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THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISM: LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN SINGAPORE

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Abstract: *This paper explores the linguistic landscape of Singapore's tourist attractions by observing the languages present on signs at eight different tourist locations. By taking photographs of signs at the tourist attractions, this study aimed to investigate the languages present and whether the languages on signs reflect the nationality of tourists visiting them. Top-down and bottom-up signs were compared in terms of both languages present as well as code preference. This paper also explores the commodification of language in Singapore's tourist attractions. Results show that the languages on signs at a few tourist attractions reflect the nationality of tourists who visit them, but also that exclusion of languages does not mean that the number of tourists visiting from certain countries is low. A few differences between top-down and bottom-up signs are observed, including differences in code preference of signs in Chinatown and also the low percentage of Malay and Tamil on bottom-up signs, always in Chinatown, compared to top-down ones. Mandarin Chinese and Tamil can be seen to have been commodified in Chinatown and Little India respectively, in order to give tourists a more authentic experience of the two attractions.*

Keywords: *Tourism, Linguistic Landscape, Micro-Place Names, Landmarks, Commodification of Places and Place Names*

1. INTRODUCTION*

Singapore is a city-state with a total population of about 5,700,000 as of 2019[1]. The citizen population makes up about 61.4% of this figure, at about 3,500,000. This citizen population is made up of 76.0% Chinese, 15.0% Malay, 7.5% Indian and 1.5% other ethnic groups. As stated in the Constitution, Singapore has four official languages – Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, and English. Singapore has a bilingual education policy that makes it compulsory for every child to learn both English, which is the language of instruction, as well as their Mother Tongue[2]. This Mother Tongue language is determined by the ethnic group of the students – Chinese, Malay, and Indian students learn Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil respectively. English is seen as the *lingua franca* of the country, while the Mother Tongue languages are seen as the languages that ensure that the heritage of every Singaporean remains a part of their identity[3].

Singapore's tourism industry plays an important part in the country's economy. In 2018, there were 18.5 million international visitor arrivals and S$26.9 billion was collected in tourism receipts[4]. Table 1 shows the countries that had the highest number of tourists who visited Singapore in the year 2018.

Region	Place of Residence	Number of Arrivals
Greater China	China	3,417,604
Southeast Asia	Indonesia	3,021,455
South Asia	India	1,442,277
Southeast Asia	Malaysia	1,254,022
Oceania	Australia	1,107,224
North Asia	Japan	829,676
Southeast Asia	Philippines	778,141
Americas	USA	643,268
North Asia	South Korea	629,454
Southeast Asia	Vietnam	591,614
Europe	UK	589,009
Southeast Asia	Thailand	545,650

Table 1. Number of tourists who visited Singapore in 2018, by country (Singapore Tourism Board, [2019a])

* Most of the pictures in this article have been taken directly by Boon Yong Teo and belong to his personal collection. When pictures have not been taken by one of the Authors, the source is duly indicated.
[1] Cf., for all the details, Singapore Department of Statistics, (2019).
[2] Cf. Aman, N., (2009), pp. 47-68.
[3] Cf. Lim, L., Pakir, A., & Wee, L., (2010), *passim*.
[4] Cf. Singapore Tourism Board, (n.d.).

As seen from Table 1, a significant number of tourists come from places where English is not the primary language spoken. While some of these tourists come from places where Mandarin Chinese or Malay – both of which are official languages in Singapore – are the primary language spoken, others, such as Japanese and Korean tourists, might face greater problems when visiting Singapore and its tourist attractions. As these tourist attractions are visited by both tourists and locals, the linguistic landscapes of these attractions could be different from what has been previously studied with regard to the linguistic landscape in Singapore.

Keeping in mind the languages used by the locals in Singapore and the nationality and expected language repertoire of the tourists who visit Singapore, this study aims to investigate the linguistic landscape of tourist attractions in Singapore by observing the languages present on both top-down and bottom-up signs and exploring differences between the two. This study will also investigate if the languages present at these attractions reflect the number of tourists from the different countries and if language has been commodified for tourism in Singapore.

The paper represents, therefore, a very comprehensive survey of touristic signs and (micro-)place names in the Lion City and, by associating linguistic criteria with elements of sociological analysis, aims at providing an innovative contribution to the field of Tourism Studies, dealing not only with the toponymic description, invention, and re-invention of the names and intrinsic features of local attractions and landmarks, but also providing an original resource for further analysis of trends and dynamics in tourists' needs and preferences.

Moreover, this research is a robust addition to the panorama of studies on Singapore Sociolinguistics and on the linguistic landscape of the Lion City, approached, in this article, according to a perspective which goes beyond the analysis of speech and speakers in real time. It is focused, indeed, on a very specific aspect of the use of languages in the island, i.e., the languages of touristic signs and landmarks, always in relation to people 'in-context' (local inhabitants and tourists) and at the synchronic level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Linguistic Landscape

Linguistic landscape is a term that was first introduced by Landry and Bourhis[5] and it refers to the combination of 'the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings'.

Another important early contribution to the study of linguistic landscape was Scollon and Scollon[6], who introduced the theoretical framework of Geo-semantics – 'the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world'. Scollon and Scollon believed that the meanings of signs and symbols are formed from their placement and that each sign or symbol indexes a larger discourse. Scollon and Scollon[6] also explained the system of code preference on bilingual or multilingual signs, which refers to the order in which languages appear on signs. This is an important concept in the current study, where bilingual or even multilingual signs are expected, given the diversity of languages in Singapore.

Building on these two studies, other scholars began to work on the field of linguistic landscape. An analysis of the linguistic landscape of Israel was developed by Ben-Rafel,

[5] Cf. Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y., (1997), pp. 23-49.
[6] Cf. Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W., (2003), *passim*.

Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht[7]. They made a distinction between signs from national and public bodies and signs from individual social actors such as shop owners, using the terms 'top-down' and 'bottom-up', respectively, to refer to them. Making use of this distinction, they were able to investigate how the different languages were used by the people and the nation. Backhau[8] made a similar distinction between official and non-official signs when investigating the linguistic landscape of Tokyo and observed the differences between the languages used on the two types of signs. One of the differences highlighted was in code preference, where Japanese was the preferred code for 99.0% of official signs and only 60.3% of the non-official signs.

2.2 Linguistic Landscape in Singapore

Linguistic landscape studies have also been conducted in Singapore. Tan's[9] work examined the state policy and observed how Malay, the national language of Singapore, was always placed at the top of signs at the entrances of schools. Different combinations of languages were also observed on signs for places of attractions, some of which chose to include Japanese, a foreign language, over an official language such as Tamil or Malay. Tan felt that these inconsistencies could be due to pragmatic reasons and seen as a commodification of language.

In a separate study, Tan[10] also acknowledges that Japanese, in the linguistic landscape, could be linked to the practical considerations connected with the requirements of tourism, similar to the use of Mandarin Chinese in Chinatown. A more recent work by Tang[11] observed the dominance of English in the linguistic landscape of Singapore. The prevalence of English and diglossia of languages on public signs was also highlighted. As the majority (63%) of signs were monolingual, Tang postulates that 'Singapore might be more monolingual- than bilingual- or multilingual-oriented'.

Scholars in Singapore have also focused on the languages used on shop signs. Shang and Guo's study[12] examined patterns in the language used on shop name signs in neighbourhood centres and found that English was prevalent in all types of shop name signs. In English-Chinese bilingual signs of upper-lower alignment, more than half of the signs placed Mandarin Chinese on top, indicating Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code for many shop owners. Traditional Chinese characters were also often used instead of the simplified characters that the official policy promotes, suggesting differences between the bottom-up signs and the official policy.

