

Underlying Power and Prestige of Languages: A Marketspace Study in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the linguistic landscape of the Bayombong Public Market in Nueva Vizcaya, focusing on the types, functions, and categories of signs, the languages used, and community perspectives on language use. Using a mixed-method approach, it combined quantitative data from photographic documentation and signage tallying with qualitative insights from interviews with vendors and consumers. Findings showed a dominance of bottom-up signs, particularly commercial and advertising signage. Most signs served informational purposes, though a notable portion conveyed symbolic meanings. English was the most commonly used language, followed by Filipino and Ilocano, with minimal presence of indigenous languages like Ifugao. However, spoken interactions primarily involved local languages, highlighting a disconnect between written and spoken language use. Interview responses revealed that English is often chosen for its perceived modernity and broader appeal, while local languages are linked to identity and accessibility. This indicates that the market's linguistic landscape reflects both economic priorities and cultural affiliations. In conclusion, the Bayombong Public Market illustrates a complex sociolinguistic environment where visual language use emphasizes prestige and commerce, while everyday speech reflects cultural identity. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on multilingualism, language hierarchies, and inclusivity in rural public spaces.

Keywords: language use, linguistic landscape, multilingualism, signages, sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

The study of linguistic landscapes is gaining traction in the Philippines, focusing on written language use in public spaces such as signs, billboards, and shop names. Defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997), linguistic landscapes offer insights into how languages coexist, compete, and reflect social structures. They help analyze language distribution, status, identity, and power dynamics within communities. This field highlights the importance of language vitality, the transmission and daily use of a language, and language diversity, or the number of languages spoken in an area. Prominence of certain languages on public signs often indicates linguistic dominance and reflects broader sociopolitical forces.

Language dominance, both individual and societal, refers to the greater use and influence of one language over others, shaped by education, media, and historical factors. Understanding this concept is key to addressing issues of identity, cultural preservation, and social inclusion. Linguistic landscape studies reveal how languages are stratified in society, reflect public attitudes toward multilingualism, and show the impact of language policies. Ultimately, examining linguistic landscapes in various settings, from cities to schools, offers a window into community dynamics, identity, and linguistic ideologies.

Different Perspectives in Linguistic Landscape Research

Linguistic landscape research encompasses various perspectives, viewing language use in public spaces as a reflection of broader societal, cultural, and political realities. It draws from fields like sociology, ethnology, language policy, and communication studies to analyze how public language functions as a social practice, revealing patterns of power, identity, and social change.

The Sociological Perspective on Linguistic Landscape

The sociological approach to linguistic landscape research focuses on how public language use reflects power relations, identity, and globalization. Studies often examine urban areas, where the prominence of certain languages reveals social hierarchies and cultural shifts.

For example, Backhaus (2006) found that English dominates signage in Tokyo's commercial and tourist zones, despite Japanese being the official language, highlighting the tension between global influence and local identity. Similarly, Huebner (2006) studied Bangkok and observed how English, through code-switching and code-mixing, signifies economic power in a globalized context. Ben-Rafael et al. (2015) noted that in cities like Brussels and Tel Aviv, English signage tied to global brands often overshadows regional or minority languages.

Overall, the sociological perspective reveals how globalization, commerce, and cultural prestige shape language use in public spaces, often favoring English in major cities. However, most research has focused on urban centers, leaving a gap in studies of rural linguistic landscapes, such as in Bayombong.

The Ethnographic and Communicative Perspective on Linguistic Landscape

The ethnographic or communicative perspective focuses on how people perceive and interact with languages in public spaces, using methods like observation and surveys. Studies such as Trumper-Hecht (2010) in Israel, Aiestaran et al. (2010) in Spain, and Shang (2021) in China show that perceptions of language use are shaped by identity, politics, and social context. These works highlight that linguistic landscapes are not just about language presence but also about how communities interpret and value them.

This study applies that perspective to Bayombong, a culturally and linguistically diverse town. With languages like Gaddang, Ilocano, Tagalog, Tuwali, and Kankanaey spoken in the area, the research aims to understand how people in the public market perceive language use in signage, a topic rarely explored in rural settings.

