



The linguistic landscape of Manila Central Post Office: A macro-linguistic analysis

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Abstract

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This study describes the linguistic landscape (LL) of the Manila Central Post Office (MCPO), one of the landmark government offices in the capital of the Philippines. This unconventional choice of locale partially fills the gap in extant LL studies that focus more on streets and neighborhoods. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered to determine the dominant language in signage found in the public-access spaces of the MCPO and the communicative functions of the said signs. Findings show that English is the dominant language of the signs. Using Finocchiaro and Brumfit's (1983) categories of communicative functions, it was found that most English signs serve referential and directive functions. Finally, the interview responses of key personnel of the MCPO reveal important insights into the intersection of language use and function. Implications call for a review of government language policy Executive Order 335.

Keywords: Bilingualism, communicative functions, government language policy, linguistic landscape, Philippines, post office

1. Introduction

Studies in multilingualism have emerged in the last two decades because of significant changes mostly brought about by globalization (Martin-Jones, Blackledge, & Creese, 2012). In the educational landscape, the Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has been proposed around the world. The same policy has been applied in the Philippines, which proposes that the first language of students be used as the medium of instruction in primary schools until Grade 6, while English and Filipino should be taught in the elementary grades as subjects rather than serve as mediums of instruction (Gunigundo, 2010). These movements help raise awareness about linguistic diversity, which is also highlighted in linguistic landscape (LL) studies.

Landry and Bourhis are credited to be among the early proponents of LL research. Their 1997 study on ethnolinguistics and signage in Canada is considered a pioneer attempt

to associate signs with ideologies about language and location. Defined as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, as cited in Burdick, 2012, p. 1), linguistic landscape serves as a corpus for the investigation of the profound relationships between the sign, the sign-makers, and the sign-readers. While most LL studies focus on semiotic analysis, there is evident lack of macro-linguistic analysis, which considers such factors as communicative function, authorship, and readership of signs. It is this gap that this paper attempts to partially fill.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

As the language of wider communication, English is invariably included in several LL studies located in spaces where it is spoken as a first, second, or foreign language. For instance, Huebner’s study in 2006 focused on the linguistic diversity present in Bangkok, as well as the role of code mixing in the LL of 15 neighborhoods in the city. Huebner differentiated the signs and symbols provided by the government as well as private sectors in the LL of Bangkok. The paper showed the influence of English in the development of the Thai language in most aspects such as lexicon, syntax, and orthography. In Tokyo, Backhaus (2006) studied how signs under the top-down and bottom-up categories serve different functions but nonetheless contribute to the city’s LL. Gorter (2006) explained that signs made by the government are top-down, whereas those made by private organizations are bottom-up.

In Israel, Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht (2006) studied the occurrence of three major languages in the country—Israel-Hebrew, Arabic, and English. They also studied which of these languages are prevalent in the communities of Israeli Jews, Palestinian Israelis, and non-Israeli Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The study showed how multilingualism is present in these communities, with Hebrew being the predominant language among Israeli Jews and Palestinian Israelis, and Arabic being the predominant one for non-Israeli Palestinians in East Jerusalem. English only comes second in the Israeli Jew and non-Israeli Palestinian communities.

LL studies have also been conducted in the Philippine context. In studying the LL of the Taft station of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and the Recto station of the Light Rail Transit (LRT), De Los Reyes (2014) found that English is preferred over Filipino in the signs used. He also determined that English is used in the signs primarily to make people ‘follow orders’ as in comply with directions and to ‘make an order’ as in purchasing goods in establishments within the vicinity. Another study on LL found in the Philippines was done by Ambion in 2013. He studied the patterns in the signs found in Amadeo, Cavite where he discovered that the signage give value to the local language as evidenced by the prominence of the Amadeo dialect in the signs. Meanwhile, the value ascribed to foreign languages, such as English and Spanish, is related to the promotion of the coffee product for which the town is known. Such studies are necessary, for, as Dagenais, Moore, Sabatier, Lamarre, and Armand (2009) asserted, LL findings are pedagogical aids to promote awareness of linguistic diversity in a specific locality.

