Impact and Identities as Revealed in Tourists' Perceptions of the Linguistic Landscape in Tourist Destinations

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Abstract

The language displayed on signage, tarps, and shop fronts helps tourists navigate the place or learn how to avail of services or facilities in a destination. The availability of tourist information in a familiar language can be crucial to tourist satisfaction because tourists rely on signage information during the tour. This study analyzed tourists' perceptions of signage in select Northern Mindanao, Philippines, destinations. This study employed a qualitative approach and used an online questionnaire to gather data. The participants were local tourists who were purposively sampled for this study. Their responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings revealed four themes: tourists' perceptions of the usefulness of signage, preferred language in signage, perceptions of destinations that use English signage, and impressions of visitors to destinations with English signage. Study participants found signage with texts and symbols helpful in navigating the destination. English signage is perceived as convenient and helpful in making tourists feel secure in a new place. It is equated with the progress and sophistication of the destinations and their visitors. This study concludes that while English is perceived with high valuation as a lingua franca in tourism, multilingual signage is desired. The tourists' linguistic preference is a challenge to LL actors, who need to be more adaptive to tourists' language choices while not sacrificing the authentic experience at the destination. Sign makers should consider how linguistic elements in signage shape the tourist destinations' image and tourists' satisfaction in general.

1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape (LL), or the language in signage (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shang, 2021), of tourist destinations, is crucial to the satisfaction and experience of every tourist. Many tourists rely on signage for identification and navigational information as they tour around the spaces of a destination (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The language displayed on signage, tarps, and shop fronts helps tourists navigate the place or learn how to avail of services or facilities. Since the LL of a public space encompasses both the linguistic and extra-linguistic elements and is not limited to the use of the English language (Bolton et al., 2020), the LL contributes to a tourist site's factual and symbolic creation, making it a significant aspect of visitor knowledge and consumption (Fox, 2012). In the era of globalization, languages, and culture are considered

technical competencies in exchange for marketable values, especially in promoting tourism and the local economy (Yang, Xue, & Song, 2022). Hence, the availability of tourist information in a language familiar to tourists is one of the top five leading attributes of destinations that attract tourists (Chen & Hsu, 2000).

Capitalizing on signage improvement is one way of revitalizing the economy, especially after the pandemic. In a study by Suzuki and Heo (2022) about impressions of tourist information signage in Japan, they stress the need to improve signage to attract international tourists by developing multilingual signage, such as using English in tourist information written in Japanese only. The use of the English language in signage has become apparent in business and tourism (Vivas-Peraza, 2020), of which English occupies a hegemonic position in the LL as the *de facto lingua franca* in multilingual destinations (Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau , 2010). Using an international language such as English in signage to communicate tourist information accommodates the linguistic needs of international tourists. Galgoczi-Deutsch (2011) shares the same observations that it is important to display information using a world language such as English in places of interest likely to be visited by tourists to accommodate the linguistic needs of those who do not speak the local language. In addition, Gnapapala (2015) argues that it is necessary to introduce and improve directions, signage, and information about tourist destinations using English and other popular foreign languages to obtain high tourist satisfaction. Gnanapala identified nine variables, including signage information about tourist destinations, that can impact tourist satisfaction in Sri Lanka. Information from signage and tour guides that are inaccurate, inadequate, and incomprehensible can lead to tourists' confusion and frustration.

LL studies that deal with the linguistic signs in tourist destinations are mainly limited to international settings. These include Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan Garau's (2010)observations on the LL of a multilingual resort in Spain, Galgoczi-Deutsch's (2011) study on tourist satisfaction, and the LL of Hodmezovasarhely, Hungary, Kallen's (2009) work on the Irish LL which presented a discourse perspective of signage, Lu et al.'s (2019) case study on the LL of Hungcun Village in China, and Ruzaite's (2017) snapshot of the tourism LL in Lithuania and Poland. Most of these LL studies on tourism highlight English as the most preferred language in tourist destinations worldwide, symbolizing its profitable impact on the destination. A study by Mubarak and Abdul Muthalib in the shopping centers of Banda Aceh in Indonesia also reported the prevalent use of English in signage despite the non-English speakers inhabited the area. Their analysis pointed to the desire for uniqueness and trendiness as the significant reasons for using English in their signage. Shop owners believe that by using English in signage, customers can easily remember their shops (Mubarak & Abdul Muthalib, 2021).