The Language Policy Perspective on Linguistic Landscape

This perspective views linguistic landscapes as outcomes of both official policies and grassroots practices. Studies, such as Ferguson & Sidorova (2018) in Yakutsk and Shohamy (2006) in Brussels, show that while policies may promote minority languages, dominant languages often prevail in public signage due to economic and political pressures. Thus, public signs reflect language ideologies, power structures, and the tension between policy and practice.

Integrating Perspectives in Linguistic Landscape Research

Linguistic landscape research benefits from combining sociological, ethnographic, and policy perspectives. Each approach offers unique insights, whether focusing on power dynamics, public perceptions, or policy implementation. Together, they help reveal how language use in public spaces is shaped by broader cultural, economic, and political forces, particularly in the context of globalization and multilingual societies.

Linguistic Landscape in Commercial Spaces

Research on linguistic landscapes in commercial spaces highlights how language use reflects both local culture and broader economic forces. Studies in the Philippines (Cantina, 2021; Luna, 2023) show that signage often employs English and stylistic strategies (e.g., jokes, blends) to attract customers and support tourism, while local languages remain underrepresented. Similar patterns appear in Indonesia (Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias, 2020) and China (Lu et al., 2019), where national and global languages dominate, signaling the effects of globalization. Ambion (2023) also emphasizes the role of English in marketing local products.

Overall, these studies underscore the need to balance economic growth with the preservation of linguistic diversity and heritage.

Linguistic Landscape in Community Spaces

Studies show that signage in community spaces reflects cultural heritage, local preferences, and policy tensions. In the Philippines, Esteron (2021) found church signs use English, Latin, and Spanish, while Ilocano is suggested to enhance local relevance. Bonifacio (2022) highlighted how regional languages often displace indigenous tongues, calling for education reforms. Manalastas and Auxtero (2023) criticized signage laws for favoring English over Filipino and local languages. In China, Yao et al. (2022) found Uyghur marginalized in signage due to state policies. Manalastas (2024) noted a division in Intramuros, Manila, English for tourists, Filipino for locals. These findings stress the need for balanced language policies that support both national unity and linguistic diversity.

Linguistic Landscape During Disasters

Research shows that language in public signage plays a critical role in disaster communication and recovery. Studies like Doroja-Cadiente and Valdez (2019) on Typhoon Haiyan highlight how language reflects social inequalities and emotional responses, with English sometimes creating comprehension barriers. Other research (Insyirah & Sudarwati, 2021; Ellaga & Valdez, 2020) confirms that multilingual signs improve understanding during crises, while unequal access to vital information remains a concern globally (Hopkyns & Van Den Hoven, 2021; Kalocsányiová et al., 2021). These findings underscore the importance of inclusive, accessible communication in emergencies.

Linguistic Landscape in Educational Institutions (Schoolscapes)

Linguistic landscapes in schools serve as valuable educational resources that promote cultural identity and inclusivity. Studies (Balog & Gonzales, 2023; Bernardo-Hinesley, 2020) show that incorporating local languages fosters belonging and enhances learning. Research by Gorter and others emphasizes linguistic landscapes' role in raising awareness of language diversity and identity. Abbas et al. (2022) noted how language use in universities reflects cultural and ideological narratives shaping students' experiences. Together, these studies advocate for integrating linguistic diversity in curricula to enrich education.

Marketplaces, as hubs of trade and social interaction, naturally embody multilingualism and cultural diversity. However, there is a lack of studies focusing specifically on the linguistic landscape of marketplaces. Exploring language dominance, diversity, and local language use in these settings could provide valuable insights into community language preferences and dynamics.

This study adopts the linguistic landscape (LL) framework initially conceptualized by Landry and Bourhis (1997) to examine how public signage reflects and shapes multilingualism, identity, and language policy. LL views languages displayed in public spaces not only as communicative tools but also as symbolic markers of sociopolitical dynamics, promoting inclusion and equity for minority languages while fostering symbolic belonging and accessibility (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Shohamy, 2006; Hopkyns & Van Den Hoven, 2021). A central theoretical distinction in LL research is between "top-down" signs (official, institutional signs such as street names, traffic signals, and public notices that reflect dominant power structures and state language policies) and "bottom-up" signs, which originate from private businesses, community groups, or individuals, including commercial advertisements, graffiti, and community announcements that often reveal local linguistic diversity and grassroots language use (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Ben-Rafael, 2009). This framework enables analysis of the interplay between institutional authority and community agency in shaping the linguistic environment, illustrating tensions between national language promotion and the preservation of indigenous and local languages (Bonifacio, 2022; Manalastas & Auxtero, 2023). Additionally, LL serves as an