Most of the LL studies mentioned (i.e., Ambion, 2013; Backhaus, 2006; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Huebner, 2006) focus on neighborhoods and streets as spatial representation of a certain community of speakers. Gorter (2006) refers to these as studies of “cityscapes,” a more specific type of landscape. Albeit also situated in the city, the present study focuses on a specific government establishment—the Manila Central Post Office (MCPO). Sloboda (2009, as cited in Finzel, 2012) explained that ideologies are sometimes implemented by the government through the linguistic landscape. Thus, LL studies in spaces managed by the government may help detect hidden ideological tendencies (Finzel, 2012). It is therefore interesting to note what language ideologies might be veiled, if there are any, in a government office such as the MCPO.

Post offices seem to be rapidly becoming irrelevant, mainly because of the emergence of electronic mail and any other Web 2.0 applications that enable faster and cheaper exchange of messages across the globe. However, the post office remains a potent locale for LL studies because people from all walks of life frequent it for such functions as claiming and sending mail, packages, and money transfers. In addition, the Postal ID is a valid identification card recognized across all sectors, rendering the post office a still significant place for onsite transactions. In fact, statistics provided by the Universal Postal Union for the Philippines in 2015 (see Table 1) show that over 75,000 people are serviced by this government office.

Table 1
Population served by a Philippine post office (Universal Postal Union, 2015)

Percentage of the population collecting mail from a postal establishment	12%
Population (millions)	100,699
Average number of people served by a permanent post office	75,942.23
Total number of permanent post offices	1,326

As a government-owned and -controlled office, the Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost) is duty-bound to implement public policies and regulations. By this principle, a language-related stipulation to which post offices ought to subscribe is Executive Order No. 335 (E.O. 335), Series of 1988. According to Espiritu (2015), this regulation, which was ratified by former President Corazon Aquino, mandates:

... all departments/bureaus/offices/agencies/instrumentalities of the government to take such steps as are necessary for the purpose of using the Filipino language in official transactions, communications, and correspondence. The order was issued on the belief that the use of Filipino in official transactions, communications and correspondence in government offices will result to a greater understanding and appreciation of government programs, projects and activities throughout the country, thereby serving as an instrument of unity and peace for national progress.
[emphasis added]

All departments/bureaus/offices/agencies/instrumentalities of the government are enjoined to do the following:

1. *Take steps to enhance the use of Filipino in official communications, transactions and correspondence in their respective offices, whether national or local; [emphasis added]*
2. Assign one or more personnel, as may be necessary, in every office to take charge of communications and correspondence written in Filipino;
3. *Translate into Filipino names of offices, buildings, public edifices, and signboards of all offices, divisions or its instrumentalities, and if so desired, imprint below in smaller letters the English text; [emphasis added]*
4. Filipinize the “Oath of Office” for government officials and personnel; and
5. Make as part of the training programs for personnel development in each office the proficiency in the use of Filipino in official communications and correspondence.

1.2 Research Objectives

Whether Filipino is, indeed, used in the public signs in a Philippine post office as stipulated in E.O. 335 is one of the points for investigation in this research. Primarily, the objective of the study is to describe the linguistic landscape of the central office of the Philippine Postal Corporation—the MCPO. Defined as “any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location” (Ambion, 2013, p. 230), linguistic landscape in the chosen milieu will include various types of signs visible to the public. Spolsky and Cooper (1991, as cited in Yavari, 2012) classified public signs into street signs, advertising signs, warning notices and prohibitions, building names, informative signs (directions, hours of opening), commemorative plaques, objects, and graffiti. These are among the types of signs examined in this LL research to address the following questions:

1. What language is dominant in the signage found in the public space of the MCPO?
2. What communicative functions and intentions are frequently associated with the languages in the signs?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Macro-linguistic Analysis

Barni and Bagna (2009, as cited in Finzel, 2012) identified the three dimensions of LL analysis: (1) semiotic, (2) micro-linguistic, and (3) macro-linguistic. Semiotic analysis classifies signs based on the six variables of time and space: textual genre, position, location, domain, context, and place. Micro-linguistic analysis, on the other hand, offers a qualitative interpretation of the text in the signs. It considers such details as font size and type, and draws conclusions based on the frequency of their occurrence. Finally, macro-linguistic analysis examines the internal functions of signs such as spatial organization (i.e., How do the signs help put order in a particular space?), communicative function (i.e., What purpose for communication do the signs help satisfy?), and issues of authorship and readership (i.e., Do the signs reflect the intent of the sign-maker for the sign-reader?).