In a similar study, Shang and Zhao[13] photographed shops in ten neighbourhood centres and examined the value of significance of English in the private domain, in particular shop names, where the language(s) on the signs are decided by the shop owners. Similar to Shang & Guo's study, the prevalence of English was also observed on shop signs, with 96% of signs containing English either in English monolingual signs or signs which included English with one or more languages. Shang and Zhao also observed that the most frequent code combination for bilingual signs was English-Chinese, but the Chinese text is often represented in larger fonts. This is likely indicating Mandarin Chinese as a preferred code for the related shop

[7] Cf. Ben-Rafael, E., Shohamy, E., Amara, M. H., & Trumper-Hecht, N., (2006), pp. 7-30.
[8] Cf. Backhaus, P., (2006), pp. 52-66.
[9] Cf. Tan, P. K. W., (2013), pp. 227-250.
[10] Cf. Tan, P. K. W., (2014), *passim*.
[11] Cf. Tang, H. K., (2018), pp 152-173.
[12] Cf. Shang, G., & Guo, L., (2016), pp. 183-201.
[13] Cf. Shang, G., & Zhao, S., (2016), pp. 8-14.

owners, a similar observation to Shang and Guo. The presence of dialectal pronunciations, similar to traditional characters being seen in Shang and Guo's study, also suggests that bottom-up signs differed from the official policy. Both studies also observed a low vitality of Malay and Tamil as these two languages were not seen much on shop signs. While these studies show Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code on most shop signs, shops in tourist attractions may differ.

Foreign languages were observed to be used on shop signs in Singapore as well. Ong, Ghesquière, and Serwe[14] examined the presence of French in shop names and found that it was linked to a French linguistic fetish that was tied to the food and beauty industries, something that had been observed in studies done in other countries. The use of French in shop names was also seen in residential heartlands and can be interpreted as a strategy to appeal to the consumers. Hult and Kelly-Holmes[15] examined the attestation of Norwegian in a tailor shop in Chinatown and found that there were several reasons for the use of the language, including the shop owner's personal experiences and the historical role of Scandinavians in Singapore's shipping industry. While foreign languages are to be expected in the current study, it would be interesting to attempt to understand the reasons behind their presence.

The languages used in stall signboards in hawker centres have also been studied. Leimgruber[16] explored the linguistic landscape of a hawker centre and concluded that the linguistic landscape 'becomes one of the loci where identity work is being carried out'. This identity work by the stallholders is done through the use of their signboards to index many things, including their historical backgrounds through references to the time when they were itinerant[17]. Ong's[18] study of signboards from five hawker centres focused on how stall owners construct their identity through their signboards. She concluded that hawker centres can be seen to 'reproduce the nation's theory of multiracialism, as the attachment of race-related languages to ethnic food reproduces existing racial identities'[19].

A similar tendency is seen also in the strategies developed to name and re-name local brands, to make them more 'attractive' and recognisable and to define their local components[20].

2.3 Linguistic Landscape and Tourism

The linguistic landscapes of tourist towns and popular destinations for tourists have also been studied by scholars and commodification of language has been observed in many of such studies. Heller[21] sees the commodification of language in two different ways – as a technical skill and as a sign of authenticity. With regard to tourism, Heller adds that the tourism industry has 'become attractive to peripheral regions', where there are linguistic minorities, and these places now 'seek to commodify politically produced identities'[22].

One such example of linguistic commodification of a minority language can be seen in Dingle, a tourist town located in Ireland. Moriarty's study[23] of the linguistic landscape of Dingle found that all monolingual Irish signs in the town were only aimed at locals, and that

[14] Cf. Ong, K. K. W., Ghesquière, J. F., & Serwe, S. K., (2013), pp. 19-25.
[15] Cf. Hult, F. M., & Kelly-Holmes, H., (2018), pp. 79-93.
[16] Cf. Leimgruber, J. R. E., (2018), p. 95.
[17] Cf. Leimgruber, J. R. E., (2018), cit., pp. 178-199.
[18] Cf. Ong, K., (2019), pp. 629-665.
[19] Cf. Ong, K., (2019), cit., p. 635.
[20] Cf. Lim, S.T.G., and Perono Cacciafoco, F., (2020), pp. 374-397.
[21] Cf. Heller, M., (2010), pp. 101-114.
[22] Cf. Heller, M., (2010), cit., p. 108.
[23] Cf. Moriarty, M., (2013), pp. 464-477.

signs aimed at tourists containing Irish were always accompanied by English as well as font and colour that index Irishness. These bilingual signs can be seen as Dingle's strategy in 'marking the commercial entity as authentically Irish where tourists can consume the *real thing*, and the English translation serves to create the *right balance between the foreign and the familiar*'[24]. This study shows how Irish has been used to commodify Dingle as a place where the Irishness is authentic.

Heller, Pujolar, and Duchene[25] noted how a tourist site in francophone Canada turned to bilingualism, in order to survive. This particular tourist site performed plays which were written in Acadian French, but had to create an English version of their promotional materials in the early 2000s, so that they could attract more visitors, especially those who did not speak French. A similar development was observed in museums in Catalonia, where multilingual materials were provided in the exhibits – including signs and explanations –, but the Catalan language was still the most visible, among these multilingual materials.

Yan's study[26] of the linguistic landscape of Macao's heritage and gaming tourism also observed the commodification of language. However, unlike studies showing the commodification of one national or ethnic language, she found that the linguistic landscape of Macao is one which constructs a hybrid identity through the use of multiple languages. This can be seen as a reflection of the interaction between the Chinese and Western cultures.

Linguistic landscape studies of tourism have also seen the prevalence of English where it is not the main language being spoken. Marta's research[27] on the Hungarian town of Hódmezővásárhely found that bilingual signs were present in many parts of the place, including the museum, hotel, and city centre. The museum included multilingual signs where English, French, and Spanish were included, while most signs in the city centre were Hungarian-English bilingual. Marta notes that the presence of bilingual signs in Hódmezővásárhely means that the town is becoming increasingly prepared to be visited by tourists from different countries. A study by Ruzaitė[28] focuses on the linguistic landscape of resort cities located in the border areas of Lithuania and Poland. The scholar observes multilingual linguistic landscapes in both countries, suggesting that English serves as a *lingua franca* and can be seen as the language of tourism. The study also finds that multilingual signs are prevalent in the private sector, such as at restaurants and shops, in both Lithuania and Poland.

A different perspective on museums and their visitors, not focused on commodification, but on the impact of memory and on transitional justice projects, has been recently provided by Light, Creţan, and Dunca[29]. Moreover, the three scholars have further studied the links between tourism and transitional justice in Romania, by exploring 'the importance of domestic tourism for enabling citizens to encounter and engage with wider transitional justice projects'[30].

Other works have given a significant contribution to the studies on tourism dynamics and to the relationships between inhabited centres and tourists.

Duncan Light has analysed the phenomenon of the commodification of place names with the aim to attract tourists in a seminal paper published in 2014[31].

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[24] Cf. Moriarty, M., (2013), cit., p. 471.
[25] Cf. Heller, M., Pujolar, J., & Duchêne, A., (2014), pp. 539-566.
[26] Cf. Yan, X., (2018), pp. 198-217.
[27] Cf. Marta, G. D., (2011), pp. 31-38.
[28] Cf. Ruzaitė, J., (2017), pp. 197-220.
[29] Cf. Light D., Creţan, R., and Dunca, A.-M., (2021b), pp. 1-21.
[30] Cf. Light D., Creţan, R., and Dunca, A.-M., (2021a), pp. 742-754.
[31] Cf. Light, D., (2014), pp. 141-156.

Light, Creţan, Voiculescu, and Jucu[32] have provided important insights into the changing dynamics of tourism in the cities of Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, in particular in the context of tourism restructuring and the strategies to attract visitors to major centres.

