. Pietikäinen et al. (2011) referred to this as *genres*, which are germane to types of activity in the linguistic landscape. Their study focused on 5 main genres: name sign, notice, advert, road sign, and street name (p. 291, 292), which was adopted as the framework of categorizing sign content, with a few adjustments, for this study. The first category is *name signs* (coded as NA) that include not only street, station, school names but also shop names, etc. The second one is *notice signs* (coded as NO), including etiquette/ advisory signs, safety/ warning signs, instruction signs, and so forth. The next four are road signs like directional ones (coded as RO), general informational signs (coded as IN), advertisements (coded as AD), and signs for community information (coded as COM).

3.3.6 Text and image. Besides texts, signs also make use of images so that the message conveyed is accessible to everyone, especially when the signs are not quadrilingual. Thus, signs

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

with texts only were coded as T; signs having both texts and images as TI, and image-only signs as I.

As an example, according to this coding scheme, the sign in Figure 3.3 is coded as CC1-004-ECMT-GO-NO-T.



Figure 3.3. A notice sign

So, the first part of this chapter sketched out cycles of discourses circulating within Singaporean society. Both *de jure* and *de facto* language policies were mentioned, which might provide qualitative interpretation as well as explications for the quantitative data yielded from linguistic landscape, whose processes of collecting and coding were detailed in the second part of this chapter. LL findings and discussion in the light of the ecology of language can be found in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Linguistic Dominance in Multilingual Singapore

In this chapter, quantitative LL data are used to sketch a general picture of the language use by different LL-actors in the setting of Singapore in terms of language(s) contained on signs, language use and general language patterns by different LL-actors, code preference, and language use as regards content. The presentation of quantitative LL data is also accompanied by discourses that are germane to the construction of the social action of putting up a sign. Different social actors might be influenced by different discourses when making decisions about the language(s) appearing on their signs as well as the order of the languages if the signs are bi- or multilingual. Such decisions can also be affected by assumptions that sign producers had made about potential readers.

Then, within the theoretical framework of the ecology of language, the quantitative as well as qualitative analyses of data serve to highlight the *niches* of the four official languages of Singapore. The utilization of English is, later, zoomed in on and discussed in relation to the notion of imperialism as well as the complexity of English in the setting of Singapore. A discussion of the possibility of a language shift on public signage follows, postulating that English is becoming the native language of Singaporeans. Last but certainly not least, *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of Singapore are discussed taking the *ecology-of-language paradigm* and the *diffusion-of-English paradigm* into consideration.

4.1 Linguistic Landscape: Multilingual Singapore, or Is It So?

As mentioned in the Data Analysis part in the Methodology chapter, photography of all the signs in and around 30 MRT stations of the Circle Line yielded 1555 pictures in total. On the surface, a quick look at the data reveals that approximately 66% of the signs pictured are monolingual, 26% bilingual, 4% trilingual, and 4% quadrilingual as shown in Figure 4.1 below.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

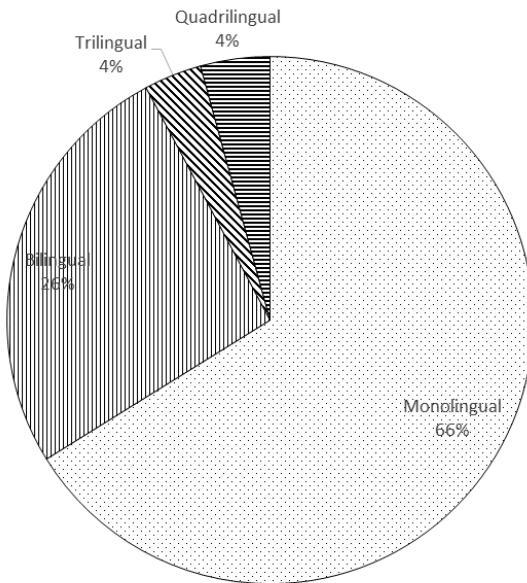


Figure 4.1. The proportion of signs in terms of number of language(s) used

The percentage of signs containing only one language is surprisingly high whereas that of trilingual or quadrilingual signs is strikingly low. More light will be shed on these signs in the following sections, taking language(s) contained, language use and general language patterns by different LL-actors, code preference, and language use in terms of content into consideration.

4.1.1 Language(s) contained. With regard to the distribution of signs containing different numbers of languages, the much wider use of monolingual signs than that of bi- and, especially, multilingual ones is quite unexpected when the linguistically heterogeneous background of Singapore, or at least the constitution claims so when stating that Singapore has four official languages, is considered.

When it comes to language use on monolingual signs, English appears on 95% of this type of sign, meaning monolingual signs in English make up around 63% of the total 1555 signs. Thus, from such a high percentage, it can be inferred that English is a dominant language. As for the other three official languages, monolingual signs in Chinese account for 4%; Malay, in spite

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

of being the national language and one of the official languages of Singapore, comes next, yet only 1% of monolingual signs contain this language. Monolingual signs in Tamil were nowhere to be found in the survey areas. Such discrepancies in the distribution of languages on monolingual signs are illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

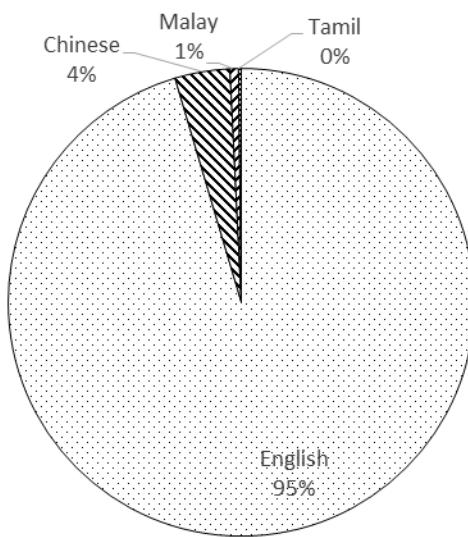


Figure 4.2. Distribution of the four official languages on monolingual signs

That monolingual signs in English are ubiquitous could be firstly explicated by the fact that approximately 80% of the population of Singapore can understand this language, either alone or together with another language or other languages (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011a), which can be a result of the bilingual education policy. Hence, sign producers might have paid attention to sign readers' repertoires when putting up monolingual English signs. Moreover, the use of English has been heavily promoted by the Singaporean government and consequently corporations and the media, which could possibly influence the choice of English as the only language on signs.

With any sign containing more than one language, it is useful to examine whether these languages function as translations of each other or each of them conveys a different message.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Considering the data collected for this study, the large majority of bi- and multilingual signs are, according to the categorization developed by Backhaus (2007), homophonic ones, i.e. “signs contain[ing] two or more languages ... that constitute complete translations ... of each other” (p.91). An example of this can be found in the quadrilingual sign in Firgure 4.3 below.



Figure 4.3. A quadrilingual sign at Dhoby Ghaut (CC1) station

The notice sign in Figure 4.3 contains all the four official languages of Singapore with English being used for the original message and then being translated into Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. However, to avoid overlap, discussion of the pattern of these quadrilingual signs is saved for the next part dealing with general language patterns by different LL-actors since this type of signs is used mostly by the Singaporean government only.