This LL study employs the macro-linguistic framework as it focuses on the communicative functions associated with the language of the public signs found in situ. In addition, it attempts to partially explore the authorship issue of compliance (or noncompliance) with the cited government language policy (i.e., E.O. 335).

1.3.2 Communicative Functions

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) are known proponents of the notional-functional approach in language teaching. This type of syllabus promotes a communicative rather than structural approach to teaching and learning a target lingua, focusing on “what people want to do or what they want to accomplish through speech” (p. 13). They identified the five categories of communicative functions: personal, interpersonal, directive, referential, and imaginative. Table 2 shows examples of functions under each category provided by Tedick (2002) to expand the framework of Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983).

Table 2
Categories of communicative functions of language (Tedick, 2002, pp. 80-82)

Communicative Function	Sample Functions
Personal	expressing one’s thoughts or feelings expressing moral, intellectual, and social concerns
Interpersonal	greetings and leave-takings introducing oneself to others expressing joy at another’s success expressing concern for other people’s welfare apologizing indicating agreement or disagreement making promises and committing oneself to some action

Table 2 continued ...

Communicative Function	Sample Functions
Directive	making suggestions persuading someone to change his/her point of view requesting and granting permission requesting information asking for help and responding to a plea for help forbidding someone to do something; issuing a command giving and responding to instructions or directions warning someone discouraging someone from pursuing a course of action establishing guidelines and deadlines for the completion of actions
Referential	reporting about things, actions, events, or people identifying items or people in the community describing someone or something paraphrasing, summarizing, or translating (L1 to L2 or vice versa) interpreting information explaining or asking for explanations of how something works comparing or contrasting things discussing possibilities or capabilities of doing something reporting facts about events or actions or about a text evaluating the results of an action or an event
Imaginative	discussing a poem, story, text, advertisement, a piece of music, etc. story-telling, narrating events expanding ideas suggested by others or by a piece of reading creating rhymes, poetry, stories, plays, or scripts recombining familiar dialogues or passages creatively

These subfunctions serve as guide in determining the communicative functions of the signs examined in this study. Then, the macro-linguistic analysis will explore how these communicative functions intersect with the language choice and the sign-makers' compliance with language policy.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data. The primary data for this investigation are photos of the public signs in the MCPO. The number and frequency distribution of signs based on language use and communicative function account for the quantitative data. Meanwhile, qualitative data were obtained through interviews with two key officers of the post office, whose responses serve as a representation, albeit limited, of the language views and ideologies of the sign-makers.

2.2 Study Locale

The MCPO, the head office of the PHLPst, has been purposively chosen as the locale of the study. As a historical landmark of the country, the MCPO building has been a potent site for architectural research because of its neoclassical design. However, no known linguistic studies has yet been done in this milieu. The current investigation partially fills this gap by exploring the linguistic landscape of this government office. For instance, some important linguistic implications may stem from the PHLPst's membership in the Universal Postal Union, which widens its client composition to include not only Filipinos but also citizens from the other 191 member-states of the said union.

2.3 Data-gathering Procedure

Signs in areas that are accessible to the public (i.e., building façade, and ground floor) were photographed. A total of 138 signs were categorized using Spolsky and Cooper's (1991, as cited in Yavari, 2012) description of signs as guide.

Table 3

MCPO public signs identified based on Spolsky and Cooper's (1991, as cited in Yavari, 2012) categories

Category	N
Advertising signs	8
Warning notices and prohibitions	21
Building names	1
Informative signs	107
Commemorative plaques	1
Total	138

Table 3 shows the number of public signs considered in this LL study. A total of 138 signs were found in the spaces in the MCPO that are readily accessible to the public, that is, the exterior and the first floor of the building. These signs were identified based on the categories or descriptions of Spolsky and Cooper (1991, as cited in Yavari, 2012). It is evident that a majority of the signs are “informative” followed by “warning notices and prohibitions.”