2.4 Research Issues

While the linguistic landscape in Singapore has been studied in some detail, with some investigations developed on the shop signs and signboards in hawker centres, not much has been studied with regard to the linguistic landscape of Singapore's tourist attractions. As these places also cater to the needs of tourists, the linguistic landscape could differ greatly from previous studies that have been conducted in Singapore, in terms of both top-down and bottom-up signs. Therefore, this article aims to investigate the following:

(1) What are the languages present in the linguistic landscape of Singapore's tourist attractions, and are they a true reflection of the related number of tourists from different countries?
(2) How do top-down and bottom-up signs differ in tourist attractions?
(3) Is language commodified in Singapore's tourism industry and, if yes, how so?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

Data was collected in the form of photographs of signs, both top-down and bottom-up. This study followed Backhaus'[33] definition of a sign as 'any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame'. Bottom-up signs analysed in this study consisted mainly of shop signs. Some shops observed had more than one sign, but only one photo was taken for each shop and counted for analysis. This was to ensure that all shops have equal representation in the results to ensure that the results themselves were not skewed by shops having multiple signs, granting impartiality of data collection. In places where there are more than one of the same shop-type in the same place, only one photo has been counted for analysis. For buildings, only photographs of shop signs on the ground floor were taken. This is because these shops are the most visible to people walking past these places and also for ease of data collection.

The tourist attractions where photographs were taken were selected from a list of locations where statistics showing the percentage of visitors from each country were available. These visitor statistics were taken from Singapore Tourism Board's website and the list of attractions was split by whether they were paid or free attractions. From the paid attractions, Gardens by the Bay, Singapore Zoo, Jurong Bird Park, and National Orchid Garden were selected, while Orchard Road, Chinatown, Little India, and Singapore Botanic Gardens were chosen among the free attractions. These attractions were elicited in order to have signs from a wide range of both paid and free attractions, where different languages are expected to be present.

[32] Cf. Light, D., Creţan, R., Voiculescu, S., & Jucu, I. S., (2020), pp. 465-477.
[33] Cf. Backhaus, P., (2006), cit., pp. 52-66.

The photographs used in this study were taken by Boon Yong Teo from January 2020 to March 2020.

3.2 Data Analysis

Two different approaches were used to analyse the data. For some of the attractions, a quantitative approach was not applied for the languages present on the signs. This was because these attractions had their own policies for the languages to be included in the signs, and were largely consistent throughout. This would mean that numbers showing the frequency distribution of the different languages would merely be representing the frequency of the different types of signs, which would not be helpful in drawing any meaningful conclusion. These attractions were Gardens by the Bay, Singapore Zoo, Jurong Bird Park, National Orchid Garden, and Singapore Botanic Gardens. These places also had very few private shops within the compounds.

In consideration of the above, the signs were classified into different categories – brown sign, directional sign, map, attraction name, warning sign, exhibit information sign, and other information sign. The brown signs refer to the signs that are 'placed along roads or pathways leading to a particular place of interest or facility'[34]. Directional signs refer to signs that indicate the directions of different places within an attraction. The map is the one that is found across the attraction, while attraction name signs refer to the signs that are found at each attraction showing the name of a specific attraction. Danger signs have been excluded from the category of warning signs, as all attractions use the same danger sign that contains the four official languages of Singapore. Exhibit information signs refer to the signs that are placed together with the exhibits, showing the name and, sometimes, detailed information about them. After classifying the signs into these categories, the languages present in each category was taken down. There were, however, still exceptions that did not follow the general pattern of each category, and these signs were looked at as well.

For Orchard Road, Chinatown, and Little India, the photographs taken were first sorted into whether the signs were top-down or bottom-up, then by the languages present and the code preference. Using a quantitative approach, the different languages present in the linguistic landscape of the different tourist attractions were identified and the frequency distributions of these languages were taken down. The code preference of the signs was also observed, but only for signs containing translations and arranged in a top-bottom layout. This is because the names of some shops were a combination of two languages, and it would not be fair to take either language as the preferred code.

The data obtained were analysed and compared against the visitor statistics, to conclude whether the languages present on signs were a good reflection of the nationality of the tourists visiting the attractions. Top-down and bottom-up signs were also compared in terms of languages present and code preference.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Gardens by the Bay

Category	Language(s) present
Brown sign	-

[34] Cf. Singapore Tourism Board, (2019b).

Directional sign	English
Map	English
Attraction name	English English, Malay, Chinese, Tamil
Warning sign (not including danger sign)	English
Exhibit information sign	English

Table 2. Languages on different categories of signs at Gardens by the Bay

Almost all the signs at Gardens by the Bay are monolingual and in English. There were two distinct patterns under the 'Attraction Name' category of signs. One was only in English, while the other had all four official languages of Singapore – English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil. The signs for the 'Attractions' that were labelled with alphabets in the map, shown in Figure 1, were only in English, while the signs for the 'Other Attractions' labelled with number were in the four official languages. Figure 2 and Figure 3 are examples of the monolingual signs, while Figure 4 and Figure 5 are examples of signs with the four official languages. Figure 6 to Figure 8 are examples of the remaining categories of signs that are consistent throughout the place.

Figure 1. Gardens by the Bay map

Figure 2. Monolingual English ‘Attraction Name’ sign at Gardens by the Bay

Figure 3. Monolingual English 'Attraction Name' sign at Gardens by the Bay

Figure 4. 'Attraction Name' sign with 4 languages at Gardens by the Bay

Figure 5. 'Attraction Name' sign with 4 languages at Gardens by the Bay

Figure 6. Directional sign at Gardens by the Bay

Figure 7. Warning sign at Gardens by the Bay

Figure 8. Exhibit information sign at Gardens by the Bay

4.2 Singapore Zoo

Category	Language(s) present
Brown sign	English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil
Directional sign	English, Chinese, Japanese
Map	English, Chinese, Japanese
Attraction name	English

Warning sign (not including danger sign)	English English, Chinese, English, Chinese, Japanese
Exhibit information sign	English, Chinese, Japanese

Table 3. Languages on different categories of signs at the Singapore Zoo

Most signs at the Singapore Zoo contained three languages – English, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese. Examples of the different categories of signs found in the Singapore Zoo are shown below from Figure 8 to Figure 17. One category of signs where consistency was lacking was the one of the warning signs, where three different types of signs could be seen – monolingual English, English and Mandarin Chinese, and English, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese. These examples are shown from Figure 13 to Figure 15. Most 'Attraction Name' signs were monolingual signs in English only, but there were a few 'Attraction Name' signs in English, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese, as shown in Figure 18 and a few others in English, Mandarin Chinese, and Malay. These included the example shown in Figure 19 and also the attractions found in *KidzWorld*, the area located near the top of the map shown in Figure 11. The exhibit information signs mostly had three languages on them, but the Mandarin Chinese and Japanese translations were often limited to the names of the species, while detailed information tended to be provided only in English. For some exhibits found in the attraction of the sign in Figure 19, the exhibit information signs were in English, Mandarin Chinese, and Malay, following the languages found on the attraction name sign. An example of this is shown in Figure 20.