Meanwhile, Li & Yong (2020) investigated the role of minority languages in Yunnan, China's tourism industry. They claim that tourism helps ethnic minority groups make money because their languages and traditional items are turned into capital that helps the local economy. This is evident in the names of regional delicacies, which can evoke exotic and authentic feelings among eager buyers of the products. In a study by Shang (2021) on the LL of three big cities in China, an online survey questionnaire was carried out to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of residents about the multilingual LL of the cities. It was found that

study participants are aware of the English-rich multilingual practices in the LL, where English texts are considered instrumental in constructing an international-oriented city. As there appears to be a language commodification in tourism, this study finds it worthwhile to investigate the dynamics of the LL of tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao as perceived by its local tourists. This study argues that the commodification of English in tourism bears what Rubdy and Said (2015) refer to as "exclusion, dissent," and "ethnolinguistic struggles" (Rubdy, 2015, p. 1). Blackwood et al. (2016) also noted the disfavoring of local languages in view of the economic perspective of the LL.

In the Philippines, English has a noticeable presence in the LL of urban spaces (De Los Reyes, 2014; Jazul & Bernardo, 2017), but the LL in tourism and the role of language in attracting tourists to the destinations still needs to be researched. Similarly, perception studies in tourism have focused on tourism development, tourist destinations, hotel service quality, and safety and risks of tourism (Yan & Lee, 2014). Studies on the perception of tourists on private and public signage (Garvin, 2011), particularly the language used in signage, have received little attention among researchers. Tourists' semiotic concerns are rarely considered in tourism research, and language is rarely seen as a positive component in tourism (Kallen, 2009). Despite the vital role of language in persuading and attracting potential tourists, more research is needed on how language persuades and attracts tourists and promotes tourism locations (Salim & Som, 2018). This situation has prompted the present study to examine tourists' perceptions of destinations' LL. The crucial role that tourism plays as one of the primary movers of the economy through the large influx of tourists (Lu et al., 2019; Salim & Som, 2018) necessitates an investigation into the role of language and its impact on tourism, particularly in achieving tourist satisfaction. The present study intends to fill this gap by examining how local tourists perceive the LL in select tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. The study aims to answer the question: What are the perceptions of local tourists on the LL of select tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao?

2. RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. English in Signage

Whether placed in big cities or provincial areas, multilingual signage units always incorporate English as one of the languages (Schlick in Cenoz & Gorter, 2009, p. 57). English is the primary language used to give information about services, offers, and directions to tourists (Galgoczi-Deutsch, 2011). Galgoczi-Deutsch noted that while English is the primary language in bilingual signs appearing at top-visited areas, indexing it as the most widely spoken language in the world, having multilingual pieces of information in the LL, such as French, Spanish, or German is the way to become more adaptable for foreign tourism.

The prevalence of English in the signs is often attributed to globalization, where businesses use English to increase sales. English is associated with internationality, technology, modern life, coolness, and development (Alm, 2003). In the study of Cenoz and Gorter (2009) on the economic perspective of language in the LL, they claimed that the employment of English in commercial signs does not appear to convey factual information but rather for its symbolic value. When sign readers learn that the message is in English, they associate them

with values like internationalization, success, sophistication, and fun (Piller in Cenoz and Gorter, 2009, p.70). While the prevalence of English in the LL can represent its economic value, it can also represent language dominance and power, as observed by Landry and Bourhis. The LL can indicate the dominance and status relationship among the area's language groups. In diglossic cases, the high-status language used for formal functions is likely to appear in public signs even if the language is spoken only by the minority population. The community's majority language is often used in place names and company signage, unlike minority languages (Ramamoorthy; Xiao in Cenoz and Gorter, 2009, p. 68).