To answer the first research question, the signs were classified according to language use (i.e., English, Filipino, and English-Filipino). The bilingual signs were then further classified into four types as suggested by Reh (2004, as cited in Yavari, 2012): (1) complementary, (2) duplicating, (3) fragmentary, and (4) overlapping. Complementary texts are those that have different parts of the texts written in different languages. Thus, in order for the sign-readers to comprehend the whole text, they must be familiar with the languages in the text. On the other hand, duplicating texts are those that have the exact same text and information in different languages, thus giving the same value to all the languages involved. Fragmentary texts provide the whole information in one language, with some parts translated into other languages. Lastly, overlapping texts contain only some information in another language, while the rest of the text is only in one language. Based on these descriptions, Yavari (2012) recognized that it was hard to distinguish between fragmentary and overlapping signs. Thus, to simplify, “fragmentary” is used in this study to refer to both types of signs.

Next, the MCPO signs were classified according to the five communicative functions in Finocchiaro and Brumfit’s (1983) framework. Finally, two high-ranking MCPO officials were interviewed to probe the intentions and ideologies behind the language choices of the sign-makers. The interview data were then analyzed using theme identification techniques prescribed by Ryan and Bernard (2003).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Dominant Language in Public Space Signs in the MCPO

Table 4
Languages in public MCPO signs

Language	N	%
English	122	88.41
Filipino	1	0.72
English-Filipino	15	10.87
Total	138	100.00

Table 4 shows the languages used in the public signs in the MCPO. As can be seen, English dominates the public space of the post office with 88% of the signs written

in English. This number shows how formidable a force the English language can be in a given public space. As Finzel (2012) noted, in some cases of LL, minority (or minoritized) languages are given emphasis, while others mirror the growing impact of English as the primary language of globalization. The current findings give credence to the latter. Even more striking is the minimal presence of signs in Filipino despite the government directive (E.O. 335) to promote the use of Filipino in government office communications, including public signs. Image 1 shows the only monolingual Filipino sign in the publicly accessible area in the entire building.

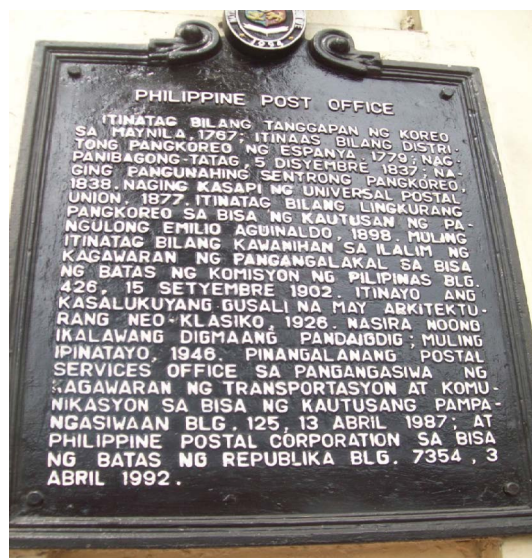


Image 1. Building history sign

This finding is consistent with the observation of De Los Reyes (2014) in his LL study of two train stations in the Philippines. He highlighted that no signs in the Taft-MRT station are in monolingual Filipino and only one sign in the Recto-LRT station is in monolingual Filipino. The paucity of Filipino language in public signs in train stations is argued to be an indication of the government's preference for English. Interestingly, this linguistic preference appears to be particularly evident in formal settings (Pascasio, as cited in De Los Reyes, 2014). This may, in part, explain the predominance of English signs in the post office, which may be regarded as a formal space, being a government bureau.

Table 5
Types of bilingual signs

Bilingual Sign	N	%
Complementary	9	60.00
Duplicating	1	6.67
Fragmentary	5	33.33
Total	15	100.00

Table 5 shows the types of bilingual signs based on the categories provided by Reh (2004, as cited in Yavari, 2012). As presented, complementary bilingual signs occurred the most in the public space of the MCPO. This type of bilingual sign displays different parts of the text in different languages. Hence, it requires sign-readers to have some level of mastery in both languages. This circumstance may again be attributed to the country's long exposure to a bilingual language policy, which normalizes the expectation that Filipinos are knowledgeable in both Filipino and English.

Reh (2004, as cited in Yavari, 2012) also noted that even the bilingual signs in English and Filipino indicate a subtle preference for English as indicated in its use for “important” words. Such a case was also noted in some MCPO signs. For instance, Image 2 shows a complementary bilingual sign where important content words are in English.