Figure 9. Brown sign of the Singapore Zoo

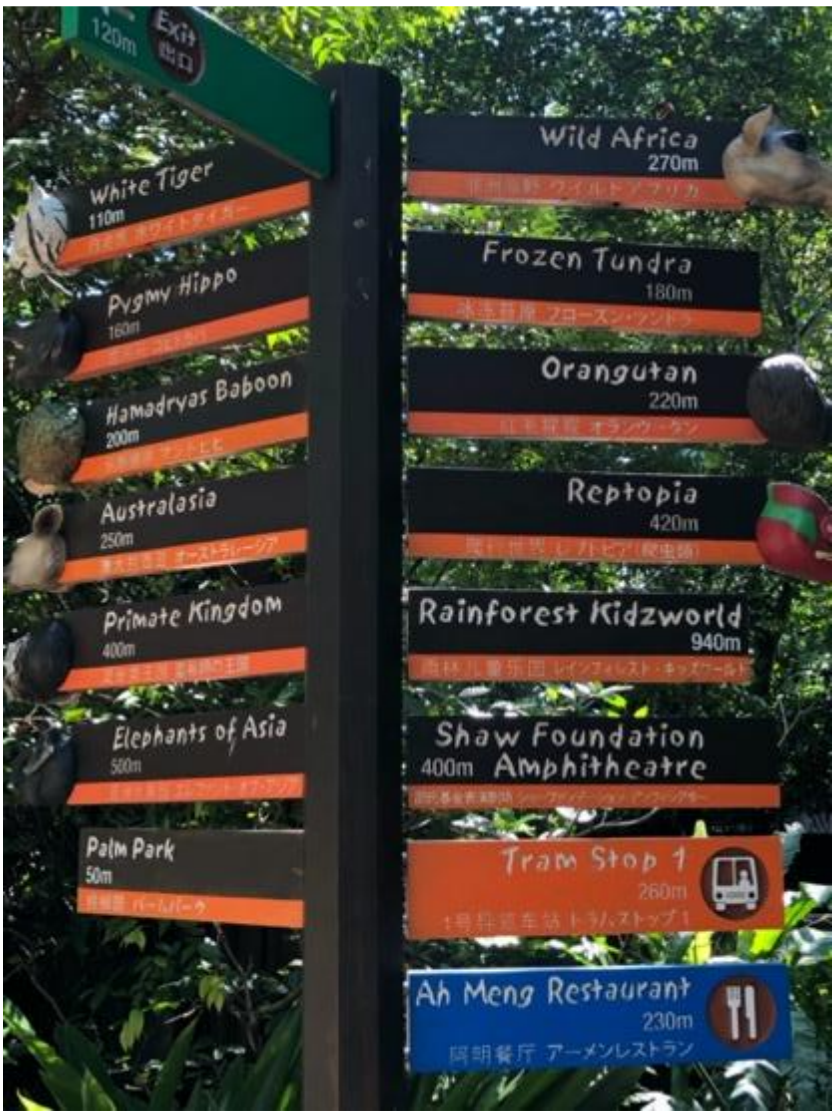

Figure 10. Directional sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 11. Map at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 12. ‘Attraction Name’ sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 13. Monolingual warning sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 14. Bilingual warning sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 15. Trilingual warning sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 16. Exhibit information sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 17. Other information sign at the Singapore Zoo

Figure 18. Trilingual 'Attraction Name' sign at the Singapore Zoo

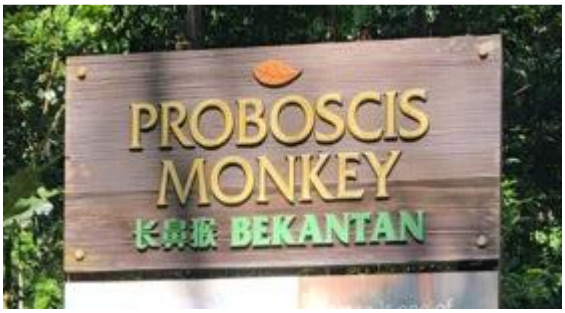

Figure 19. Trilingual 'Attraction Name' sign at the Singapore Zoo

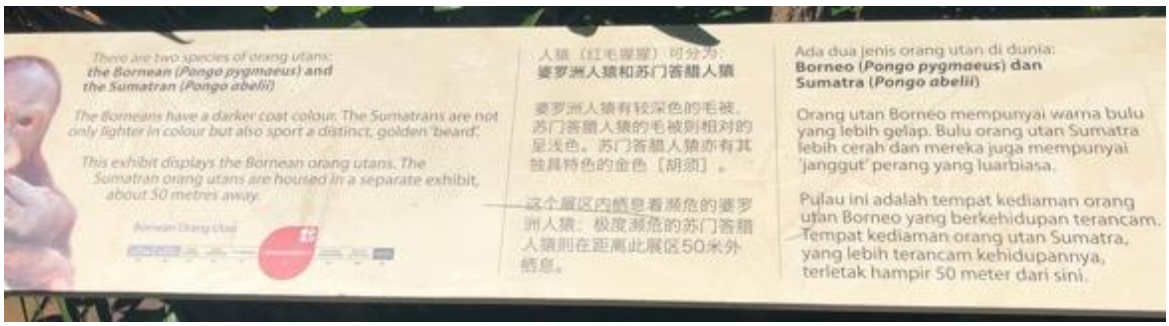

Figure 20. Exhibit information sign in English, Mandarin Chinese, and Malay at the Singapore Zoo

4.3 Jurong Bird Park

Category	Language(s) present
Brown sign	English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil
Directional sign	English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean
Map	English, Chinese, Korean
Attraction name	English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean English

Warning sign (not including danger sign)	English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean
Exhibit information sign	English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean,

Table 4. Languages on different categories of signs at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 21 to Figure 29 are examples of the different categories of signs found at the Jurong Bird Park. Most signs at the Jurong Bird Park are in four languages – English, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. This is with the exception of the map (Figure 23), where Japanese is absent. There are mainly two kinds of 'Attraction Name' signs, one with the same four languages (Figure 28), and the other with only English (Figure 29). There was one exception to this, where Malay was found along with the other four languages. This can be seen in Figure 30.

Figure 21. Brown sign of the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 22. Directional sign at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 23. Map at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 24. Multilingual ‘Attraction Name’ sign at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 25. Warning sign in English at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 26. Warning sign in Mandarin Chinese and Malay at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 27. Warning sign in Korean and Japanese at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 28. Exhibit information sign at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 29. Monolingual English 'Attraction Name' sign at the Jurong Bird Park

Figure 30. 'Attraction Name' sign with 5 languages at the Jurong Bird Park

4.4 National Orchid Garden

Category	Language(s) present
Brown sign	English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil
Directional sign	English
Map	English
Attraction name	English
Warning sign (not including danger sign)	English
Exhibit information sign	English

Table 5. Languages on different categories of signs at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 31 to Figure 36 are examples of the different categories of signs found at the National Orchid Garden. Almost all of the signs at the National Orchid Garden are in English. An exception is the 'exit' sign, shown in Figure 32 as part of the directional signs, where English is seen alongside a written text that could be read both according to Chinese and Japanese interpretations. Another directional sign found at the toilet contained both Mandarin Chinese and Japanese, in addition to English (Figure 37), and this combination of languages was also seen on a sign at a water cooler (Figure 38).

Figure 31. Brown sign of the National Orchid Garden

Figure 32. Directional sign at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 33. Map at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 34. 'Attraction Name' sign at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 35. Warning sign at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 36. Exhibit information sign at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 37. Trilingual directional sign at the National Orchid Garden

Figure 38. Trilingual sign at a water cooler at the National Orchid Garden

4.5 Singapore Botanic Gardens

Category	Language(s) present
Brown sign	English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil
Directional sign	English
Map	English
Attraction name	English
Warning sign (not including danger sign)	English
Exhibit information sign	English

Table 6. Languages on different categories of signs at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 39 to Figure 44 are examples of the different categories of signs at the Botanic Gardens. Almost all the signs at the Botanic Gardens are monolingual English signs. The only exception was one 'Attraction Name' sign, shown in Figure 45, which contained both Mandarin Chinese and English.

Figure 39. Brown sign of Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 40. Directional sign at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 41. Map at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 42. ‘Attraction Name’ sign at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 43. Warning sign at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 44. Exhibit information sign at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Figure 45. Bilingual 'Attraction Name' sign at Singapore Botanic Gardens

4.6 Orchard Road

The area chosen for Orchard Road was the main street of Orchard Road. The exact location is highlighted in Figure 46.