The prominent presence of English in signage reflects the effects of globalization on languages, where English as an international language emerges in multilingual signage. The effect of globalization, referred to as McDonaldisation by Heller in Gorter (2006, p. 4), is manifested in the rising space of the English language in numerous LLs (Gorter, 2006). A study by Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2010) in a multilingual tourist destination in Mallorca claims that business, tourism, and migration rapidly add to the multilingual component of metropolitan regions, with English exhibiting a dominant status. Given that different languages evoke different associations, these associations carried by a language are transferred to an object, such as the advertised product (Hornikx, van Meurs, & Starren, 2007). For example, English in advertising is often associated with its status as a world language. In the case of tourist destinations, Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2010) corroborate with Kallen (2009) and Galgoczi-Deutsch (2011) that linguistic elements in signage contribute to tourist satisfaction. As Kallen puts it, the impact of the discourses in signage produces a lasting impression on a tourist, and this impression becomes the representation of a country or an area. Such insight is vital to enhancing the tourism business by looking into the role of language in achieving a satisfying tourist experience. The abovementioned studies implicate a careful approach in choosing the language in signage, as it can be an influential factor in achieving tourist satisfaction. Hence, studying LL and tourism has enriched our understanding of the relationship between language and tourism and how cultural attitudes and other identities are expressed in tourist spaces (Thongtong, 2016).

On the other hand, the LL helps build the sociolinguistic environment because people process visual information. The language in signage can undoubtedly impact their impression of language status and linguistic conduct. Similar to the abovementioned studies, the present study also deals with the prominence of the English language in signs, even though the population in Northern Mindanao is multilingual, with Cebuano Visayan as the widely spoken language. The multilingual context in Northern Mindanao makes the LL of tourist destinations and the perceptions of local tourists attractive. The LL can give details on the sociolinguistic context and the use of various languages in signage and compare it with the government policy and language use recorded in surveys (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009).

The LL can reveal the differences between official language policy and the impact of that policy on the people. However, in the case of tourism and the LL, Kallen argued that national languages are of little significance to tourists, considering their transience and linguistic diversity as "temporarily leisured persons" who may not be using any of these languages within the destination. Dealing with an authentic foreign language experience can make the tour around the destination incomprehensible and thus difficult due to language

barriers (Kallen, 2009, p. 271). As a result, the local tourism business may argue that it has the right to employ tourist languages that would contradict the national policy. He underscored the need for an LL tourism model incorporating transience and diversity as essential factors instead of focusing on territory and tradition (Kallen, 2009). Generally, many tourists, particularly international travelers, expect to see English signage during their trips (Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau , 2010). The international tourist industry acknowledges the danger of incomprehensible language to tourists since language barriers make it challenging for people to acquire goods or services if they cannot understand what is on offer or how to obtain it (Kallen, 2009). The tourism industry and the consumer may build a shared interest in communicating in a linguistically simple manner. Thus, the challenge for LL designers in tourism is to use visible language in public areas while maintaining authenticity and communication value for local audiences while delivering an intelligible linguistic experience for tourists. Those who give services to tourists will have a thriving commercial experience if those who make signs and those who read them mutually understand each other. The traveler should get the impression that the destination is unique but not so unique as to be unattractive. This agreement might thus serve as the foundation for a successful transformation journey in which the linguistic environment plays an important role (Kallen, 2009).

2.2. Perceptions of English

Perception is the process of receiving and decoding spoken, written, or signed input by which a set of cues is matched with a stored representation (Crystal, 2008). In this process, a person organizes and analyzes their sensory impressions of their surroundings. One's perception may differ significantly from the objective reality (Yeung & Leung, 2007). In Yan and Lee (2014, p. 397), Kurtz and Boone distinguished perception and attitude. They claimed that perception is linked to an item, whereas attitude is more of a long-term reaction to that item. The differences are found in the various degrees of attribution to an object, with perceptions referring to a broader application.

Perception studies in tourism have dealt with various aspects, including tourism development, tourist destinations, hotel service quality, and safety and risks of tourism (Yan & Lee, 2014). However, studies on the perception of tourists on private and public signage (Garvin, 2011), particularly the language used in signs, have yet to receive much attention among researchers. Tourists' semiotic concerns are rarely considered in tourism research, and language is rarely seen as a positive component in tourism (Kallen, 2009). This situation has prompted the present study to examine tourists' perceptions of English signage in destinations.

Bruyel–Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2010) have recommended a careful approach to producing LL signs since English use in LL of tourist destinations influences the tourist experience. Galgoczi-Deutsch (2011) has also noted the crucial role of displaying information in English in places of interest likely to be visited by tourists. As different languages evoke different associations, these associations carried by a language are transferred to an object, such as the advertised product. In the case of multilingual advertising, Hornikx et al. (2007) have cited attracting attention and creating a favorable image of the product as the two reasons for using foreign languages. While foreign languages are associated with the countries where they are spoken, English in advertising is often associated with its status as a world language. In the

case of tourist destinations, Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan-Garao (2010) corroborate Kallen's claim that linguistic elements in signage contribute to tourist satisfaction (Kallen, 2009). Such insight is crucial to enhance the tourism business by identifying service strengths and shortcomings to avoid dissatisfaction that could harm future business. In light of this, the present study attempts to fill this literature gap, focusing on local tourist perceptions of English used in signage units at tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao.

3. DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This study is qualitative research on tourism's LL. It employed an online survey questionnaire of ten open-ended questions to investigate tourists' perceptions of using English in various signage in select destinations. The online survey was considered the most feasible tool to reach potential participants who may not have engaged in face-to-face interviews about personal experiences, especially during the pandemic.

Since this study deals with the explicit and the implicit message of the written data, qualitative content analysis is used because it is a helpful approach in identifying the conscious and unconscious messages expressed in the written texts. It is also a valuable technique for categorizing the linguistic data in this study into conceptual categories to determine the consistent patterns or similar themes among the tourists' perceptions. These themes were described and interpreted in this study.

3.2. Research Participants

The participants are an amalgam of doctors, lawyers, teachers, school supervisors, nurses, student leaders, soldiers, IT experts, veterinarians, and people in business from different places in the Philippines. They are local tourists in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, who were purposively sampled for this study. Considering the participants as local tourists, they are Filipinos born in the Philippines. They were identified and recruited through their travel websites and social media accounts. All participants can speak three to four languages, including English, Cebuano, Tagalog, and Meranaw. While participants are generally fluent in English, they consider it their second language.

Out of the 85 recruited individuals, 32 had consented to participate in the study, but two did not pursue answering the questionnaire. Thus, 30 participants responded to ten open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of the LL of select tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao, namely, Dahilayan Adventure Park in Bukidnon, the Mantigue Island Nature Park in Camiguin, Paseo de Santiago in Lanao del Norte, the Belvedere Hoyohoy View Deck in Misamis Occidental, and the Divine Mercy Shrine in Misamis Oriental.

3.3. Research Locale

This study is contextualized in Northern Mindanao tourism, where English still flourishes on the signage in its linguistic territory despite its multilingual setting with local languages such as Cebuano Visayan, Binukid, Kinamiguin, Maranao, and Tagalog coexist with English. Northern Mindanao, also known as Region X, is situated in the southern part of the Philippines. It comprises five provinces: Bukidnon, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, and Misamis Oriental. The region's tourism is among its expanding investment

potential due to its natural attractions, which include extensive, protected forests, white sand beaches, coral reefs, and sheltered bays rich with aquatic life. Because of its strategic location, Northern Mindanao serves as a gateway to and from the rest of Mindanao. It has modern port facilities and extensive road networks connecting it to the different parts of Mindanao, making it an ideal tourist destination throughout the year (Through the Golden Gateway of Northern Mindanao, 2022).

3.4. Research Instrument

This study used an online survey questionnaire to investigate tourists' perceptions of the LL, particularly the use of English signage, in select tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao. The questionnaire contained ten open-ended questions that asked participants their preferred language for signage, their impressions of destinations that used English signage, and their feelings when they saw signage written in languages other than English.

3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher identified and recruited the participants by sending them invitation messages through their accounts on travel websites and social media, such as TripAdvisor and Facebook. The 32 recruited individuals consented to participate in the study by signing an Informed Consent Form through email. After obtaining the participants' consent to participate in the study, the researcher sent them a link to the online questionnaire via email and private messaging. 30 out of 32 were able to respond to the questionnaire in two weeks. Thus, 300 responses were generated from the participants who answered ten open-ended questions, all written in English.

Along with the questionnaire, the researcher also provided the participants with documented images of the signage displayed at the select destinations for their reference. The signage fulfilled informative functions by giving information to tourists through naming places and objects, making public announcements, giving instructions and guidelines, stating greetings and prohibitions, providing street signs and navigational directions, providing safety and regulatory signs, promoting services, products, and facilities including retail and marketing details, and providing notices and reminders regarding Covid-19 health and safety protocols. Table 1 summarizes the various signage found in the select destinations in terms of language used in the signs.