Image 2. Reminder for employees

Finzel (2012) mentioned that LL research could indicate the existence of minority groups or languages. By extension, we propose another way of framing the idea—that LL indexes and promotes the minoritizing (or reducing the linguistic value) of specific languages. In the case of the current study, the noted predominance of English signs seems to place Filipino in a relatively subordinate position as the language of this government office, contradictory to the prescription of the government language policy.

3.2 Communicative Functions Frequently Associated with the Languages in the Signs

Table 6 shows the number of public signs in the MCPO classified by language and communicative function.

Table 6
Communicative functions of MCPO public signs

Language	Personal		Interpersonal		Directive		Referential		Imaginative		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
English	1	50%	13	100%	46	90.20%	58	90.63%	4	50%	122
Filipino	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.56%	-	-	1
Eng-Fil	1	50%	0	0	5	9.80%	5	7.81%	4	50%	15
Total	2		13		51		64		8		138

A majority of the MCPO signs are referential (64 out of 138 signs). This linguistic function, as defined by Saville-Troike (1989, as cited in DeCarlo, 1994), is the conveyance of factual information to the listeners (in this case, the readers). In this category, the most common signs are the window labels (see Image 3). As a public office, the MCPO is expected to have referential signs in much of its public space to properly orient the visiting public on where particular transactions are to be done. For instance, as Image 3 shows, bulk mail are received in window 49, and the postage metered machine is found in window 50.



Image 3. Window labels

The second predominant function of MCPO signs is directive (51 out of 138 signs). Directive signs help the public move efficiently around the office by indicating locations or the next step in a sequential procedure with the aid of arrows. Image 4 shows two examples of this.



Image 4. Directive signs

The first sign points to the location of the e-postshop. The second sign directs the public where to find parcel windows 124, 131, and 132, as well as the “comfort room,” the Philippine English term for “toilet.” The use of expressions unique to Filipino users of English in government building signs is unsurprising as they are part of the Filipino sign makers’ and likely the Filipino sign readers’ linguistic resource.

Some directive signs also establish guidelines that warn against or discourage certain practices. Illustrative is the government’s “no to fixers” campaign poster shown in Image 5. The cited law—Republic Act 9485, also known as the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007—defines “fixer” as:

... any individual whether or not officially involved in the operation of a government office or agency who has access to people working therein, and whether or not in collusion with them, facilitates speedy completion of transactions for pecuniary gain or any other advantage or consideration.

Essentially, fixers are people who promise to help process transactions faster in exchange for money. They are ubiquitous in government offices where transactions, such as getting an ID or filing an application, may take hours to complete. Such inefficiency thus makes fixers’ paid promise to expedite the process attractive to the public. Recognizing, however, that the practice of engaging fixers promotes corruption, government offices were mandated to publicize the law barring them.



Image 5. *Warning to the public*

As a government office rendering specific service to the public, the MCPO is expected to have directive signs in spaces that the public are allowed to navigate. The use of English in such signs is explained by De Los Reyes (2014) as an indication of the ideology that English is a language of power, which presumes that sign-readers follow English signs more than signs in other languages such as Filipino.

The third common type of signs in the MCPO, with 13 tokens found, is interpersonal. These signs mostly identify oneself to others, particularly the window teller serving the customers. Haratyan (2011) described the interpersonal function as expressive of the relationship between the writer and the reader, in this case, the sign-maker and the sign-reader. As a government office, the MCPO receives clients daily. This necessitates identifying employees who will facilitate the transaction of the clients.

The fourth category of signs in situ—represented by 11 signs—is imaginative. Interestingly, this is the only function where signs written in bilingual English and Filipino exceeded the number of signs in monolingual English. Signs under this function mostly include advertisements. This could indicate that in marketing their products, the MCPO would like to appeal to Filipinos' bilingual nature (as shown in Image 6), hence the need to include mixed English and Filipino. This is similar to the assertion of Pietikainen and Kelly-Holmes (2011) that neither English nor a local language alone can stand to advertise a product. In their study of a Sami village in Northern Finland, they found that a product must not be too symbolic of its local culture because it may not work once it gets separated from its local context or it might necessitate a lot of explanation. Therefore, a combination of languages is needed to advertise a product.