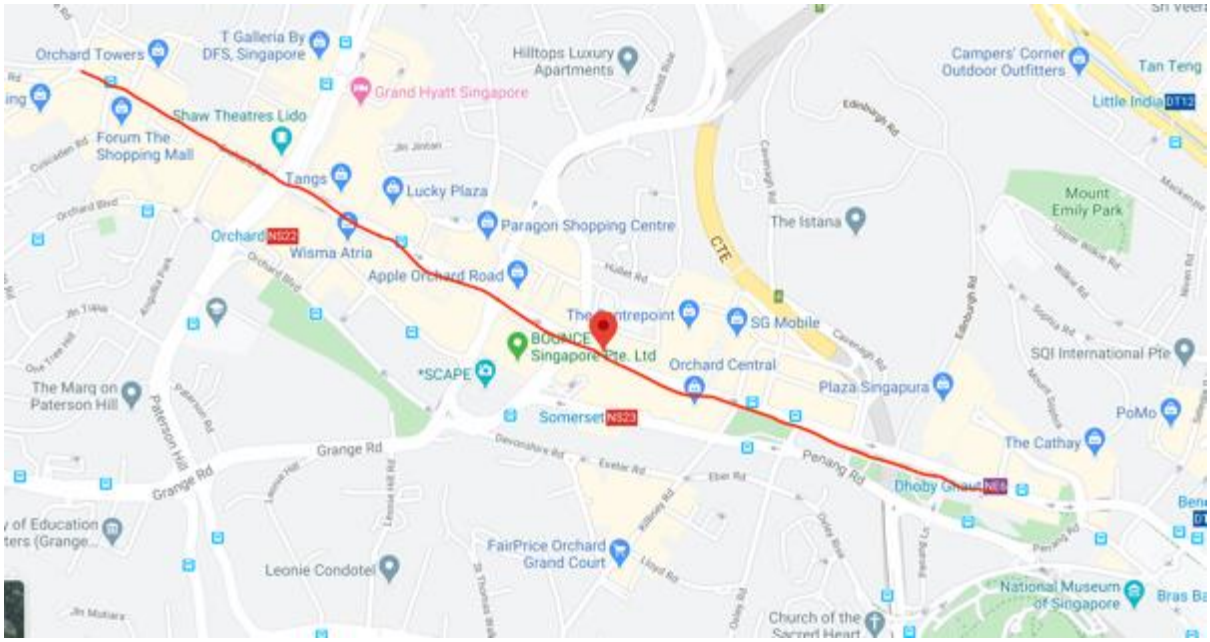

Figure 46. Area of data collection at Orchard Road

A total of 183 signs were taken for analysis. These 183 signs included 45 top-down signs and 138 bottom-up signs. The signs were first analysed by the frequency of the languages. All 45 top-down signs were monolingual and only contained English. The 45 top-down signs consisted of road signs, traffic signs, and prohibitory signs. The frequency distribution of the different languages on the 138 bottom-up signs is shown in Table 1. The 'Others' category consists of only foreign languages. There were no signs containing Malay or Tamil observed.

Language	Frequency
English	130 (94.20%)
Chinese	14 (10.14%)
Others	14 (10.14%)

Table 7. Frequency distribution of the different languages on bottom-up signs at Orchard Road

Of the 138 bottom-up signs, 128 were shop signs and 109 of these were monolingual. These 109 signs consisted of 101 signs containing only English and 8 signs containing only a foreign language. Of the 19 bilingual shop signs, 13 signs were a combination of English and Mandarin Chinese, while 6 signs were a combination of English and a foreign language. Only 4 shops signs were top-bottom layouts containing translations, so the code preference of shops at Orchard Road was not analysed, due to a small sample size. Figures 47 and 48 show the breakdown of languages on monolingual signs and the language combinations on bilingual signs.

Figure 47. Breakdown of the languages on monolingual signs in Orchard Road

Figure 48. Breakdown of the language combinations on bilingual signs in Orchard Road

4.7 Chinatown

The area chosen for Chinatown included Upper Cross Street, Mosque Street, Pagoda Street, Temple Street, Smith Street, and parts of New Bridge Road and South Bridge Road. The exact location is highlighted in Figure 47.

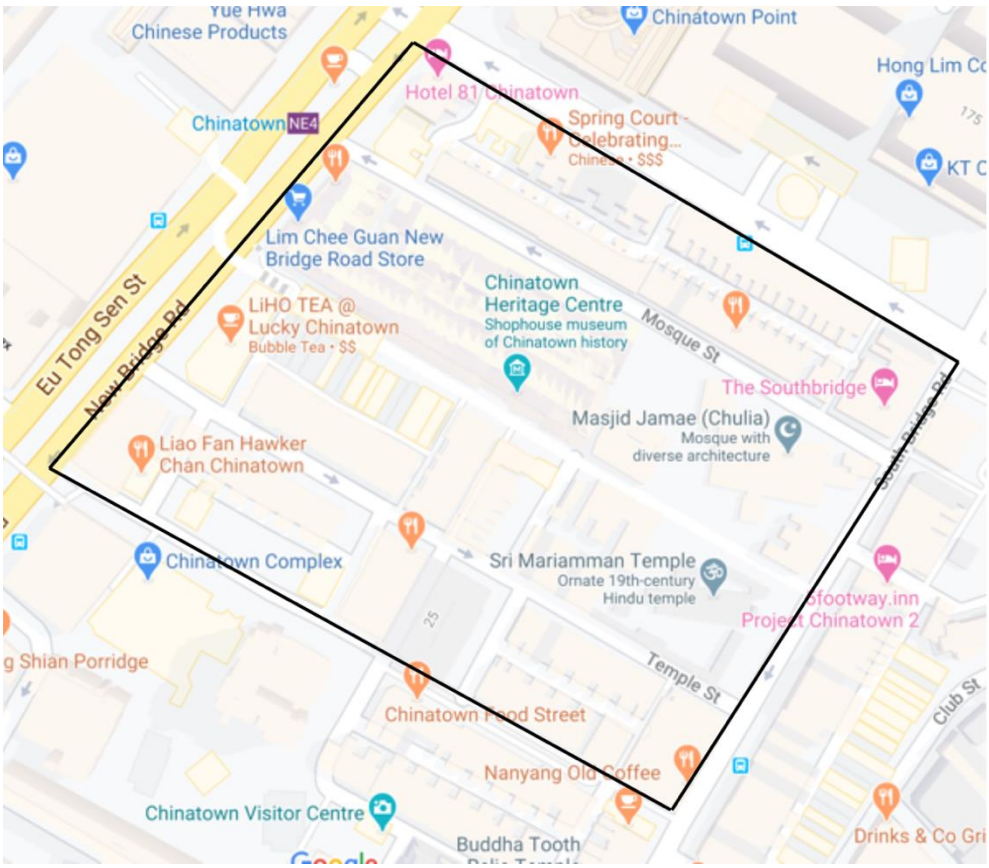

Figure 49. Area of data collection at Chinatown

A total of 342 signs were taken for analysis. These included 38 top-down signs and 304 bottom-up signs. The signs were first analysed by the frequency of the languages. Tables 2 and 3 show the frequency distribution of the different languages in top-down signs and bottom-up signs respectively.

Language	Frequency
English	38 (100.00%)
Chinese	25 (65.79%)
Malay	11 (28.95%)
Tamil	11 (28.95%)
Others	5 (13.16%)

Table 8. Frequency distribution of the different languages in top-down signs

Language	Frequency
English	261 (85.86%)
Chinese	185 (60.86%)
Malay	0 (0.00%%)
Tamil	2 (0.66%)
Others	15 (4.93%)

Table 9. Frequency distribution of the different languages in bottom-up signs

The 38 top-down signs consisted of 13 monolingual English signs, 13 bilingual signs, and 12 multilingual signs. All 13 bilingual signs were a combination of English and Mandarin Chinese, while the 12 multilingual signs consisted of 1 sign including Mandarin Chinese, English, and a foreign language, 7 signs including all 4 official languages of Singapore, and 4 signs with a foreign language on top of the 4 official languages.