educational resource, fostering incidental language learning and raising awareness about multilingualism (Gorter, Cenoz, & van der Worp, 2021). Building on this, Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) categorization of eight types of signs—including street signs, advertising, warnings, building names, informative signs, commemorative plaques, inscriptions on objects, and graffiti, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted roles of language in public spaces and how these signs mediate language ideologies, reflecting the complex relationship between language, space, and power. Finally, as Hu (2022) highlights, linguistic landscapes perform two main functions: the informational function, which helps individuals navigate and reveals linguistic and cultural diversity, and the symbolic function, which fosters pride and social identity among language users by visibly marking their languages in public spaces, thus contributing to cultural representation and vitality.

This study examines the linguistic landscape of Bayombong Public Market to understand how language use reflects cultural diversity, identity, and social power. Despite increasing research on linguistic landscapes, language use in public markets remains underexplored. Conducted from late March to early April 2025, this study addresses the following questions: What types and categories of signs are common in the market? What are the primary functions of these signs? Which languages are used? And how do people perceive language use in this space? Findings will deepen understanding of language dynamics in market spaces and inform policies that support linguistic diversity and inclusion.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of signage types, functions, and languages with qualitative narrative interviews to explore language use in Bayombong Public Market. Data were gathered through observation, photographic documentation, and semi-structured interviews with five vendors and five consumers selected via convenience sampling. Vendors were chosen for their role in creating signage, while consumers provide insights on language interpretation, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the market's linguistic landscape. The small sample allowed for in-depth exploration, and ethical protocols including informed consent and confidentiality were strictly observed. The research was conducted within the approximately 0.012 km² area of Bayombong Public Market, a linguistically diverse site where Ilocano, Gaddang, Tagalog, and other local and national languages are commonly used, making it an ideal context for examining multilingual public signage.

This study used several research instruments to explore the linguistic landscape of Bayombong public market. Photographic documentation captured images of all written signs for later analysis, while field notes from semi-structured interviews provided insights into social interactions and language use. A tally sheet systematically recorded the frequency and distribution of languages and sign types to support quantitative analysis. An interview guide, validated by the research adviser, was used to gather detailed information from vendors and consumers about their language choices, signage practices, and perceptions of how language affects business and community identity. The guide included open-ended questions to encourage participants to share additional relevant experiences. Together, these instruments provided a comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic and visual communication dynamics within the market.

Data analysis for this study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research questions. Photographic data were used to identify and categorize signs in the market as either top-down (official) or bottom-up (created by businesses or citizens), with frequency counts and percentages determining their occurrence. Signs were classified following Ben-Rafeal's (2009) types of signs, Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) categories of signs, and Hu's (2022) linguistic function of sign, and results were presented in tables and graphs. An

intercoder ensured reliability and consistency. The functions of signs were analyzed through content analysis to distinguish informational from symbolic roles, complemented by interview insights from vendors and consumers on how these functions are perceived. Languages displayed and spoken in the market were documented, classified, and quantified to reflect their prominence. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed to explore community attitudes and differences between vendors' and consumers' perspectives. This mixed-method approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic landscape, including sign types, functions, language use, and social attitudes within the Bayombong public market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section 1. Types of Signs Commonly Found in the Public Market Linguistic Landscape

Table 1

Types of Signs in the Public Market Linguistic Landscape (Landry and Bourhis, 1997)

| | n | % |
|--|-----|-------|
| Top-Down Signs | 39 | 12.15 |
| Public building names and official notices | 16 | 41.03 |
| Warning notices and prohibitions | 16 | 41.03 |
| Street names and traffic signs | 7 | 17.95 |
| Bottom-Up Signs | 282 | 87.85 |
| Commercial and advertising signs | 199 | 70.57 |
| Graffiti and street art | 46 | 16.31 |
| Community-based signs | 37 | 13.12 |

Table 1 reveals a significant imbalance between top-down and bottom-up signages in the Bayombong Public Market, with bottom-up signs (n=282) greatly outnumbering top-down signs (n=39). Among top-down signs, public building names and warning notices are equally frequent (n=16 each), while street names and traffic signs are the least common (n=7). Conversely, commercial and advertising signs dominate bottom-up signage (n=199), followed by graffiti and street art (n=46), and community-based signs (n=37). This pattern indicates that the market's linguistic landscape is primarily shaped by grassroots actors, vendors, businesses, and local communities, rather than formal government interventions, supporting Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) distinction between top-down and bottom-up signage.