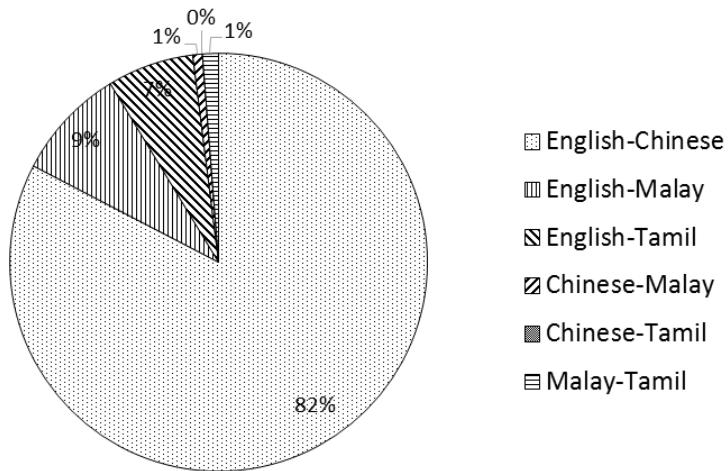


Figure 4.4. Combinations of languages and their distribution on bilingual signs

With respect to bilingual signs, there is a diversity of combinations between the official languages of Singapore. By and large, the combination between English and another official language, regardless of their order, is the most common pattern, taking of 98% of the total number of bilingual signs. For this pattern, bilingual English-Chinese, or the other way round, signs are the most popular, followed by English-Malay and English-Tamil ones as shown in Figure 4.4. Other combinations between the three official languages other than English seem not to be favored by LL-actors. Chinese-Malay and Malay-Tamil signs each account for only 1% of the bilingual signs collected. Bilingual Chinese-Tamil signs are not visible, at least in the survey areas.

Summarizing, the use of English on signs, at first glance, seems to overshadow those of the other three official languages of Singapore considering its enormous proportion when monolingual signs or bilingual ones having English as one of the two languages used on signs are taken into consideration.

4.1.2 Language use and general language patterns by different LL-actors. When LL-actors are taken into account in the discussion of language use, the three identified social

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

actors illustrate both similar as well as disparate deployments of the four official languages (Figure 4.5). The Singaporean government, corporations, and individuals even though unevenly contributing to the linguistic landscape of the survey areas, share similarities in their frequent use of English and Chinese. English is the language most employed by all LL-actors, especially the first two with the use of English being roughly three times higher than that of Chinese and six times higher than those of Malay and Tamil.

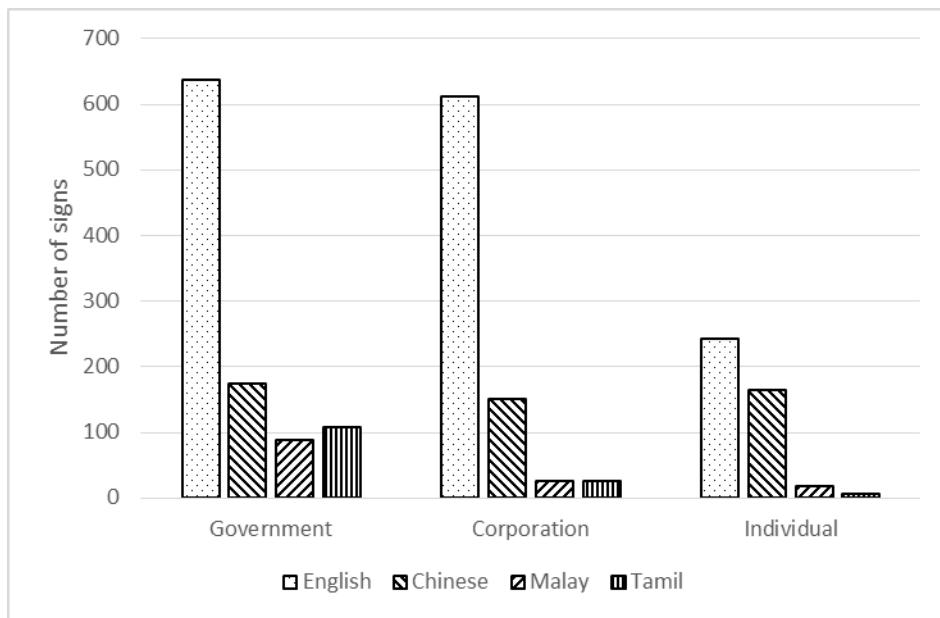


Figure 4.5. Use of languages by LL-actors

However, as regards the utilization of Malay and Tamil, there are noticeable differences in the ways these two official but minority languages are used among the three types of LL-actors in question. The government deploys Malay and Tamil more frequently than corporations and individuals, with the use of Tamil being subtly higher than that of Malay. Corporations appear to have even uses of the two languages, and individuals, utilizing Malay and Tamil least often, have the deployment of the former being higher than that of the latter.

Hence, a quick look at the use of the four official languages on mono-, bi-, and multilingual signs as well as by different LL-actors reveals the strong presence of Standard

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

English, a not-so-strong presence of Chinese, and the low presence of both Malay and Tamil. Such overall quantitative observations indicate the role of English as the working and official language while do not reflect the role of Malay as the national language as well as one of the official languages of Singapore. The same thing happens to Tamil when it is scarcely found in signs collected.

According to Landry & Bourhis (1997), an important characteristic of LL is that it is shaped by not only public authorities but also individuals, associations, or firms. In the case of Singapore, much as all social or LL-actors have their share in the process, the multilingual landscape of the survey areas appears to be shaped more by the government and corporations than by individuals. Out of 1555 linguistic items collected, 42% is produced by the government; 40.2% by corporations; 17.8% by individuals as shown in Table 4.1 below. Besides the discrepancy in the contribution to shaping the linguistic landscape, official and non-official agents have markedly different preferences in their choice of languages as well as the ways in which they are combined.

Table 4.1.

Contribution of LL-actors to LL and their prominent language patterns

Social actors	Number of signs by each social actor	Prominent language patterns	Number of signs by each pattern
Government		Monolingual English	419
	652 (42%)	Bilingual E-x	126
		Quadrilingual	44
Corporations	626 (40.2%)	Monolingual English	464

	Bilingual E-x	127
Individuals	Bilingual x-E	142
277 (17.8%)	Monolingual English	95

E-x = English together with either Chinese, Malay, or Tamil

x-E = either Chinese, Malay, or Tamil together with English

Shohamy (2006) asserted that “[i]n general, those in authority use language in the public space to deliver symbolic messages about the importance, power, significance and relevance of certain languages or the irrelevance of others” whereas “groups and individuals in the private domain feel manipulated by symbolic displays of language in the public space and protest against it, either by displaying items in “other languages” that provide different and contradictory symbols or by preventing the display of any verbal languages in the public space, as they perceive it as an imposition on their personal freedom and/ or ideologies” (p. 110). However, even though the former concerning the use of language by those in authority aligns with the LL results of this thesis, the latter might not be the case, especially when English is deployed by individual sign producers.

From the LL data of the present study, it can be observed that different social actors demonstrate dissimilar language patterns on their signs. The Singaporean government display a diversity of language patterns on their signs. By and large, they, very often, opt for either monolingual signs in English with or without pictures illustrating the message being conveyed or bilingual ones having English as the first language followed by one of the other official languages. Trilingual or quadrilingual signs with English appearing first and Tamil being the last one is also an option, albeit with a relatively low frequency. In governmental signs that have all of the four official languages, the positions of Chinese and Malay are not that fixed as the two

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

official languages “compete” for the second position as demonstrated in Figure 4.3 above and Figure 4.6 below.