Of the 304 bottom-up signs, 290 were shop signs. 148 of these were monolingual, 138 were bilingual, and 4 contained three languages. Of the monolingual signs, 107 signs contained only English and 41 contained only Mandarin Chinese. 132 of the 138 bilingual shop signs were a combination of English and Mandarin Chinese, while 6 signs were a combination of English and a foreign language. The trilingual signs consisted of 1 sign with English, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese and 1 sign with English, Mandarin Chinese, and Thai, while the other 2 signs contained English, Japanese, and Korean. Figures 50 and 51 show the breakdown of languages on monolingual signs and the language combinations on bilingual signs.

Figure 50. Breakdown of the languages on monolingual signs in Chinatown

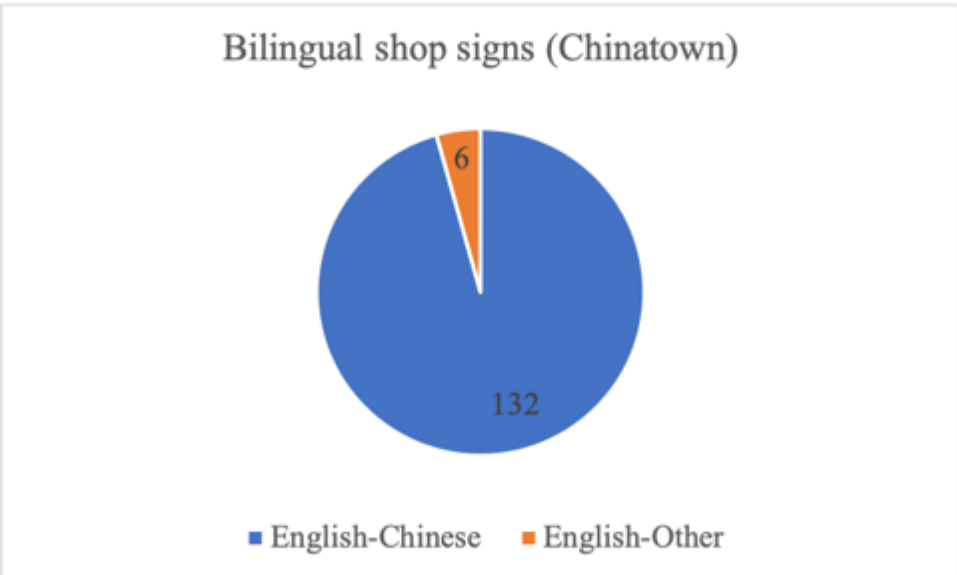

Figure 51. Breakdown of the language combinations on bilingual signs in Chinatown

The code preferences of the signs were observed for 87 signs of top-bottom layout, with 9 of these signs having English as the preferred code. For the other 78 signs, 76 had Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code and Korean was the preferred code for the remaining 2 signs. Figure 52 shows the breakdown of the preferred codes of the shop signs in Chinatown.

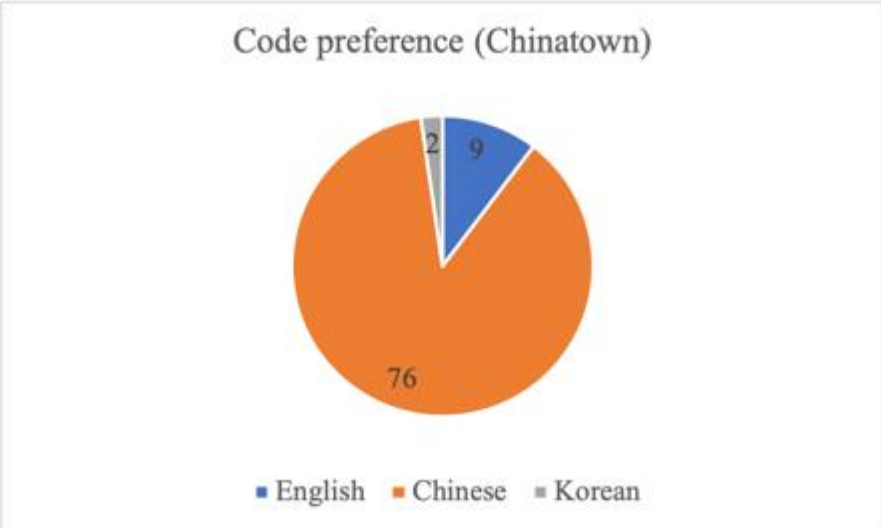

Figure 52. Code preferences of shop signs in Chinatown

4.8 Little India

The area chosen for Little India included Serangoon Road and Buffalo Road. The exact location is highlighted in Figure 53.