Table 1

Summary of Signs per Tourist Destination

Tourist Destination	Monolingual English Signs	Bilingual Signs (English-Filipino/ English-Cebuano)	Non-English Signs	Total No. of Signs
Dahilayan Adventure Park	118	0	3	121
Divine Mercy Shrine	86	2	3	87
Mantigue Island Nature Park	31	0	2	33
Paseo de Santiago	32	6	4	42
Hoyohoy View Deck	23	0	0	23
OVERALL TOTAL	290	8	12	310

3.6. Data Analysis

The responses from the online survey were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The responses for every question were labeled from P1 to P30, where P stands for a participant, and the number corresponds to the participant's number from 1 to 30. This step was made to keep each participant's identity confidential.

Since some of the responses used code-mixing, such as English-Tagalog and English-Cebuano, the researcher idealized these sentences into English and reflected them in square brackets, as seen in the extracted sentences in the discussion. The researcher applied an in-depth analysis to identify the recurring themes from the responses. The analysis revealed four major themes that reflect the local tourists' perceptions of the LL:

1. The usefulness of signage in the tourist destination
2. Language preference in signage
3. Perception of the tourist destinations that use English signage
4. Perception of tourists who visit tourist destinations with English signage.

Each theme is presented as the study's results and is supported by extracts from the participants' responses to strengthen the discussion and interpretation of the data. The extracts from the responses of local tourists provide insightful information on whether or not the linguistic signage has been helpful to tourists and whether or not they prefer to see English or other languages in signage. The thematic analysis also presents information regarding tourists' perceptions of seeing languages other than English in signage and what these languages tell about the tourist destination and the people who visit these tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The usefulness of signage in tours

The participants perceived signage in tourist destinations positively. They claimed that signage units are helpful because the information they get from them points them in the right direction, helps them save time, and teaches them the rules to observe while inside the destination's premises. The responses presented in Extract 1 provide information on how tourists feel about seeing signage in the destinations.

Extract 1

P3: Signages are helpful in terms of giving firsthand information regarding the place. They are very useful.

P7: I like it when tourist spots have signages. It gives me direction on where to go and what to be observed. It's like I feel safer when I see them.

P9: Mas maayo gyud ug naay mga signages sa area para dili ta mawa sa dalan ba. [It helps when signage is present in the area to avoid getting lost on the way to the place.]

P10: Yes! Especially when [it is] your first time in the place. [I]t help[s] a lot to people who are afraid to ask questions because the text on the signages gives us instruction on what we should do.

P17: Very helpful due to the fact that we are tourists, we don't know [about] the place. With signage, we are guided, especially if signage has a written text ba, Hindi yong symbols lang nakikita mo. [With signage, we are guided, especially if signage contains written text, not just symbols.]

P18: Signages are very much useful. Why? Since I am just a visitor in that specific place, there may be rules and restrictions that I am not aware of, and signage is very helpful. Also, even with the GPS, sometimes we, as a family, find it hard to locate some destinations.

P20: [Y]es, to be guided and to save time on what particular spot we are looking for. It helps if there are signages.

P22:[T]hey are a great reminder for our safety.

P25: I find them helpful on my tour because the signage makes it easier for me to tour around by just looking at them.

P28: Whenever I see signage, it guides me as to what I need to do and avoid.

The finding in this study supports the observations of Ballantyne et al. (2008) that signage is the primary source of directional information to destinations or attractions. It is similar to Yan and Lee's (2014) observations that most visitors believe signage is beneficial for exploring and learning about the city's culture. When navigating the city, first-timers rely heavily on signage information. The linguistic data in signage is also helpful for tourists who are afraid to ask questions, especially when it is their first time visiting the place. Other participants said that tourists unfamiliar with the area find their way to the desired site through the help of signage information, especially when even the Global Positioning System (GPS) cannot pinpoint the exact location.

All participants acknowledged the importance of linguistic data from signage to maximize their visit to the tourist destination. The abovementioned finding implies that tourists depend on the information they see on signage regarding directions and guidelines inside the destination. Hence, improved signage may benefit the local economy by attracting tourists and inhabitants, as Suzuki and Heo (2022) argued. The LL positively impacts a tourist's experience in a destination.