The prevalence of warning notices and public building names among official signs highlights authorities' focus on regulation and institutional presence, while the scarcity of street and traffic signs points to gaps in urban planning, possibly leading to a more improvised flow of movement within the market. The dominance of commercial signs underscores the central role of economic activity, reflecting how private enterprise influences language use as a means of visibility and power. Simultaneously, the presence of graffiti, handwritten, and community-based signs reveals the market as a space for cultural expression, identity, and social interaction, aligning with Landry and Bourhis' (1997) view of linguistic landscapes as both informative and symbolic. This dynamic is further supported by studies like Backhaus (2006) and Huebner (2006), which note that bottom-up signage in commercial settings often favors global or economically dominant languages such as English, reflecting aspirations toward modernity and economic legitimacy, sometimes at the expense of local languages.

Overall, the findings suggest that the linguistic landscape of Bayombong Public Market is a contested space where economic, cultural, and political power relations are visibly inscribed, making it a dynamic arena of communication, identity, and social negotiation.

Section 2. Categories of Signs According to Their Functions and Forms

Table 2

Categories of Signs According to Their Function and Form (Spolsky & Cooper, 1991)

| Category | N | % |
|--|----|-------|
| Advertising signs | 75 | 23.37 |
| Objects include inscriptions or labels | 68 | 21.18 |
| Building names | 59 | 18.38 |
| Graffiti | 46 | 14.33 |
| Informative signs | 44 | 13.7 |
| Warning notices and prohibitions | 26 | 8.11 |
| Street signs | 2 | .62 |
| Commemorative plaques | 1 | .31 |

Table 2 categorizes signage in the Bayombong Public Market by form and function based on Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) framework. Advertising signs are the most prevalent (n=75), followed by objects with inscriptions or labels (n=68), building names (n=59), graffiti (n=46), informative signs (n=44), warning notices and prohibitions (n=26), street signs (n=2), and a single commemorative plaque (n=1). The high number of building names aids spatial orientation, helping vendors and customers navigate the busy market. Informative and warning signs, though fewer, remain important for safety and order, while the scarcity of street signs suggests reliance on local knowledge and reflects the market's informal, organic development. The significant presence of graffiti highlights the market as a vibrant social space where informal and often unsanctioned cultural expressions coexist alongside commercial signage. The near absence of commemorative plaques indicates limited focus on historical memory or official cultural narratives, emphasizing the market's role as a center for current economic and social activity.

Overall, these contrasts show that commercial purposes dominate signage, while symbolic expressions arise informally through grassroots initiatives, aligning with theories that linguistic landscapes serve multiple economic, social, and cultural functions.

Section 3. Function of Linguistic Landscape Common in the Marketplace

Table 3

Function of Linguistic Landscape (Hu, 2022)

| Function | f | % |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Provide information | 203 | 63.24 |
| Convey symbolic meaning | 118 | 36.76 |

Table 3 classifies signage by primary function into informational (n=203) and symbolic (n=118) categories, revealing a market linguistic landscape dominated by practical communication. Most signs provide essential information—such as product prices, stall names, and directions, reflecting the market's transactional nature. However, a significant portion (about 37%) carries symbolic meaning, expressing community identity, cultural pride, and social values.

This dual role aligns with Hu's (2022) framework that linguistic landscapes serve both informational and symbolic functions. Commercial signs, for example, not only inform but also influence consumer perceptions through language choice and design, projecting modernity or authenticity. Similarly, top-down signs like warning notices regulate behavior while asserting authority. The coexistence of these functions shows the market as both a space of commerce and cultural expression. Vendor and consumer remarks further illustrate this blend: a vendor uses Ifugao alongside English to express ethnic pride, while a consumer prefers Filipino signs to connect with local identity. These findings emphasize that marketplaces operate as multifunctional spaces where language serves economic needs and social identity, supporting theoretical views on the complex roles of linguistic landscapes.