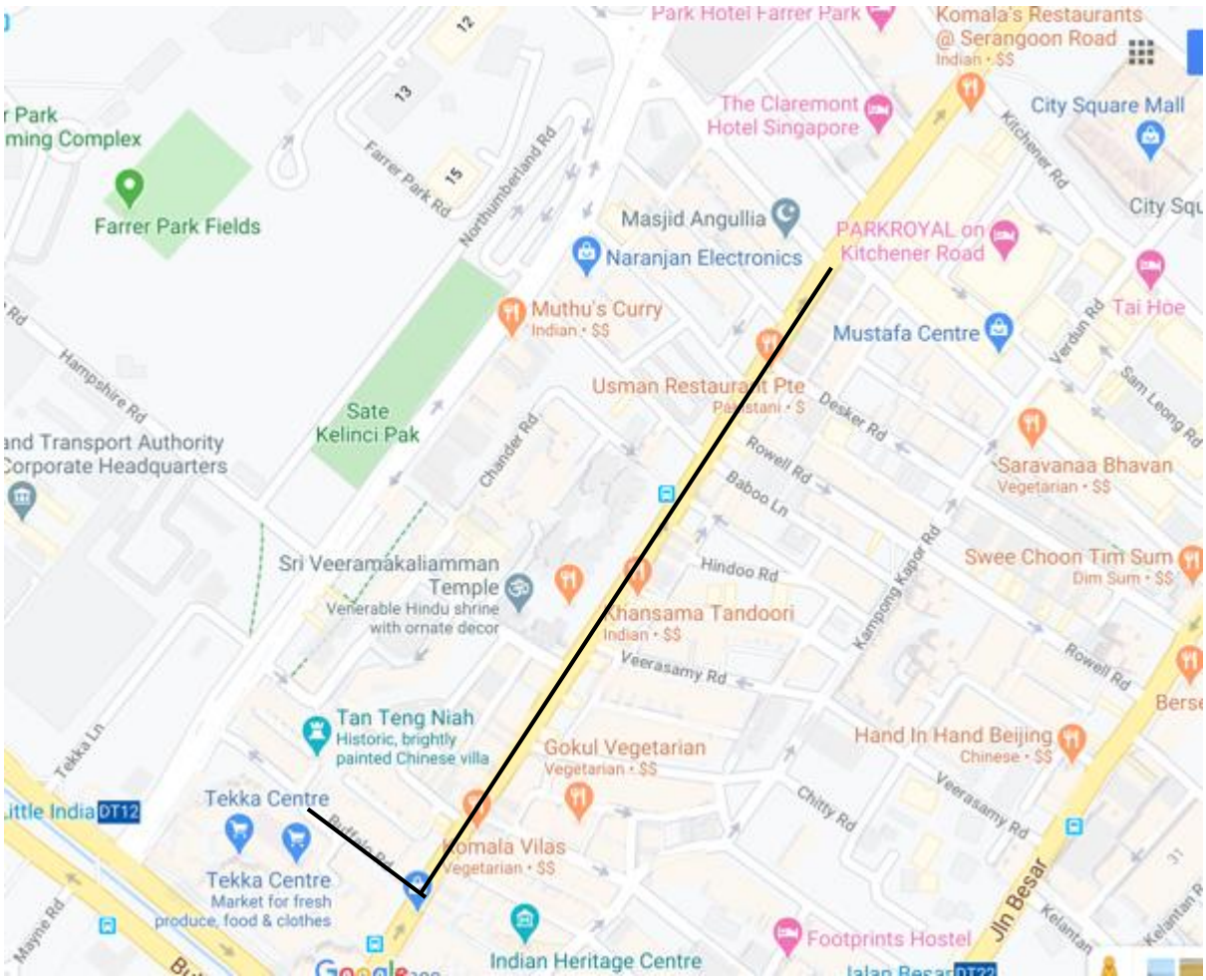

Figure 53. Area of data collection at Little India

A total of 157 signs were taken for analysis. This included 34 top-down signs and 123 bottom-up signs. These signs were first analysed by the frequency of the languages. Tables 4 and 5 show the frequency distribution of the different languages in top-down signs and bottom-up signs respectively.

Language	Frequency
English	33 (97.06%)
Chinese	2 (5.88%)
Malay	2 (5.88%%)
Tamil	5 (14.71%)
Others	1 (2.94%)

Table 10. Frequency distribution of the different languages in top-down signs

Language	Frequency
English	122 (99.19%)
Chinese	16 (13.01%)
Malay	3 (2.44%%)
Tamil	32 (26.01%)
Others	5 (4.03%)

Table 11. Frequency distribution of the different languages in bottom-up signs

The 34 top-down signs consisted of 27 monolingual English signs, 1 monolingual Tamil sign, 2 bilingual signs, and 3 multilingual signs. One of the bilingual signs included English and Mandarin Chinese, while the other included Tamil and English. Of the 3 multilingual signs, 1 included a foreign language on top of English and Tamil, while the remaining 2 signs included all 4 official languages of Singapore.

Of the 123 bottom-up signs, 120 were shop signs, of which 80 were monolingual. These 80 signs consisted of 79 signs containing only English and 1 sign containing only Tamil. Of the remaining 40 shop signs, 31 were bilingual. 21 of these 31 signs were a combination of English and Tamil, 8 signs were in English and Mandarin Chinese, and the remaining 2 signs contained English and Arabic blessings. 5 signs contained English, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil, 1 sign contained English, Tamil, and a foreign language, and 3 signs had English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. Figures 54 and 55 show the breakdown of languages on monolingual signs and the language combinations on bilingual signs.

Figure 54. Breakdown of the languages on monolingual signs in Little India

Figure 55. Breakdown of the language combinations on bilingual signs in Little India

The code preferences of the signs were observed for 19 signs of top-bottom layout. 11 of these signs had English as the preferred code, Tamil was the preferred code for 5 signs, and

3 signs had Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code. Figure 56 shows the breakdown of the preferred code of shop signs in Little India.

Figure 56. Code preferences of shop signs in Little India

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Comparison with Visitor Statistics

The results above were then looked at together with the visitor statistics obtained from the Singapore Tourism Board website. From these numbers, we can then tell whether the languages present on the signs at the attractions are a good reflection of the nationality of the tourists who visit them.

	Gardens by the Bay	Singapore Zoo	Jurong Bird Park	National Orchid Garden	Botanic Gardens	Orchard Road	China-town	Little India
Indonesia	17	2	1	1	3	42	12	8
Malaysia	15	2	1	<0.5	2	27	9	5
China (Mainland)	36	10	2	4	10	38	30	15
Hong Kong	38	8	2	4	11	45	32	15
Taiwan	36	8	1	3	8	38	27	19
Japan	31	12	2	4	16	48	24	18
South Korea	38	8	8	4	15	42	27	18

Table 12. Visitor statistics showing the percentage of visitors, by country, who visited the attractions in 2018 (Singapore Tourism Board, [2019a])

Several of the above attractions have mainly monolingual English signs. These include Gardens by the Bay, National Orchid Garden, Botanic Gardens, and Orchard Road. Of these attractions, Gardens by the Bay had a rather significant number of tourists from China (36%, or about 1,230,000 people), Japan (31%, or about 257,000 people) and South Korea (38%, or about 239,000 people) visiting it in 2018. It is interesting to note that, with these numbers, the signs mainly contain only English.

On the other hand, while only 8% (about 50,000 people) of South Korea's tourists and 2% (about 16,600 people) of Japan's tourists visited the Jurong Bird Park in 2018, majority of the signs still contained Japanese and Korean. Some might have expected that these numbers, while significant, would have been higher, given the salience of these languages on the signs. The figure for South Korean tourists visiting the Singapore Zoo was an identical 8% (about 50,000 people), but Korean was not included in the signs there, while Japanese was included with 12% (about 99,600 people) of the Japanese tourists visiting it in 2018.

It is also interesting to note that Korean does not appear on any of the brown signs at the attractions observed, while Japanese is seen only on the brown signs at Chinatown. This might be due to the age of the brown signs, coupled with an increase in tourists from South Korea in recent years. Table 13 shows the number of arrivals from South Korea from 2008 to 2018. Brown signs must contain all four official languages of Singapore, and it is also possible to add a fifth language[35]. Tan[36] observed the presence of Japanese, instead of Malay or Tamil, on brown signs, which were, at the time of the study, not yet required to contain all four official languages of Singapore. Japanese appears to be considered an important language for tourism in Singapore, and the reason for this can be seen from the fairly consistent number of arrivals from Japan in recent years, as shown in Table 14.

Year	Number of Arrivals
2018	629,454
2017	631,363
2016	566,509
2015	577,082
2014	536,975
2013	471,768
2012	445,184
2011	414,879
2010	360,703
2009	271,987
2008	423,018

Table 13. Number of arrivals from South Korea by year, from 2008 to 2018 (Singapore Tourism Board, [2019a])

[35] Cf. Singapore Tourism Board, (2019b), cit.
[36] Cf. Tan, P. K. W., (2013), cit., pp. 227-250.

Figure 57. Chinatown Food Street brown sign from July 2009, reproduced in Tan's (2013) study

Figure 58. Chinatown Food Street brown sign photographed by Boon Yong Teo in February 2020

Year	Number of Arrivals
2018	829,676
2017	792,873
2016	783,862
2015	789,179
2014	824,741
2013	832,845
2012	757,116
2011	656,417
2010	528,951
2009	489,987
2008	571,040

Table 14. Number of arrivals from Japan by year,
from 2008 to 2018 (Singapore Tourism Board, [2019a])

The inclusion or exclusion of these foreign languages on signs is a delicate issue. Hall-Lew and Lew[37] noted that it was a challenge to 'balance differences that intrigue tourist curiosity with familiar elements'. This balance is also dependent on how open a tourist market is to embrace something new or how afraid tourists are of differences[38]. It is important, for these attractions, to tackle this issue carefully, as tourists have been observed to be more likely to return when there is an ease of access to information and services and they are made to feel

[37] Cf. Hall-Lew, L. A., & Lew, A. A., (2014), p. 341.
[38] Cf. Hall-Lew, L. A., & Lew, A. A., (2014), cit., pp. 336-348.

welcome[39]. For example, while the Irish tourist town of Dingle has been commodified to portray authentic Irishness, as mentioned above, signs aimed at tourists always contained English along with Irish[40]. This is one way to enable tourists to experience something different, but also to make them feel welcome, by having elements familiar to them. The presence of Japanese on the brown signs could be a way to do the same for the Japanese tourists.