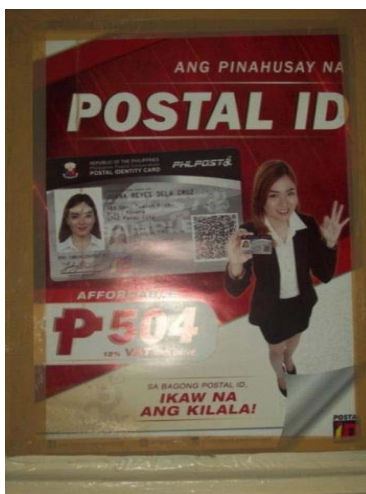


Image 6. Advertisement

Finally, the least common communicative function of the MCPO signs is personal, registering only two cases. This could be attributed to the fact that the post office primarily caters to the public and does not limit its services to specific individuals. An example of this sign is a posted letter by the workers' union addressed to the Chairman of the Board of PHLPost discussing the complaints raised by the workers. While the researchers perceive the posting of such correspondence inappropriate, considering that it is an internal matter, the members of the union may have deemed it fit to post this letter on the public space of the MCPO to inform the employees that their complaints are heard and that the union is doing something about it.

3.3 Intention of the Sign-makers

To inquire into the intentionality of the signs, two administrative officials of the MCPO were interviewed. When asked who is responsible for making and approving the public signs in the post office, both respondents identified the Office of the Post Master General as the main content provider. Working with this office is the Corporate Communications Group and the General Services Department, who are jointly responsible for making the actual signs.

Aside from authorship, another point explored in the interview is intentionality. When asked about the intention of the sign-makers in relation to the communicative functions and language of the public signs, three dominant themes emerged: variety of target readers, inclination toward bilingualism, and limited awareness of language policy.

3.3.1 Variety of Target Readers

When asked what sign-makers consider in deciding what language to use in the signs, both respondents mentioned the importance of the anticipated readers.

Depende sa...tao na recipients nung information na gusto kong iparating. So kung yung information ay tungkol sa, halimbawa, sa delivery o kaya sa mail processing, at yung mga tao ko dun hirap makaunawa ng English, tinatagalog kasi yan ang lengguwaheng madali nilang maintindihan. [It depends on the person who will receive the information that I intend to give. So, if the information is, for example, about delivery or mail processing, and the people in that area have difficulty understanding English, I use Tagalog because that is the language easier for them to understand.] – Administrator 1

Definitely kung sino yung makakabasa. Yun yung isang mahalaga doon. Kung mapapansin nyo, meron tayong nasa wikang Filipino dahil ang mga nagpupunta dito sa atin sa Manila Central Post Office ay karamihan naman ay Pilipino. Ngunit amin ding isinasang-alang alang...na mayroon tayong mga kliyente, mga naghuhulog ng sulat, na taga-ibang bansa. Ito rin ay para magkaroon ng mas magandang komunikasyon doon...sa mga pinagsisilbihan natin o sa mga binibigyan natin ng serbisyo. [It's definitely the possible readers. That is what's important. If you noticed, we have signs in Filipino because those who come here to the Manila Central Post Office are mostly Filipino. But we also take into consideration the fact that we have clients, those who send mails, who are foreigners. This is to facilitate good communication with the people we are serving.] – Administrator 2

These responses suggest that the sign-makers consider who is likely to read the signs in deciding what language to use. As expected, a majority of the MCPO clients are Filipinos, who, they believe, prefer the Filipino language (which is often referred to as Tagalog as it is largely based on this dominant language of Central Luzon). However, the administrators are also mindful that non-Filipino clients frequent the office, hence the need to use the international language, i.e., English. The possibility for an international client composition is due to the Philippine Postal Corporation's membership in the Universal Postal Union, which caters to 192 countries all over the world, including traditionally English-speaking nations such as Australia, Canada, UK, and USA.

3.3.2 Inclination Toward Bilingualism

Consistent with their expressed consideration of the target sign-readers' language, the respondents articulated the inclination toward bilingualism, which they claim to be the usual tendency of most Filipinos, particularly millennials.