Section 4. Languages Used in Public Marketspace

Table 4

Language Used on Signage in Bayombong Marketplace

| Language use | f | % |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Monolingual English | 184 | 57.32 |
| Monolingual Filipino | 53 | 16.51 |
| Monolingual Ilocano | 4 | 1.25 |
| English-Filipino | 76 | 23.68 |
| English-Ilocano | 2 | .62 |
| Filipino-Ilocano | 1 | .31 |
| Ifugao-English-Filipino | 1 | .31 |

Table 4 shows that monolingual English signs (n=184) dominate the Bayombong Public Market, followed by monolingual Filipino (n=53), bilingual English-Filipino (n=76), with very few Ilocano (n=4) and Ifugao-English-Filipino (n=1) signs. This reflects the association of English with modernity, professionalism, and accessibility—a legacy of American colonial influence on Philippine institutions.

Vendors justify using English as an international language understandable to foreigners, even though foreign customers are rare. In contrast, spoken interactions primarily involve Tagalog and Ilocano, highlighting a gap between written and spoken language use. This reveals a sociolinguistic divide where English dominates public signage for symbolic and economic reasons, while local languages prevail in daily conversation. The marginal presence of Ilocano, Ifugao, and other indigenous languages in signage signals their underrepresentation and risks their long-term vitality. Public visibility is crucial for language maintenance, and the dominance of English may accelerate language shift, as younger generations perceive local languages as less valuable.

English signage also reinforces social hierarchies, granting economic and social advantage to those fluent in English while marginalizing others. Vendors with English signs may attract more customers and appear more modern, creating inequalities among market participants. Additionally, the market's English-dominated signage may alienate locals who prefer native languages, affecting inclusivity. To promote linguistic equity, inclusive language policies encouraging multilingual signage in English, Filipino, and local languages like Ilocano and Ifugao are recommended. Educational efforts and subsidies can support vendors in adopting these practices, helping preserve linguistic diversity and cultural identity.

In summary, Bayombong's linguistic landscape reflects broader patterns where English symbolizes prestige and economic opportunity, shaping social dynamics and marginalizing indigenous languages. Addressing this imbalance is essential for fostering cultural resilience and linguistic justice in the marketplace.

People's Perspectives on Language Use in the Marketspace

The language used in public signage significantly shapes how individuals experience and connect with the Bayombong public market, a culturally diverse space. This study explores the views of five vendors and five consumers, focusing on how signage language affects shopping, identity, and community ties. The contrast between the English-dominated signs and the local languages spoken, Ilocano, Tagalog, and indigenous tongues, reveals broader cultural and social dynamics around language visibility, representation, and accessibility.

Vendor Perspectives on Language Use in Signage

The interview among five vendors at Bayombong Public Market explores how they perceive and use language in their daily interactions and signage. While their spoken communication fluidly shifts among Ilocano, Tagalog, and indigenous languages like Ifugao and Gaddang, the language of signage is markedly different, English is dominant. The vendors'

choices reflect a mix of practical concerns, cultural identity, and symbolic meanings tied to language.

In everyday conversation, vendors readily adapt to the linguistic background of their customers. Ilocano and Tagalog are the most frequently used, with indigenous languages reserved for specific cultural or ethnic connections. As Vendor 3 noted, “Of course, we adjust...it depends on what the person is.” Despite this multilingualism in speech, most vendors favor English for signs. Vendor 1 explained her preference by saying, “English, kasi yun yung international language. Everyone can understand.” This view was echoed by others who associate English with education, technology, and broader understandability.

English is often used not because it is the most spoken language in the market, but because of its symbolic value. Vendors see it as professional, modern, and useful for potential foreign customers—even if foreigners rarely visit. Vendor 4 emphasized this by stating that English is “international,” and useful in case foreigners pass by. Others, like Vendor 5, take a more minimalist approach, using numbers or very simple words instead of full labels, believing customers will understand through context: “I just put ‘10 pesos’. They’ll automatically see what it is.” Some vendors use language on signage to express identity and solidarity. Vendor 1, an Ifugao, includes Ifugao in her signage not for practicality but to appeal to fellow Ifugaos and foster community support: “Ifugaos support Ifugao stores.” This practice reflects how signage can have both informative and symbolic functions, consistent with Landry and Bourhis’s (1997) framework of linguistic landscape.