Figure 4.6. A quadrilingual sign at Promenade station (CC4) station

These quadrilingual signs reflect the multilingual language policy stated by the Singaporean government in the constitution. Moreover, considering the fact that roughly 17% of the population knows only one language except for English (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011a), quadrilingual signs can make sure that the messages conveyed on signs can be understood by Singaporean sign readers, especially those whose repertoires are limited.

As for signs put up by corporations, monolingual signs in English account for the majority of the total number of signs spotted. Besides, bilingual signs following the pattern E-x are also present. English is, again, the first language and x, for most of the time, is Chinese. Even though the Chinese dialect promoted by Singaporean government is Mandarin, there is no difference known between the major Chinese dialects when it comes to written language. There are only differences between traditional and simplified Chinese, but such differences are quite irrelevant to the focus of this study, thus not being taken into consideration.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

When it comes to signs produced by individuals, taking up just one-third of the number of signs put up by either the government or corporations, the pattern x-E is most chosen, followed by monolingual English one. The fact that monolingual signs in English account for around 34.3% of the signs produced by individuals is hardly expected. Moreover, contrary to the E-x pattern on bilingual signs by the government and corporations, the x-E pattern selected by individuals for their bilingual signs deprives English of its usage as the original message and seems to limit its use to merely a means of wider communication in case potential readers fail to get the message written in one of the other three official languages.

4.1.3 Code preference. Code preference was referred to by Backhaus (2007) as the way “signs represent the geopolitical world through the choice of languages, their graphic representation, and their arrangement if more than one language is contained on a sign” (p. 37). Thus, while investigating a given sign, especially a bi- or multilingual one, it is essential to take the languages chosen, thus covertly touching the excluded ones, their font, size, and order, etc. into consideration. And among the aforementioned aspects, while the font and size of the languages utilized can be a matter of personal preference, the order of languages might be influenced by official language policies (Backhaus, 2007).

As discussed, though not directly above, among the four official languages of Singapore, English, in general, is favored the most by all LL-actors; Chinese comes next, leaving Malay and Tamil quite far behind. Likewise, the prior mentioned prominent patterns employed by different social actors reveal that the first position on most bi- or multilingual signs is occupied by English, except for bilingual signs produced by individuals. More often than not, Chinese is selected to be the second language on quadrilingual signs even though this position of Chinese is, at times, threatened by Malay. So Malay can be either the second or the third language to appear

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

on signs containing all four official languages. The last position is saved for Tamil as in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.6 above. Such an arrangement of languages on multilingual signs is a conscious, and indeed thoughtful, one because, as Backhaus (2007) remarked:

Since it is hardly practical to display more than one message on the same piece of space
... a choice must be made as to which of two or more messages is to appear in prominent position. A direction of translation in making the text given in dominant position appear as the original version from which the co-appearing other versions are derived. It goes without saying that what is intended to appear as original can be assumed to come first.

(p. 103)

From this it can be understood that on most bi- and multilingual signs collected in Singapore, English is chosen to be the original message, which is then translated into other official languages. However, among the indicators for code preference listed above, size and font of texts do not appear to indicate code preference on multilingual signs collected in Singapore. Examples, again, can be found in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.6 above, in which all four versions of the messages are presented in the same size and font (as for English and Malay). It could be explicated that the order of languages on multilingual signs alone is self-evident, thus sufficient to produce a visual hierarchy of languages.

4.1.4 Language use in terms of content. According to Pietikäinen et al. (2011), *genres*, i.e., content as used in this thesis, are “relatively durable and stable ways to mobilise and organise linguistic and semiotic resources. In other words, genres are discursive action with social and linguistic dimensions, making them recognisable across specific context” (p. 291). Genre analysis might help to shed light on the use of languages and language combinations.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

The quantitative LL results of the current thesis reveal that different LL-actors deploy languages in different manners when it comes to the content of the signs. While signs put up by the Singaporean government are, more often than not, notice signs, road signs, name signs, advertisements, and sometimes signs conveying general information, those produced by corporations mostly include advertisements, notice signs, and name signs, and signs by individual sign makers are advertisements, name signs, and notice signs as in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2

Language use and language patterns in terms of content by different LL-actors

LL-actors	Content	Number of signs		
		Monolingual	Bilingual E-x/ x-E	Quadrilingual
		English	x-E	
GO	NO	209	32	34
	RO	99	8	1
	NA	63	81	7
	AD	40	5	1
	IN	7	0	1
CO	AD	215	58	2
	NO	164	28	16
	NA	85	40	1
IN	AD	46	59	0
	NA	33	60	1
	NO	16	22	1

E-x = English together with either Chinese, Malay, or Tamil

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

x-E = either Chinese, Malay, or Tamil together with English

As for notice signs, regardless of the length or complexity of the messages, both the Singaporean government and corporations appear to favor monolingual signs in English much more than bilingual signs having the pattern E-x or quadrilingual signs. This, again, could be resulted from firstly the status of a “working” language of English, secondly the fact that the fact that approximately 80% of the population of Singapore can understand this language, either alone or together with another language or other languages (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011a) as a result of the bilingual language policy, and the promotion of English by the Singaporean government, thus the frequent utilization of this language by corporations and in the media. Yet, quite divergent from this tendency, individual sign producers prefer x-E bilingual signs to monolingual English signs or quadrilingual ones.

When it comes to name signs, signs demonstrating the bilingual E-x pattern by the Singaporean government and the x-E pattern by individuals are relatively more common than monolingual English name signs and much more frequent than quadrilingual ones by these two LL-actors. As regards corporations, however, there is a marked tendency to write their name signs in English only, which can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, being written in English, the name signs can reach a wider range of sign readers, based on the same argument applied for the case of monolingual notice signs in English as just above. On the other hand, English as a global language is tied to some particular values germane to Western culture, internationalization, globalization, and so forth; as a result, name signs in English might help to add more values to the products being sold or services being provided by corporations. A specific case of monolingual English name signs by corporations will be discussed in detail further below.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Regarding advertisements, the Singaporean government, in comparison to the other two LL-actors, do not put up many signs having this content, and the large majority of the advertisements produced by the government are in English only. Advertisements by individual sign producers are found in the x-E bilingual pattern or in English only. Corporations have the largest share when it comes to signs having this specific content. Most advertisements put up by this LL-actor are monolingual ones in English since employing the language understood by roughly 80% of the populace is ostensibly more economical and reasonable than following the E-x pattern, which might pose the risk of leaving out some potential sign readers, or including all the four official languages.

Road signs, showing directions for example, are the signs produced by the Singaporean government only, most of which are written in English only possibly owing to the nature of the messages, being short and simple with basic phrases, and the accompanying symbols and/ or images.