Kasi nga na-expose na tayo sa dalawang lengguwahe eh. Minsan kung masyado kang nabihasa sa Bisaya, at hindi gaano sa Tagalog, Bisaya at English... So, depende kung saan naka-situate yung tao. Halimbawa, dito sa Manila, pwede kang mag-Tagalog at pwede ka ring mag-English. [This is mainly because we have long been exposed to the idea of bilingualism. If you are fluent in Bisaya, and not in Tagalog, it is highly likely that you speak Bisaya and English... So, it depends on the area in which the person is situated. For example, here in Manila, you could use Tagalog as well as English.] –Administrator 1

...kunyari bakit “passport,” bakit hindi “pasaporte”? Kasi mas marami sa atin ang alam natin passport kesa pasaporte, diba?...Sa tingin ko, kaya din sya...particularly dito sa Postal ID, bakit sya naka-Taglish, kung tawagin natin, ay dahil ang gusto nyang i-capture ay yung mga millennials, yung mga bagong graduate ng college na wala pa talaga silang ID....So, yun yung mga nag-ta-Taglish talaga. I think para mas catchy at yun yung tamang approach dun sa target market. [For example, why use “passport” instead of “pasaporte”? It’s because most of us know it as passport, not as pasaporte. In addition, I think, particularly in the case of the Postal ID, it’s in Taglish, as we call it, because we are trying to capture the attention of the millennials, those who are fresh graduates and do not have valid IDs yet. Those people are the ones who mainly use Taglish; I think it catches their attention more and that is the right approach to the target market.] –Administrator 2

The use of bilingualism was particularly evident in the case of “imaginative” signs or those that advertise ideas. In fact, across the communicative function categories, “imaginative” is the only function where English-Filipino outnumbered English signs. When asked about this, the respondents again referred to the need to reach a wider target market—Filipinos and foreigners alike. This intention is consistent with the idea of Pietikainen and Kelly-Holmes (2011), who found in their study on the labeling of souvenirs from Samiland in Scandinavia, that a product worth-buying is something differentiated enough not to be too indicative of one’s culture; that is, it can also be seen as worthy and relatable outside of its community. In the case of the MCPO’s direct and allied services, the use of English and Filipino widens its appeal to possible customers from different social and linguistic backgrounds.

As expressed in the feedback of the respondents, the occurrence of the bilingual signs is attributed to the bilingual orientation of the Philippines, which can be traced to the nation's linguistic history with American English since the Americans wrestled the Philippines from Spanish rule in 1898. One administrator even referred to the country's bilingual education policy, which has supported both Filipino and English languages even before the implementation of the MTB-MLE policy. Indeed, using two languages—either through code-switching or code-mixing—is a recognized tendency among bilingual or multilingual speakers. It is not surprising therefore that Filipinos tend to combine Filipino and English in their utterances and can easily relate to bilingual signs (i.e., English-Filipino signs). In fact, Goulet (1971, as cited in Bautista, 2004) observed that “among educated Tagalogs, mixing is considered the normal acceptable conversational style of speaking and writing”; one reason for this language practice is “bridging social distance,” which is a clear consideration of the MCPO sign-makers in their language choice (p. 228).

It is notable that Administrator 2 identified millennials as a specific target group of the MCPO because of their perceived need for a valid ID, such as the postal ID. Lancaster and Stillman (2002, as cited in Kavaliauskiene, 2012) described millennials or GenY (i.e., those born in the mid-1980s) as the internet generation, who are particularly active in social media, where code-switching is pervasive. Aner and Wei (2007, as cited in E. Papalexakis, Nguyen, & Dogruoz, 2014) confirmed that “multilingualism is the norm” in both personal and online communication (p. 42). These related findings justify the presence of English-Filipino signs in the MCPO. However, there is still a clear bias for English as evidenced by its predominance in the signs. This puts to question the validity of E.O. 335, a language policy which promotes the use of Filipino in government offices.

3.3.3 Limited Awareness of Language Policy

The delayed implementation of E.O. 335 signed under the Cory Aquino administration was cited by both respondents when asked about the obvious imbalance between English and English-Filipino signs in the MCPO.