Overall, language choice in signage is driven more by functionality and perceived customer expectations than by any formal language policy. As supported by Spolsky and Cooper’s (1991) theory, vendors tailor their signs to what they believe customers will understand or respond to. This includes using Tagalog or Ilocano if necessary, or skipping signs altogether in favor of direct communication or visible pricing. Finally, many vendors emphasized that language is only one part of customer engagement. Personal rapport and friendliness are seen as more important in attracting buyers. As Vendor 1 said, “It’s not about languages, but about being friendly. Getting along with customers will attract them to you.” This highlights that while signage shapes public perception, interpersonal interactions remain central to commerce in the market.

In summary, the vendors’ perspectives reveal a complex interplay between practicality, identity, and prestige in the linguistic landscape of Bayombong Public Market. English dominates signage for its symbolic capital, but local and indigenous languages thrive in spoken interaction. Multilingual signage efforts must consider not only language equity but also vendor preferences, customer dynamics, and the everyday realities of market communication.

Consumer Perspectives on Language Use in Signage

Interviews with five consumers from Bayombong Public Market reveal a clear tension between the prevalence of English signage and the community’s preference for local languages such as Ilocano, Tagalog, and Ifugao. While all participants use Tagalog or Ilocano in daily conversations, they observe that most signage remains in English—seen as clear but culturally detached.

Consumer 1 noted that Ifugao signage reflects local identity, but preferred bilingual signs in English and Ilocano for broader accessibility. Consumer 2 echoed this, favoring Tagalog and Ilocano due to the linguistic makeup of Nueva Vizcaya. Consumer 3, who shops daily, found English signs understandable but said they lack local resonance, recommending Ilocano or Filipino for cultural relevance. Similarly, Consumer 4 valued clarity but expressed that signage in any language she understood was acceptable. Consumer 5 highlighted a recent increase in Ilocano and Tagalog signage and shared that seeing Ilocano signs encourages her to speak Ilocano, making the market feel more familiar.

Despite English being seen as practical, many consumers view it as “international” and disconnected from the cultural identity of Bayombong (Consumer 3). Instead, they associate Ilocano and Tagalog with comfort and community belonging (Consumer 5). This aligns with Shohamy’s (2006) view that linguistic landscapes act as informal language policies, reinforcing which languages are valued in public life. The dominance of English reflects global prestige, but may marginalize local and indigenous languages (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). Participants suggested multilingual signage to balance functionality and representation. Consumer 2 emphasized the need for Ilocano due to its widespread use, a sentiment reflected in Luna’s (2023) study in Marinduque, which found bilingual signage enhances inclusivity. Consumer 1 similarly affirmed that Ifugao-language signage mirrors the cultural makeup of Bayombong. This need for representation extends to indigenous communities. Visibility of local languages is seen as a means of cultural affirmation (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Without such visibility, there’s a risk of cultural erosion, as signs become symbols of modernity divorced from local heritage.

Bayombong’s linguistic landscape can better serve its community by integrating Ilocano, Tagalog, and indigenous languages alongside English. As Backhaus (2006) observed in Tokyo, signage that ignores local linguistic realities creates a disconnect between public texts and community identity. By embracing multilingualism, Bayombong’s marketplace can become a more inclusive, culturally grounded, and linguistically representative space.

Conclusion

The Bayombong Public Market’s linguistic landscape is shaped largely by bottom-up signage, reflecting economic motivations, cultural expressions, and practical considerations. English dominates the visual environment due to its perceived prestige, yet local languages persist in spoken interactions, revealing complex language hierarchies. This disconnect underscores the need for inclusive language policies that support multilingual signage, particularly incorporating Filipino and indigenous languages. Doing so not only preserves linguistic diversity but also fosters cultural identity and community representation.

Recommendations

To promote linguistic inclusivity, local authorities and cultural organizations should support vendors in incorporating local languages into signage through education and incentives. Multilingual signage policies that include Ilocano, Tagalog, and indigenous languages like Ifugao are encouraged to better reflect community language practices. Designs should balance functionality and cultural identity, integrating local expressions where appropriate. Community-based language planning, engaging vendors and consumers, can foster ownership and relevance in signage practices.

Future research should explore other rural or urban markets, use longitudinal or comparative approaches, and consider theoretical lenses like Critical Discourse Analysis or Multimodal Analysis to deepen insights into language, power, and representation in public spaces.

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