4.2 The Ecology of Language

It was asserted by Hymes (1992) that while all languages are potentially equal, they are, for social reasons, not actually so (p. 2-10 as cited in Hornberger, 2006, p. 27). Even though multilingualism and bilingualism have been, at least in theory, promoted by the Singaporean government, in practice, through the lens of LL, it does not appear to be the case as among the four official languages examined when some are much more equal than others. Landry & Bourhis (1997) remarked that:

The configuration of languages present in the linguistic landscape ... can provide important information about the diglossic nature of a particular bilingual or multilingual setting. (p. 26)

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Indeed, the results yielded from LL in and around the MRT stations chosen for this study, to a certain extent, sketch a diglossic picture of the local linguistic situation of Singapore, at least when it comes to written languages on signs in the public space within the scope of this thesis. Diglossia can be understood as “two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play” (Ferguson, 1959, p. 325); however, in this case, a rather looser sense, i.e. “a phenomenon that exists in a social situation where two or more languages, which may be genetically unrelated, coexist in a stable state with different status according to their functions in specific domains” (Fishman, 1967, 1980 as cited in Rosendal, 2009, p. 23) is applied. The fact that English is multifunction, thus ubiquitous in the LL, makes it the so-called “superposed” language (Ferguson, 1959, p. 327) or “high language”, which was defined elsewhere above leaving the other three official languages being considered “low languages”. This, to a certain extent, reflects the bilingual policy, which can be referred to as “functional polarization” (Pendley, 1983 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 342) or “the division of labour between languages” (Kuo & Jernudd, 1994, p. 30 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 342).

However, among Chinese, Malay, Tamil, diglossia can also be said to exist. It was previously pointed out from the LL results of this study that Chinese is used much more than Malay and Tamil, which seemingly corresponds to the distribution of the population in Singapore in regard to ethnic groups with Chinese Singaporeans accounting for 74.1% of the population, Malay 13.4%, and Indians 9.2% (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010). Hence, it can be said that diglossia manifests twice within the linguistic hierarchy of Singapore considering the quantitative LL results of this study. In terms of function, the utilization of English overshadows those of Chinese, Malay and Tamil; as regards the population structure of

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Singapore, being the so-called native language of the biggest ethnic group in Singapore, Chinese is used much more frequently than Malay and Tamil.

4.2.1 *Niches of the official languages in the local linguistic ecology of Singapore.*

As presented in the first half of the Methodology chapter, both *de jure* and *de facto* language policies demonstrate disparate functions of the four official languages of Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew asserted that:

English is for new knowledge, to keep the nation abreast with its economic and development objectives; mother tongue is for old knowledge, to keep the people anchored and focused amidst the changes around them. (*The Straight Times*, 24 November 1979 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 342)

Drawing on LL observations concerning the strikingly high frequency of English, the relatively weak presence of Chinese, the extremely low appearance of both Malay and Tamil, prominent language patterns as well as visual hierarchy of languages, it can be said that there is a pecking order of the four official languages of Singapore, with English having much the sharpest beak.

4.2.1.1 *Malay and Tamil.* When content of signs is taken into consideration, Malay and Tamil are mostly utilized on tri- or quadrilingual name signs and notice ones. For the latter case, these two languages are deployed to serve as translations of the original message written in English so as to reach those who do not understand English and/ or Chinese. Every once in a while, advertisements might include Malay or Tamil. So, not only are Malay and Tamil of limited frequency, they are also restricted as regards their functions.

Such a low frequency of use and confined *niches* of Malay are in line with Afendras & Kuo's assertion that Malay performs "a role that is more ceremonial than functional" (1980, p.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

42). For example, Figure 4.7 is an example of a street name that consists of a specific element in Malay combined with an abbreviated generic element, an indicator of the type of street, in English. In Malay, *beras basah*, which was the name of the road appearing on G.D. Coleman's 1836 *Map of Singapore* (Savage & Yeoh, 2013, p. 47), means "wet rice" (Tan, 2011). According to Savage & Yeoh (2013), the road gained such a name since "in the early days, wet rice was laid to dry here on the banks of the "fresh water stream" (now the Stamford Canal)" (p. 47). Hence, such a use of Malay for street names does not diverge much from its so-called ceremonial function.

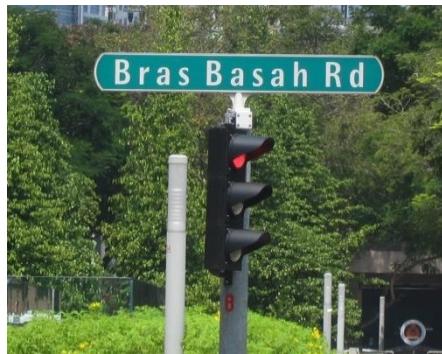


Figure 4.7. A Malay-English name sign outside Esplanade (CC3) station

Tan (2011), while investigating names in the LL, spotted quadrilingual signs at the entrances of a primary school and a secondary one with Malay being the first language, followed by Chinese, Tamil, and English. Such signs are said to conform to Article 153A; moreover, the sequence of languages is also in conformity with the order in which they appear in the Constitution. However, he later asserted that "[t]he thing that needs to be pointed out in relation to state schools in Singapore is that they are all English-medium schools, although the other official languages are taught as subjects. This will mean that the signs at the entrance will not be congruent with other signs found in the vicinity and in the school compound, which will

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

frequently be in English only” (p. 235). Such findings and observations are not dissimilar to what has been, both quantitatively and qualitatively, disclosed in the current study.

As for Tamil, even though this official language is also found on sign names, it mostly serves to transliterate Chinese and Malay names into a medium that could be read by sign readers belonging to the Indian ethnic group and failing to understand these two official languages as in Figure 4.8. Transliteration refers to “the conversion of the graphemes of one writing system into those of another, for instance from Hebrew script to Roman script” (Backhaus, 2007, p. 24). In this sense, it seems that Tamil is even a bit more marginalized than Malay.



Figure 4.8. Tamil serves as transliteration of the Malay name of an MRT station

By and large, not only does the utilization of Malay and Tamil in the LL reflect *de facto* and *de jure* language policies but it also marks the relative power as well as status of these two linguistic communities. These two official languages do have their share in the LL, thus partly demonstrating the linguistic pluralism ideology adopted by the Singaporean government. However, the limited use of Malay and Tamil, to a certain extent, mirrors the population sizes of the Malay and Indian ethnic groups, which, respectively, make up 13.4% and 9.2% of the total population of Singapore (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010). The appearance of Malay and Tamil on signs, especially official ones, is ostensibly two-fold: making sure that the messages are understood by readers understanding only either of these two languages and making Malay and Indian sign readers feel they are not excluded.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Moreover, that the bilingual policy treats these two official languages, together with Chinese, as Mother Tongue subjects seems to confine the *niches* of Malay and Tamil to the “demarcation and embodiment of culture, acting as a cultural ballast and anchor for the Singaporean” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 342). Such discourses might have mediated the use of Malay and Tamil for some street and station names. As Shohamy (2006) pointed out, “[w]hile LL is capable of creating language policy that upgrades the status of one language, it is also capable of downgrading other languages” (p. 124). Whereas the latter is applicable to the case of Malay and Tamil in Singapore, the former is true for Chinese and English, especially the second one.

4.2.1.2 Chinese. Chinese, even though not suffering the same fate as Malay and Tamil, is not that popular with LL-actors as one might expect considering the population structure of Singapore. Like the other two official languages, Chinese are usually employed on name signs and notice ones. Besides, Chinese also appears on advertisements. As pointed out previously, monolingual Chinese signs account for 4% of the monolingual signs collected, the majority of which are name signs put up by individuals as in Figure 4.9 below.



Figure 4.9. Monolingual name sign in Chinese

The Chinese name (pǔ huì) in Figure 9 can be loosely translated into English as “spreading wisdom”, which neither reveals anything specific about what is sold at the store nor, as found out later, is associated with the goods being sold. Whether sign readers can understand

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

the Chinese characters does not seem to be of great importance since the products being sold are on public display. In this case, the (good) name of the shop might be used as a means of in-group communication, helping the store to stand out above its competitors that selling the same products and make a positive impression on its customers.