4.2. Language Preference in Signage

The participants prefer to see English signage in tourist destinations. The extracts from their answers to the survey (see Extract 2) reveal that they find English texts short, easy to read, and understandable. In particular, participants like to see signage containing instructions and rules written in English. Tourists believe these pieces of information are expressed in English briefly and concisely compared to using the local language, Cebuano Visayan. Others have also mentioned that it is more convenient to see English signage because English is universal. Thus, many people, including most foreigners, can understand it. The findings support Gnapapala's (2015) claim that information from signage and tour guides that are inaccurate, inadequate, and incomprehensible can lead to tourists' confusion and frustration.

As shown in Extract 2, participants prefer to see English signage to promote inclusivity for international tourists by ensuring they understand the language used in the signage. Consequently, some participants have raised their apprehension about using the local language in signage, in this case, Cebuano Visayan. The concern is rooted in a situation in which foreign tourists may need help understanding the language in the signage. P13 remarked that if the local language is used in signage, travelers, particularly those unfamiliar with the local language, will experience difficulty understanding the message. The same sentiment was shared by other participants, who said that using the local language may stir confusion among tourists who do not speak the local language.

This phenomenon, in which tourists prefer to see English so that everybody understands the message in signage, reveals how English is perceived as a lingua franca in tourist destinations. Using it as the primary language in signage can facilitate effective communication for all tourists regardless of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Its role in the world market is undisputable as the main communication channel between people of different races (Malika & Nacera, 2018).

Extract 2

P1: English. They're usually shorter and easier to understand.

P2: I prefer English because most of us can read and understand it.

P4: English, it is more convenient.

P13: Yes, I prefer it in [E]nglish so other[s] can easily understand, especially the foreign tourists visiting our country.

P14: I like signage in English to avoid confusion

P17: I prefer [E]nglish because it[']s the universal language, foreign tourists can understand the signage.

P19: English. It's clear and easily understood.

P20: *English signage. It is easier to understand and is used as the medium of instruction in schools.*

P21: *English because you know seeing signage[s] written in English is [much] comprehensible compared to other languages.*

P25: *Yes, because English can be understood not just by us but*

also by foreigners and other tourists.

P27: *It should be English. All tourists can understand English.*

Meanwhile, the concern of the local tourists about the use of English over their local languages also illustrates how Filipinos value English over other languages. The finding corroborates De Los Reyes' observations regarding Filipinos' attitudes toward English. The "indoctrination of the value of English" during the American period influenced Filipinos' high regard for English, leading to "miseducation" as they got fixated on the idea that English is synonymous with success and comfort (De Los Reyes, 2014, p. 45). While the present study agrees with De Los Reyes on the need to change perspectives from a monolithic to a pluralistic view of language, the present study claims that the participants' preference for English signage to ensure that foreigners understand them reflects Filipinos' hospitability. Filipinos are generally known for their warm accommodation to visitors, and this cultural trait is reflected in their perceptions of what language should be used on signage. Extract 3 shows the participants' responses regarding the use of languages other than English in signage.

Extract 3

P7: *No problem if it is Filipino. It is okay with me, but how about foreigners?*

P11: *Difficulty in interpreting [the local language for tourists].*

P13: *It is quite difficult if the languages used in the signage[s] are not known to the tourist, for example, if the one used is in their local dialect. So it is more difficult for the travel[l]ers to understand the message.*

P15: *For me, it[']s okay, as long as people can understand in that area. I guess we also have to consider that these destinations also accommodate international travelers. They may not be able to understand if it's in Cebuano or Tagalog, right? So, it's better if signage is in English.*

P21: *I struggled to understand what the particular signage wanted to direct or instruct me if it was not written in English. How much more for those who totally do not understand the local language?*

P23: *If the signage is not written in English, it means I [will have to] ask the locals for its meaning. That's troublesome for foreigners.*

P24: *Uneasy. That's what I feel if I [were] a foreigner.*

When participants were asked to recall a sign from the tourist destination that they found helpful, they all mentioned signage written in English. The examples shown in Extract 4 are evidence of two things. One is that English signage is vividly present in tourist destinations of Northern Mindanao, and the second is that tourists easily remember English signage.