Kasi pansinin mo, kailan lang ba yang Executive Order na yan, kailan nilabas yan?...of course during the time of American occupation, English na tayo. Tapos nag-aral tayo, Grade 1 pa lang may English na. Hanggang sa mag-college, hanggang mag-aral, English. Kumabaga, embedded na sya sa system ng nakapag-aral. Part ng culture ng Filipino na pag magaling ka sa English, ibig sabihin non, magaling kang tao, may pinag-aralan ka. Yun ang nagiging pamantayan. [Come to think of it, that Executive Order has only been released when? Of course, during the American occupation, we have already been using English. Then, when we studied, from Grade 1 until college, we have been using English. Therefore, it has been embedded into our system as educated people. It is a part of the Filipino culture that if you're fluent in English, it means that

you are a skillful person, that you are an educated individual. That is the standard.] –Administrator 1

...tulad nung sinabi ko, yung ating kautusan sa pagkakaroon ng paggamit ng wikang Filipino sa mga dokumento, sa mga palatastas, sa mga anunsyo, ay lumabas lamang noong July 10, 2016; though existing na sya, it was during the Aquino – Cory Aquino – nung lumabas iyon. Ngayon lang nagkaroon ng...muli naming sinisimulan na ibalik ang wikang Filipino sa aming operasyon, sa aming mga pakikipag-komunikasyon sa ating mga customers. So, bakit ganon? Kasi, naniniwala rin naman kami na bilang mga Pilipino, pangalawang wika nila ay ang Ingles. [Like what I have said earlier, the Executive Order requiring offices to use Filipino in documents, advertisements, and announcements has only been released on July 10, 2016. Although it has been existing since the Cory Aquino administration, it's only recently that we're trying to incorporate Filipino again in our operations and communication with our customers. So, why is it like that? It's because we believe that as Filipinos, English is our second language.] –Administrator 2

Government offices, as national institutions, are expected to model policy enforcement. But this is clearly not the case in the implementation of E.O. 335 in the MCPO. While this policy promoting the use of Filipino in government communications and transactions has been ratified in August 1988, both the MCPO administrators suggested its relative recency, which indexes limited awareness and valuing of the said language policy. Administrator 2 claims that it was only in July 2016 that the notice about this policy was given to them. A 28-year delay in promoting a language policy makes a curious case. However, the response of Administrator 1 is quite telling of the probable reason for the deprioritization of Filipino as the language of public service. He articulated the embeddedness of the English language in the culture and education system of the Philippines since the time of the American occupation and the prevailing linguistic ideology that marks fluency in English as an index of educatedness and skillfulness.

These reasons for noncompliance with language policy present important challenges and considerations—Is the government making relevant language policies? How are these policies implemented? How is policy implementation monitored? What sanctions, if any, are given for noncompliance? Who are responsible for enforcing these policies? Do we need language policies at all?

It appears that Administrator 2 considers himself as a policy enforcer by way of his demonstrated insistence to use Filipino during the interview. His formal Filipino stands out in the interview citations for two reasons. First, it is evidently more formal than the register of Administrator 1. Second, Administrator 2 had freely conversed with the researcher bilingually (in English and Filipino). The marked shift to formal Filipino occurred only when it was established that the discussion would touch on the matter of language policy, particularly

E.O. 335. This curious language shift may have been motivated by a perceived monitoring of language-policy implementation. While seemingly isolated, this field observation candidly manifests the discrepancy between language policy and practice, which begs the question—If the LL of the MCPO shows that bilingualism is the prevailing linguistic practice, is E.O. 335 still relevant?

4. Conclusion

In summary, this research highlighted linguistic observations and insights in the MCPO, proving that this government building is also a research gem for linguistic research, not merely a locale for architectural studies. In examining the public signs displayed in the façade and ground floor of the office, 88% of the signs were found to be in English, most of which were referential and directive in function. The quantitative data suggest that English is valued in this locale as the language of authority—authority to give reliable information and give orders or directions. Consequently, the qualitative data suggest that the MCPO aspires to cater to local and international sign-readers; hence, the signs tend to be more monolingual English in nature, or bilingual English and Filipino at the very least. The minimal use of Filipino in the signs is attributed by key institutional personnel to the weak implementation of the E.O. 335.

These findings suggest the need to revisit government language policy, which is clearly not articulated in the linguistic landscape of the examined milieu. The 28-year delay in policy implementation also invites a review of policy relevance and implementation. This research, albeit limited in scope, provides evidence that the 1988 language policy does not match the 2018 linguistic reality of the Philippines where government offices now serve an international client base and where Filipinos generally prefer bilingualism over monolingualism.

LL studies by Burdick (2012), Dagenais et al., (2009), and Finzel (2012) have found that actual linguistic practices of a certain community are not necessarily reflected in the public texts surrounding them. By extension, this research found that language policies are also not necessarily reflected in the linguistic landscape even in government spaces where they are expected to be observed.

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