On notice signs or advertisements, Chinese is usually used on bi- and quadrilingual signs. On bilingual signs by the Singaporean government and corporations, Chinese acts as the translation of the English message as in Figure 4.10 whereas on bilingual signs produced by individuals, Chinese is frequently used as the original message, followed by an English translation for those who do not understand Chinese like in Figure 4.11.

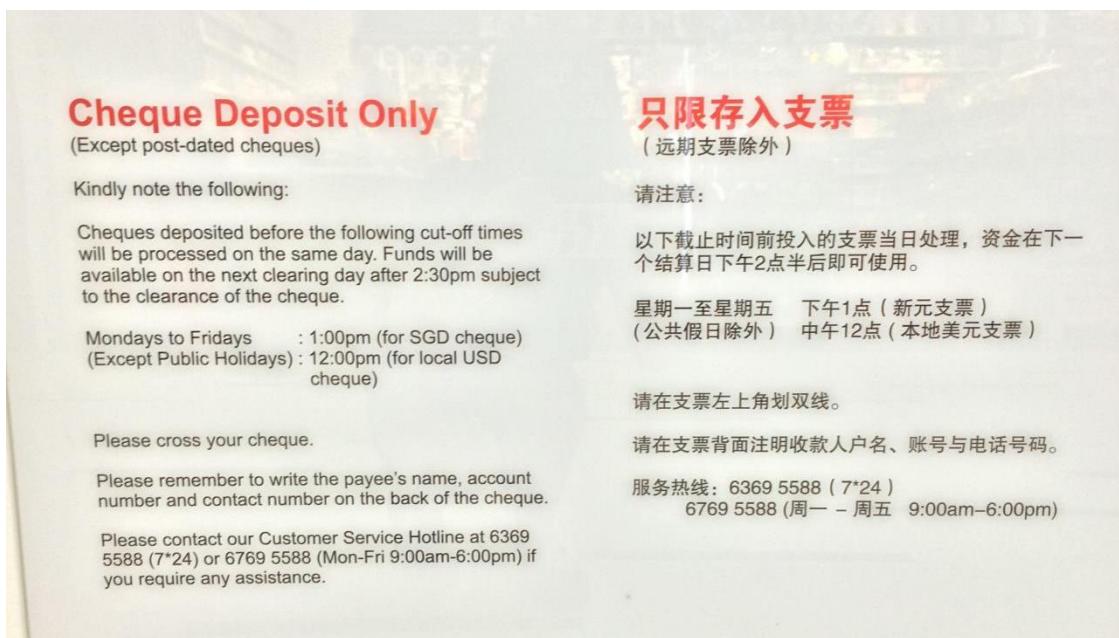


Figure 4.10. Bilingual English-Chinese sign by ICBC (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China)

The notice in Figure 4.10 was found outside the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, a Chinese multinational banking company. It can be seen that the original message written in English is relatively long and complicated; moreover, it is only translated into Chinese,

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

but not the other two official languages. This can be a hint of the languages in which services are available, thus possibly sending a direct message to sign readers, especially those who understand neither English nor Chinese. A conscious choice might have been made about what languages to include on the sign by this LL-actor since having all of the four official languages appearing on one sign could seem impractical, at least in this case.



Figure 4.11. Bilingual Chinese-English sign at a food stall

As previously disclosed when language patterns by different LL-actors were discussed, individual sign producers, as often as not, opt for the x-E pattern for bilingual signs. The sign in Figure 11 was spotted at a food stall selling Chinese food. Chinese is used for the original messages, which aim at Chinese customers or those who can understand this language. English, then, is employed for other customers. The repertoires of sign readers who do not understand Chinese could have been taken into due consideration owing to the fact that the messages are not that complex.

Summarizing, the *niches* of Chinese seem to be relatively less restricted than those of Malay and Tamil. Corresponding to the largest ethnic group in Singapore, Chinese is, at times, employed for the original messages on bilingual signs put up by individual L-actors, besides being utilized for names of streets, places, MRT stations or translations for English messages just as Malay and Tamil. The disclosed *niches* of Chinese, Malay, and Tamil help to reveal those of English.

4.2.2 From global to local: English imperialism and complexity in Singapore. This part looks into the *niches* of English, first in other ecosystems and then in Singapore through the lens of LL as well as discourses mediated its use, to reveal how English has permeated into Singaporean society with the stress on the possibility of a language shift on public signage resulted from the wide use of this language and paradigms corresponding to the *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of Singapore.

4.2.2.1 The niches of English in other ecosystems in which it is not the native language. The *niches* of English in other ecosystems have also been investigated. In Backhaus' study of the LL of Tokyo (2006), in most cases the foreign language was English, which was found on 97% of the signs of the sample (p. 55) and surprisingly had a higher frequency of appearance than Japanese on both official and nonofficial multilingual signs (p. 57, 58). Backhaus (2006) also argued that “[t]he use of foreign languages on nonofficial signs is mainly motivated by a desire to create an overseas atmosphere, even if there is no direct link to the world outside Japan. Rather than power, solidarity is the underlying motivation here” (p. 64).

English has the status of a “working language” under the Constitution in Timor-Leste and is visible in public signs in Dili (Taylor-Leech, 2012). However, despite its status as one of the working languages, English was not utilized on official signs. Indeed, English was most deployed on non-official sign, especially commercial ones, and the use of English in this type of signs “is characterised ... as a symbol of globalisation, modernity and fashion, displayed to attract local and foreign customers” (Taylor-Leech, 2012, p. 31).

Although not being an official language of Thailand, English as a global language, as revealed in Huebner's paper (2006), was of importance and influence. Data collected for this

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

study also displayed a shift from Chinese to English when it comes to the major language of wider communication in Bangkok (p. 31), especially “for the benefit of foreigners” (p. 40).

The deployment of English on storefronts in Malmö, Sweden varied by neighborhoods (Hult, 2009). In this study by Hult (2009), English monolingual signs and bilingual Swedish-English signs appeared with a higher frequency in Gågatan, a neighborhood featuring national and international retail stores, than in Möllevången, an ethnic minority community. Still, English was not as dominant as Swedish. Furthermore, contrary to the “general folk belief about English, and the belief most strongly held in *de jure* language policies ... that English serves primarily as a language of wider communication in Sweden ... a functional language for reaching those who do not speak Swedish or for obtaining information produced by those who do not speak Swedish” (Hult, 2009, p. 100), English was used more metaphorically, i.e., reflecting “stylistic choices that are meant to evoke a certain idea or abstract concept that is associated with a given language” (p. 98), than situationally, i.e., reflecting “instrumental communicative choices based on, for example, who interlocutors are and what the setting is” (p. 98). Thus, instead of being employed as a *lingua franca* for communication with those who fail to understand Swedish, English “serves more of a symbolic purpose such as indexing values associated with globalization” and “may be linked with, *inter alia*, discourses of the world economy (as a *lingua economica*), discourses of the cultural values of English-speaking countries (as a *lingua cultura*), and discourses of popular culture (as a *lingua emotiva*)” (Phillipson, 2006, p. 80 as cited in Hult, 2009, p. 100, 101). Thus, following such a stream of disclosing the *niches* of English in different ecosystems, this study sheds some light on the functions that English, one of the official languages and the working language of Singapore, performs.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