Extract 4

P1:   *Caution! Please don't go beyond this area.*

P7:   *Rest Room This Way (with an arrow symbol.)*

P11:   *Customer service/Information center*

P15:   *This way to Comfort Room*

P16:   *The Divine Mercy Shrine is a Holy Ground. Everyone is expected to abide by the dress code.*

P19:   *This way, please...This way to...*

P21:   *Always keep right*

P24:   *Exit this way*

P25:   *Entrance this way*

However, it is worth noting that some participants have also preferred to see multilingual signage in tourist destinations. They like to see Cebuano Visayan and Filipino with their English translations. These participants believe that tourist destinations that use multilingual signage promote the locals' identity and culture and value diversity among the tourists. When local languages are used in the LL with their English translation, they can be an excellent guide to local and international tourists. The finding echoes Garvin's (2011) observations that participants in her study perceived multilingual signage positively. Yan and Lee (2014) reported the same observations, stating that more than half of the study's respondents prefer to see trilingual signage in the streets of Macau. Some of the participant's responses in this study, as shown in Extract 5, warrant the capacity of the LL to bridge communication gaps and language barriers among sign-readers through a multilingual landscape. Thus, LL actors like sign makers and policymakers can consider creating signage that ascribes tourists' linguistic and cultural orientations and preferences. This will create an impression that the tourist destination is inclusive and accommodating.

Extract 5

P1:   *Amazed at how the tourist spot values diversity.*

P5:   *It's still fine as long as it does serve its purpose. However, it would be of great help if it [has an] English translation included.*

P7: *I prefer Filipino and English so that all tourists can be guided accordingly.*

P18: *I prefer those written in [the]local dialect with Filipino or [E]nglish translation. Most of the time, I find it fascinating to read signage [in] the local dialect because it promotes their culture, and the translation helps [me] understand it. Also, in a way, signage written in local dialects is welcoming [for us].*

P28: *Yes, as it can be understood by most of the tourists, it would also be better if these signage[s] written in [E]nglish were also translated into the local dialect.*

4.3. Perception of the tourist destinations with English LL

Based on the participants' answers in Extract 6, English is equated with progress, beauty, innovativeness, and a high standard. Destinations with English LL are perceived as modern, classy, appealing, and sophisticated. This perception echoes the prestige of English as an international language (Piller in Cenoz & Gorter, 2006, p.70). The positive connotations of the participants' responses reveal how they view English as a language. The finding depicts how people make sense of visual texts based on their knowledge and beliefs (Berger in Garvin, 2011, p.8).

Extract 6

P1: *The tourist destination is new and modern.*

P2: *It makes the tourist destination appear classy and sophisticated.*

P10: *It has high-end facilities.*

P12: *The destination is a high class.*

P25: *It reminds [tourists] of the importance of using appealing and functional signage to promote and attract visitors to your area.*

P30: *Equipped.*

In addition, tourist destinations with an English LL are perceived as welcoming to visitors, especially foreigners. They perceived the destination as fair and great because it could cater to many local and international tourists, regardless of race. Extract 6 shows the participants' answers.

Extract 7

P4: *The tourist destination accommodates international guests when the signage is all in English.*

P27: *The place is open to all tourists [s] from different nations, races, etc.*

P28: *The tourist destination expects and considers the thought that different tourists from all over the world will come to that place rather than locals only.*

P29: *Fair.*

Contrary to viewing the tourist destination as inclusive and welcoming to all tourists, others perceived tourist destinations with English signage as foreign places, signifying the feeling of being totally in a different or strange place because the language used in the area is different or unfamiliar. Some participants also consider it usual to see English signage in tourist destinations that they do not think of any impact on the tourist destination.

Extract 8

P14: *[It] feels like I'm in a new place and away from home.*

P16: *The destination reminds me that I am on [a] travel.*

P18: *The tourist destination appears foreign to me.*

P22: *Nothing. It has always been English[,] anyway.*

P24: *I can't think of anything[impact], really. [It is] so usual that you [dont] even think about it.*

The English LL in tourist destinations creates both positive and negative impressions about tourist destinations. While most participants equate having English signage to having excellent facilities and welcoming accommodations, others still believe that seeing all English signage in tourist destinations keeps them detached from their homes. It reminds them that they are in a new place that uses a different language. Upon seeing English signage, the feeling of being in a foreign place aligns with Kallen's model for anticipated tourist needs. Tourists need to have an authentic experience of an unfamiliar place, but it should not reach a point where the experience becomes frightening because of incomprehensible information. (2014)This finding has implications for using English signage in newly created tourist attractions or transit systems in the future.