By and large, English in the aforementioned ecosystems, through the lens of LL, seems to remain a global language, not yet permeating into the investigated societies to become a local one. English is mostly deployed to refer to values tied to globalization, modernity, Western culture, etc. However, this might not appear to be the case in Singapore

4.2.2.2 English imperialism and complexity in Singapore through the lens of LL. As presented above, even though all LL-actors have their share in the LL, the government and corporations, indeed, take the lion's ones. Moreover, these two types of social actors also demonstrate a preference for English through the use of monolingual signs in English as well as having English appear as the first language on both bi- and multilingual signs. Such pervasiveness, according to Shohamy (2006), is considered imperialism:

... the public space belongs to all and therefore dominating it through public signs can be considered some type of colonization or imperialism. (p. 125)

While discussing the fact that English, of the four official languages, is not Asian in origin, thus being regarded as “neutral” for in-group relations in Singapore, Rubdy (2001) also remarked that “[i]t has been suggested that the role English has come to play in Singapore makes it quite unique in the world since no other former colony has gone on to officially adopt English as the working language” (p. 343).

In the setting of Singapore, English, by far, is the dominant language throughout all locations in the LL regardless of the population structures of these survey areas in terms of ethnicity. Tan (2011) even asserted that “Malay ... could be considered more of a *de jure* national language, with English functioning more as a *de facto* national language” (p. 233) since it helps to obtain “Singapore’s twin goals towards nation building ... economic survival and the maintenance of racial harmony” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 351). Thus, a closer examination of signage

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

using English reveals that this official language might have dual identities: a global or international language and a local language. These so-called dual identities of English, to a certain extent, reflect what Hult (2009), as mentioned previously, put as metaphorical and situational uses of language.

4.2.2.2.1 English – a global language for economic survival in Singapore. This metaphorical use of English can be found mostly on name signs and at times advertisements by both corporations and individuals as in Figure 4.12 and Figure 4.13 below.



Figure 4.12. Monolingual English name sign by a corporation

PappaRich is the name of a Malaysian brand whose founder, Rich Tan, did “revolutionize the concept of a traditional coffee shop into a more modern dining experience with a premium feel” (PappaRich, n.d.). Such an English-like brand name is the result of the founder’s belief that “the element of success is also highly dependent on the brand name whereby it can serve as a good form of advertising” (PappaRich, n.d.).

Explaining more about the brand name, Rich Tan stressed the affective impact of the word “papa” - “someone whom you can easily relate to and remember whilst being close to your heart” (PappaRich, n.d.). As for the word Rich, even though it might appear to be the founder’s

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

first name, Rich Tan quipped “[d]oesn't everyone want to be Rich especially a Rich Pappa” (PappaRich, n.d.). It was also claimed by Rich Tan that “PappaRich provides the richness of life, Rich in Value, Aspiration, Life, Love and Future” (PappaRich, n.d.). Hence, the brand name PappaRich can be considered a metaphorical use of English due to the fact that basing on the brand name only, one having no previous knowledge of this brand can hardly figure out what is sold at the store.



Figure 4.13. Monolingual English advertisement by an individual

On the advertisement by an individual in Figure 4.13, English is employed in both metaphorical and situational manners. The English word “sunclean”, which should have been written as two separate words in terms of morphology, is metaphorically utilized as the name of the shop. The name of the shop alone can hardly give sufficient information about the service being provided even though the second element of the name might be, to a certain extent, associated semantically with the laundry service. Moreover, even after being contextualized by the situational utilization of the word “laundry”, it is still quite unclear what this LL actor wanted to convey with “sunclean”.

Thus, from the two instances elaborated just above, it can be said that the employment of English does not seem to serve basic communicative purposes but rather fulfilling other purposes

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

like internationalizing the brand in the case of PappaRich and connoting other messages such as that the LL actor producing the advertisement in Figure 4.13 had in mind, thus opting for “sunclean”. Moreover, the employment of two English(-like) words namely “pappa” and “sunclean”, to some extent, reflects Higgins (2009)’ observation that “‘public English’, a variety characterized by misspellings, novel morphosyntax and highly localized meanings” is deployed to “advertise local goods and services” (p. 14).

According to Cenoz and Gorter (2006), “[t]he use of English in commercial signs does not seem to be intended to transmit factual information but is used for its connotational value ... activat[ing] values such as international orientation, future orientation, success, sophistication or fun orientation” (p. 70). So, such a metaphorical use of English characterizes it as a global language serving functions and offering values that local languages of Singapore might not be capable of. Consequently, English is partly considered a global language, possibly belonging to another ecosystem or even the ecosphere due to its high status as a global language. This, in a sense, corresponds to the symbolic value condition among the three conditions for language choice in public signage proposed by Spolsky (1991), which refers to sign producers’ preference to write signs in their own languages or in languages with which they wish to be identified.

4.2.2.2.2 English – a local language for the maintenance of racial harmony and inter-ethnic communication in Singapore. By and large, most Singaporeans do not consider Standard English as a local language. On the contrary, it is a “home-grown, spoken vernacular English unique to Singapore (labelled Colloquial Singapore English or CSE by academics, but known as “Singlish” among most Singaporeans ...)” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 345) that “is increasingly being foregrounded in the consciousness of English-speakers in Singapore with some show of pride and “a new confidence” in its value” (Pakir, 1994, p. 177 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 345).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

However, owing to “the quite different distributions of spoken and written language” (Spolsky, 2009, p. 32) and Singlish being a spoken vernacular English, it is not Singlish but Standard English that has been situationally utilized on signs, at least on those examined in the current study, thus, in this view, being a local language.

Situational English is deployed mainly on notice signs and advertisements. Inasmuch as language is and/ or can be employed “to create group membership (“us/them”), to demonstrate inclusion or exclusion, to determine loyalty or patriotism, to show economic status (“haves/have nots”) and classification of people and personal identities” (Shohamy, 2006, p. xv), “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...[t]hus...sends direct and indirect messages with regard to the centrality versus the marginality of certain languages in society” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110). The strong presence of situational English and low presence and/ or absence of the other three official languages of Singapore marginalize Chinese, Malay, and Tamil while centralizing English.

Therefore, in theory, all the four official languages of Singapore should be included on signs to avoid ethnic favoritism; however, limited spaces and relatively long messages make quadrilingualism on signs inconvenient. Since leaving one or two languages out might make speakers of those languages feel excluded, monolingual English signs appear to be quite an ideal solution as in Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.15.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE



Figure 4.14. Monolingual English poster for Singapore Kindness Movement

The sign in Figure 4.14 is a poster for the Singapore Kindness Movement, which was officially launched in 1997 highlighting the need for “Singapore to become a gracious society by the 21st century” since “[c]onsiderate social behaviour supported by a strong economy and good government will make Singapore the best home for its people” (Singapore Kindness Movement, n.d.). In this sign, the deployment of English does not seem to aim at wider communication for the benefit of foreigners. Nor is the utilization of English tied to global or Western values that are usually attached to this language (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). Indeed, this monolingual English sign targets Singaporean sign readers whose linguistic repertoires must have been presupposed to include English at a certain level of proficiency.



Figure 4.15. Monolingual English notice sign by SMRT Corporation

Likewise, this notice sign by SMRT Corporation is also exemplary of the situational use of English. English serves a basic communicative function, for this public transport operator to reach out to its customers, mostly Singaporeans and sometimes tourists.



Figure 4.16. Monolingual English notice sign at an individual food stall

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

At individual level, monolingual notice signs in English seem to contain shorter and simpler messages as in Figure 4.16. The utilization of only English on the sign spotted at a food stall does save space for the message to be printed in a larger font, thus being more visible to sign readers. And once again, English appearing on this sign does not indicate any notion of foreignness; instead, it instructionally informs customers that they will have to serve themselves, waiting to get the food and returning their trays to the returning point.

It can be said that English serves a communicative function, yet this function might be a bit different from that of English in other ecosystems. Normally, English is used for communication between native speakers of a certain language, except for English, and those who fail to speak or understand the indigenous language. In Singapore, due to the multiethnic nature of this society, English is utilized for convenience, for Singaporeans to reach Singaporeans regardless of their so-called mother tongues. English, in this sense, is treated as an in-group language.

4.2.3 Possibility of a language shift on public signage? The notion of “language shift” refers to “the process whereby members of community in which more than one language is spoken abandon their original vernacular language in favour of another” (Kandler, Unger, & Steele, 2010, p. 3855). In spite of the fact that Mandarin Chinese is the so-called native language of the biggest ethnic group in Singapore, its share in the Singaporean linguistic market seems to be taken by both English, in terms of written language, and Singlish when it comes to colloquial spoken language.

Shohamy (2006) asserted that “[t]he display of transmits symbolic messages as to the legitimacy, relevance, priority and standards of languages and the people and groups they represent” (p. 110). Moreover, Landry & Bourhis (1997) also pointed out that “[t]he prevalence

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

of one's own language on public signs can fulfill an informational and symbolic function that can encourage group members to value and use their own language in a broad range of interpersonal and institutional settings" (p. 29). In a sense, English, from an official and working language selected and promoted by the Singaporean government, has gradually gained its share in the bottom-up market with its use by individual LL-actors and, as pointed out in 3.1.5, its being spoken at home by 52% of the Chinese, 50% of the Indians, and 26% of Malays (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011b).

Thus, it can be suggested that English is becoming the native language of Singaporeans. To a certain extent, owing to the urge to become successful, which in a sense can be measured by a good command of English, Singaporeans pay more attention to the acquisition and usage of English, using English at home together with and at times instead of their mother tongues. This can be related to what Kandler, Unger, & Steele (2010) discussed about language shift, the choice as well as its drive:

The major driver of language shift is the decision to abandon a more local or less prestigious language, typically because the target of the shift is a language seen as more modern, useful or giving access to greater social mobility and economic opportunities. (p. 3855)

The possibility of a language shift towards English on public signage suggested here appears to bear some resemblance to the dominance of English on signs in San Antonio disclosed by Hult (2014) although the city is demographically bilingual. An English-dominant image of San Antonio is constructed in spite of the fact that many people are proficient in Spanish (Hult, 2014). Likewise, an English-dominant image of Singapore suggested by the low presence of Chinese, at least on public signage in the investigated areas, is also constructed

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

despite the vitality of Mandarin in this city-state. The strong presence of English might have nothing to do with sign readers' repertoire concerning Chinese even though Mandarin literacy was 65% (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011b), but rather discourses of globalization in Singapore that align more with English than Chinese. Thus, the high frequency of use of English might not only be because it is an easy language to use to reach everyone, it might be owing to how strongly English is indexed with internationalization in a multicultural space, which affiliates with the *diffusion-of-English paradigm*.

4.2.4 *De jure ecology-of-language paradigm and de facto diffusion-of-English paradigm.* The two paradigms, which were previously presented in Chapter 2, can be considered endpoints on a continuum. And in the setting of Singapore, *de jure* quadrilingual language policy by the Singaporean government lies at the *ecology-of language* end; the bilingual policy, as well as the quantitative LL results of the current study concerning the utilization of bilingual signs with English being one of the languages, is in between but relatively closer to the *diffusion-of-English* end; that “[i]n Singapore’s official terminology, English is a “working language,” while the other ethnic languages are called “mother tongues,” each serving to re-ethnicize and consolidate separate ethnic communities” (Rubdy, 2001, p. 342) and that 63% of the total number of 1555 signs collected are monolingual signs in English position at the *diffusion-of-English* end.

Yet, the results gained and discussions of the *niches* of the four official languages of Singapore neither bear resemblance to nor seem to reflect the linguistic situation of spoken language. To a certain extent, it can be said that the case of written language is relatively less complex than that of spoken language. For instance, Chinese dialects are not dissimilar in terms of writing, yet in communication, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, and so forth are used by

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Singaporeans. And even though more than one language can be found on signs, they usually act as translations of each other instead of “reflect[ing] elements of code-switching” (Hult, 2009, p. 98). As for spoken language in Singapore, Siemund, Schulz, & Schweinberge (2014) observed that:

[L]anguage use is no either/or-matter, but the product of a complicated mesh of factors comprising speaker competencies, preferences, attitudes and motivations, parameters of the communicative situation, and the topic of conversation. Singaporeans do not speak English *or* Singlish, Mandarin *or* Cantonese, Malay *or* Mandarin, or Mandarin *or* English. They typically command several codes. They frequently code-switch, code-mix, or use unstable codes. English lexemes may be piggybacking on Chinese syntax, or vice versa. Multilingualism may better be regarded as a process, not a state. (p. 341)

It can be suggested from the quantitative LL results of this study that English appearing on approximately on 96% of the signs collected with monolingual signs in English accounting for approximately 63% reflects the *diffusion-of-English paradigm* and the small number of quadrilingual signs, especially by the Singaporean government, corresponds to the *ecology-of-language paradigm*.

4.2.5 Monolingual Singapore? A closer examination of the bilingual policy in Singapore might postulate that it may be, not in the literal sense, more monolingualism- than bilingualism-oriented. Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) contended that:

A language policy is basically monolingual when it linguistically allocates resources primarily to one language and correspondingly idolizes and glorifies this dominant language while demonizing, stigmatizing, and rendering invisible other languages. The ideological underpinning involves a rationalization of the relationship between dominant

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

and dominated, always to the advantage of the dominant, making the learning of the dominant language at the cost of other languages seem not only instrumentally functional but beneficial to and for the dominated. (p. 437)

English might be becoming the in-group language as proven quantitatively and qualitatively previously in the current study. This, together with the increasing use of English as home language (as mentioned in 3.1.5 above), which might be an effect of the English-based bilingual education system choosing English to be the medium of instruction in schools, might predict a sustained growth of English in the local linguistic ecology of Singapore. English monolingualism, at least in the LL especially when the use of other languages serves as translation for the original message in English, might be even more ubiquitous, holding a larger share of the LL than the current 63% when in 2010, approximately 80% of Singaporeans could understand English (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2011a). This reflects Pennycook's remark (2004) saying "a dominant language such as English may not always threaten other languages directly but may do so by upsetting an ecology of languages" (p. 214).

To summarize, quantitative LL data collected disclose the prevalence of English on signs, overshadowing Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. Results gained also reveal the language patterns favored by different LL-actors as well as the visual hierarchy of languages, which can be referred to as code-preference. Then qualitative analyses shed light on the *niches* of the four official languages of Singapore with English having dual identities and performing more functions than the other three official languages. To a certain extent, English can be said to be the *de facto* national language of Singapore, which might pave the way for a language shift from Chinese towards English on public signage. Additionally, concerning the two paradigms, i.e. *the ecology-of-language paradigm* and the *diffusion-of-English paradigm*, in the case of Singapore, the

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

pendulum appears to gravitate towards the *diffusion-of-English* side despite the fact that *de jure* language policies appear to promote multilingualism.