4.4.Perception of tourists who visit tourist destinations with English LL

Visitors to tourist destinations that use English in their LL are perceived to comprise local and international guests who have learned and are literate about the English language and are from the upper class. This finding suggests that the majority of the tourists understand English, as exemplified by the answers of participants 3, 4, 6, and 7. In addition, these tourists are perceived to belong in the upper class, as illustrated in P10 and P18's answers. The way the participants perceive tourists who visit destinations with English LL reflects their diversity in making sense of English signage based on their backgrounds and cultures. As Berger explains, "making meaning of visual texts, or any form of art or literacy depends on 'what we know and believe' " (Garvin, 2011, p. 261).

Extract 9

P3: *Probably, the tourists or people who visit the place are literate or educated, or may somehow be familiar with the English language.*

P4: *They are at least educated.*

P6: *For me, the people who visit the tourist destination with signage [s] written in [E]nglish is that they are smart.*

P7: *They are learned and educated.*

P10: *Madatong! [Rich] Educated!*

P18: *That the people who visit that destination are [on] the upper class.*

Moreover, the tourists are perceived to be a mixture of different races, as exemplified in the answers of participants 1, 15, 16, and 20. Participant 1 believes that tourists feel welcome with English signage because they can understand the language.

Extract 10

P1: *I'd expect [for] tourists to come from various places. English is known to be the universal language. Any tourist visiting the place would feel welcome knowing the signage[s] are made to be understood by the majority.*

P15: *It means the people visiting are foreigners.*

P16: *I think the tourist destination, especially the Divine Mercy Shrine, will cater to tourists from different parts of the world and to people from all walks of life.*

P20: *[T]hat the destination is open even to foreigners, not just Filipinos.*

Extract 11 contains some other remarks about the people who visit tourist destinations with English signage. The responses imply that tourists have had a comfortable ambiance and satisfying experience. This finding gives credence to the notion that an English LL impacts a positive experience for tourists because they associate English with sophistication.

Extract 11

P5: *People who have visited the destination must have a good experience on that site.*

P11: *Fearless/Positive atmosphere. Cool.*

P12: *Happy*

P13: *Satisfied and happy because they easily got the directions to the place they wanted to visit.*

P23: *Relief to understand the word.*

P27: *Eas[ily] understand.*

The extracts presented gave credence to the assumption that the presence of English in the LL of tourist destinations is equated to having a good and satisfying experience in the tourist destination. The findings substantiate Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau's (2010)claim that using English in destinations can influence tourist satisfaction. Having English in the LL provides a more understandable message and makes it easier to follow instructions that direct them with what they must do or where to go to the destination. Tourists' positive attitudes toward English extend to how they view tourist locations and those visiting them. This finding supports the notion that English in the LL symbolizes everything excellent, classy, comfortable, and fun--must-have qualities in the tourism industry.

5. CONCLUSION

The notable presence of English in the LL of tourist destinations in Northern Mindanao underscored its role as the lingua franca in tourism and its contribution to shaping the destinations' image and the people who visit them. Using English signage has led to favorable perceptions about the destinations as local tourists perceived English as a highly valued language in tourism. Despite the limited number of participants for this study, the finding is implicit in how Filipinos put a premium on hospitality to others as they choose to see linguistic signage in English over the local languages in the LL to ensure that foreigners understand the linguistic signage surrounding them. The preferential attitude toward English illustrates the Filipinos' accommodating attitude to please foreign tourists and visitors.

It is worth noting that tourists mentioned the need to see their local language in the LL alongside English translations - an implication of their desire to see multilingual signage that showcases their culture and identity in the LL. Such tourists' linguistic preference is also a challenge to LL actors, who need to be more adaptive to tourists' language choices while not sacrificing the authentic experience at the destination. Sign makers in tourist destinations should consider how linguistic elements in signage shape the tourist destinations' image and tourists' satisfaction in general. While English promotes a positive image of the destination and the tourists visiting it, local languages can give tourists an authentic touristic experience by knowing some local terminologies. Thus, sign makers and language policymakers may consider making multilingual signage that instructs and dictates what to do and gives them information with a cultural flavor, thereby becoming more adaptive to tourists' linguistic and cultural preferences.

As this study has limitations, future studies may expand the data collection to involve more participants and cover more tourist destinations. More qualitative data may present a more comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic factors affecting the use of English and other languages in the tourism industry. Future studies may also examine how a multilingual landscape in tourist destinations can impact the tourism industry.

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