Chapter 5. Conclusion: Current Trends and Future Directions for the Language**Ecology of Singapore**

The aims of this thesis were to investigate the employment of the four official languages of Singapore through the lens of LL, which helped to reveal the *niches* of these languages, especially English. Moreover, it was also the target of this study to touch upon the possibility of a language shift on public signage as well as language policies of Singapore. Findings and discussion, which were presented in detail in Chapter 4, will be encapsulated in this last chapter. Furthermore, the limitations of this thesis and suggestions for future research taking an interest in the linguistic situation of Singapore will also be noted in the current chapter.

5.1 Linguistic Landscape: Language Use and Visual Linguistic Hierarchy

The exceptionally high proportion of English, as revealed through the quantitative LL results, (re)produces the discourses in place about the prevalence of English in the local linguistic ecology of Singapore. Generally, English appeared on 96% of the signs collected with monolingual signs in English accounting for approximately 63%. Additionally, English, more often than not, was utilized for the original messages on bi- and multilingual signs. Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, having much smaller shares, were not widely seen in the LL.

The deployment of these languages also differs when LL-actors and content are taken into consideration. It can be observed from the data that both the Singaporean government and corporations captured the lion's shares of shaping the LL of the investigated areas, accounting for, respectively, 42% and 40.2 % of the total number of signs spotted. Hence, only 17.8 % of the LL was constructed by individual LL-actors. As for language use, the three LL-actors expressed the same preference for English and Chinese; however, their employment of the other two official languages was dissimilar. Moreover, each LL-actor opted for specific language patterns.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

Monolingual English and bilingual E-x signs, listed in order of frequency, were preferred by the Singaporean government and corporations whereas bilingual x-E and, again, monolingual English signs were put up by individuals.

Code preference was also touched upon in this study. Yet, in the LL of Singapore, the preference for, in most cases, English over the other three official languages was expressed through the order of languages on signs in lieu of size, font, and other kinds of indicators. The majority of bi- and multilingual signs except for x-E bilingual ones by individual sign producers had English appear first. On quadrilingual signs, there was a so-called competition between Chinese and Malay for the second position. The last position was always saved for Tamil.

5.2 The Local Linguistic Ecology of Singapore: Diglossia among languages on public signs and English-dominant Multilingual Singapore

Such a quantitatively proven prevalence of English in the LL of Singapore, to a certain extent, suggests the relatively restricted niches of the other three official languages of Singapore, thus ostensibly revealing the diglossic situation of languages used on public signs in Singapore. What was disclosed by LL in this study appears to correspond to other mechanisms of language planning in Singapore such as the bilingual language policy viewing bilingualism as “English-knowing bilingualism” as Kachru put it (1982, p. 42 as cited in Rubdy, 2001, p. 342).

Malay and Tamil were mostly utilized for names of streets and stations or translations of the original messages written in English on multilingual signs. The *niches* of Chinese were less confined than those of Malay and Tamil. Yet, in spite of being the native language of the biggest ethnic group in Singapore, through the lens of LL as well as discourses concerning language use, it can be said that Chinese is still much overshadowed by English, which might suggest an

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

ongoing language change with English becoming the native language of ethnic groups in Singapore.

English, which is considered to function “more as a *de facto* national language” by Tan (2011, p. 233), can be said to adopt dual identities. As a global language, the functions of English in Singapore are not dissimilar from those in other so-called ecosystems like Tokyo, Bangkok, Malmö, and so forth. Owing to its certain values related to Western cultures, modernity, foreignness, globalization, internationalization, etc., its metaphorical use is mostly for economic survival. Metaphorical English was mostly found on name signs and sometimes advertisements. Yet, as a local language, English in Singapore is deployed situationally for inter-ethnic communication as well as maintenance of racial harmony. Such a use of English could be seen on notice signs and advertisements.

Last but certainly not least, when not only the results of LL but also other mechanisms influential in shaping language policies presented in Chapter 3 are taken account of, *de jure* language policies by the Singaporean government, on the surface, align with the *ecology-of-language paradigm* with emphasis on linguistic diversity worldwide, multilingualism, foreign language learning, and linguistic human rights, whereas *de facto* language policies appear to reflect the *diffusion-of-English paradigm* with monolingualism being promoted.

To conclude, in the current study, LL in Singapore served to symbolically construct this multilingual space as an English-dominant place. The prominence of English was manifested in the high (and predictably increasing) frequency of use as well as its position in the visual hierarchy on bi- and multilingual signs, which, simultaneously, stresses English imperialism and the complexity of this language in Singapore and, to a certain extent, restricts the *niches* of the other three official languages. A potential language shift from Chinese in general to English on

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

public signage was also postulated, and *de facto* language policies of Singapore can be said to gravitate towards the *diffusion-of-English* side of the pendulum.

5.3 Limitations of the Current Study

Even though best efforts have been made, the present thesis still has certain limitations. First and foremost, owing to the fact that the survey areas were the 30 MRT stations and their surrounding areas of the Circle Line, the data should be interpreted in light of these locations. Different results, thus possibly different interpretations, might be yielded if the scope of investigation is widened or even changed.

Moreover, this study provides a synchronic look at the linguistic landscape of Singapore in 2015, and the data collected were, in terms of content, relatively more comprehensive than those of previous studies, i.e., Tan's study (2011) analyzing name signs of MRT stations, schools, streets, etc. As a consequence, it might not be possible to disclose changes over time if there were any.

Additionally, "...visual space is a result of human actions, and in turn, has an impact on human actions" (Pietikäinen et al., 2011, p. 277); this study has touched upon only the former but not yet the latter, however. Had the influence of written language used on public signs on sign readers been taken into consideration, this study would be more comprehensive, possibly disclosing other aspects of language behaviors of sign readers since, as pointed out earlier, "[t]he prevalence of one's own language on public signs can fulfill an informational and symbolic function that can encourage group members to value and use their own language in a broad range of interpersonal and institutional settings" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 29)

5.4 Further Research

Considering the limitations discussed above, future studies might wish to expand the scope of the current thesis to cover other areas of Singapore so as to achieve a holistic view of the whole city's linguistic landscape and to determine whether the findings in this study will be obtained in other areas as well.

Furthermore, a more comprehensive study can be carried out to scrutinize "the effect of language in the public space on actual language behavior and on the *facto* language practice" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 128). Interviews can be conducted, or questionnaires can be used to investigate sign readers' perception of the use of languages on public signs and assess the impact of such linguistic choices of LL-actors on their targeted audience.

Also, a diachronic study of linguistic landscape could also be carried out to see how this mechanism has changed over time and reflected (debates over) language ideologies. Lastly, other studies can also apply the same tools, albeit with adjustments, to investigate the LL of other bi- or multilingual settings so as to disclose more than just quantitative data and discussions.

Overall, the present thesis, in spite of certain limitations, casts some light on the LL of Singapore, thus revealing the *niches* of the four official languages of this city-state as well as commenting on the language policies and suggesting the possibility of a language shift from Chinese to English on public signage.

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING IN SINGAPORE

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