Considering the visitor statistics and languages on the signs at the attractions, the languages present in the linguistic landscape of the tourist locations are not always the best reflection of the number of tourists visiting from different countries. One example is the presence of Korean at the Jurong Bird Park and its absence at the Singapore Zoo, even though a similar number of tourists from Korea visited both places.

5.2 Differences between Top-down and Bottom-up Signs

This study also aims to look at the differences between top-down and bottom-up signs. Orchard Road saw a distinct similarity between the top-down and bottom-up signs. The top-down signs were all monolingual and contained only English. When comparing these to the bottom-up signs at Orchard Road, 130 (or 94.20%) contained English as well. There were low percentages for Mandarin Chinese and other languages on signs as well. Languages that fell into the 'Others' category included shops which were imported from overseas and continued to use the original language here. An example is shown in Figure 59.

Figure 59. Example of a shop sign written in Japanese and English

For Chinatown, there are a few similarities and differences with regard to the languages present in the top-down and bottom-up signs. All top-down signs contained English, compared to 85.86% of the bottom-up. Mandarin Chinese was present in almost the same percentage of signs, with 65.79% of top-down signs and 60.86% of bottom-up signs containing it. However, Malay was not seen on any bottom-up signs, and only 2 signs (or 0.66% of signs) contained Tamil. This was contrasted with 28.95% of top-down signs containing Malay and Tamil. These

[39] Cf. Cohen, E., & Cooper, R. L., (1986), pp. 533-564; Koliou, A., (1997), pp. 71-76; Leslie, D., & Russell, H., (2006), pp. 1397-1407.
[40] Cf. Moriarty, M., (2013), cit., pp. 464-477.

numbers are still very difficult to analyse, as there was a very small sample of only 38 top-down signs, compared to 304 bottom-up signs.

The code preferences of the shop signs in Chinatown contrast sharply with the top-down signs. For the top-down signs containing more than one language, English is always the preferred code and appears at the top. However, only 9 out of 87 (10.34%) shop signs had English as the preferred code, with 76 (87.36%) signs having Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code and 2 (2.30%) having Korean as the preferred code. This difference from the top-down signs is not new, especially for the signs which were of an English-Chinese combination. Even outside of Chinatown, in neighbourhood centres, Mandarin Chinese has been observed to be the preferred code in English-Chinese bilingual shop signs[41]. This suggests that, even in a tourist attraction, English was not made the preferred code for most of the signs, in order to appeal to the sense of familiarity of the English-speaking tourists who visited the place. Instead, Mandarin Chinese remained the preferred code, possibly to preserve a sense of authenticity and also to give tourists the experience of Singapore's Chinatown. Figure 60 shows an example of a shop sign with Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code.

Figure 60. Shop sign in Chinatown with Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code

Little India's top-down and bottom-up signs shared some similarities, but also had a few differences. Firstly, almost all signs contained English. English appeared in 97.06% of the top-down signs and 99.19% of the bottom-up signs. It is interesting to note that, in the sign that contained a language from the 'Others' category, the language was not Japanese or Korean, but Bengali. This top-down sign containing Bengali is shown in Figure 61. Besides this sign, Bengali also appeared in 3 of the 123 bottom-up signs (2.4%), which were advertisements. The purpose of Bengali in signs is unlikely to help make tourists feel welcome, but it is used, rather, as a means of communication with foreign workers from Bangladesh. Mandarin Chinese appeared in 5.88% of top-down signs and 13.01% of bottom-up signs, showing a slight difference, while Malay appeared in 5.88% of top-down signs and 2.44% of bottom-up signs, showing little difference. There was a lower percentage of signs containing Tamil in top-down signs, compared to bottom-up signs, with 14.71% of top-down signs and 26.01% of bottom-up signs containing Tamil. Similar to Chinatown, the small number of top-down signs compared to the bottom-up signs means that the analysis might not be an accurate reflection of the differences between the two. In terms of code preferences, English was the preferred code for over 11 out of the 19 signs of top-bottom layout containing translations. For the 16 English-Tamil signs where code preference was observed, 11 signs had English as the preferred code, while Tamil was the preferred code in only 5. The remaining 3 signs that were observed for code preference all had Mandarin Chinese as the preferred code. This means that more than half of the bottom-up signs were still in line with the top-down signs, where English was the preferred code in all the signs, in terms of code preference.

[41] Cf. Shang, G., & Guo, L., (2016), cit., pp. 183-201; Shang, G., & Zhao, S., (2016), cit., pp 8-14.

Figure 61. A sign containing Bengali

Of the three attractions where top-down and bottom-up signs were observed in this study, the most obvious differences were in the code preference of signs as well as the low percentage of bottom-up signs containing Malay and Tamil in Chinatown. Besides these, there were only very slight differences between the top-down and bottom-up signs in each attraction. The large number of monolingual English bottom-up signs in both Orchard Road and Little India can be considered to be largely aligned with the top-down signs, and also seems to support Tang's[42] idea that Singapore could, in fact, be monolingual-oriented rather than bilingual- or even multilingual-oriented.

5.3 Commodification of Language

Another aim of this study is to look at whether language is commodified in the tourism industry by investigating the linguistic landscapes of the different attractions. The presence of Japanese in the Singapore Zoo and Japanese and Korean at the Jurong Bird Park can be seen by some as a form of commodification. Instead of commodifying a local minority language, foreign languages have been commodified at these attractions to attract tourists to visit them. The presence of their native languages is seen as a tool to sell the overall package, as tourists will then be able to fully enjoy the attractions. Having the knowledge that they will be able to find their way around the attractions and not get lost, as well as being able to understand the exhibits at these attractions, could be important in tourists' decision on which attractions, or even countries, to visit. Similar to the commodification of Japanese and Korean at these attractions, Viimaranta, Protassova, and Mustajoki[43] observed how Russian was commodified in Finland for a variety of fields, one of which was tourism. The tourism industry in Finland noticed that the availability of information about products or services in Russian was viewed by the Russians as crucial for their choice, and would give Finland a competitive edge over tourism markets in other parts of Europe[31]. Websites were then translated into Russian, together

[42] Cf. Tang, H .K., (2018), cit., pp 152-173.
[43] Cf. Viimaranta, H. O., Protassova, E., & Mustajoki, A. S., (2017), pp. 620-634.

with brochures and leaflets, in an attempt to provide Russian tourists with more information in their native language. Singapore Zoo and Jurong Bird Park's provision of information in foreign languages can thus be seen as a form of commodification, and to justify the relatively high prices for entry. The National Orchid Garden is a paid attraction with mainly monolingual English signs, but the entrance fee is only S$5 for adults and S$1 for kids.

Chinatown and Little India also show signs of language commodification. The percentages of signs containing Mandarin Chinese in Chinatown are high in both top-down (65.79%) and bottom-up (60.86%) signs, when compared to Shang and Guo's[44] study of shop signs in neighbourhood centres, where 51.5% of shop signs contained Mandarin Chinese. This shows that there is a conscious effort to include Mandarin Chinese in the signs at Chinatown. This is especially obvious in the road signs, where Mandarin Chinese is included along with English. Most other road signs in Singapore, including the ones at Orchard Road, are only in English. Figure 62 is an example of a road sign where a Mandarin Chinese translation is included below the English road name.

Figure 62. Road sign in both English and Mandarin Chinese

The increased presence of Tamil in Little India on both top-down and bottom-up signs, compared to other places in Singapore, is also evidence that Tamil is being commodified. 14.71% of top-down signs and 26.01% of bottom-up signs in Little India contained Tamil. While these numbers are not big, these are already vastly different from what was observed in Shang and Guo's[45] study of shop signs, where Malay and Tamil were present on only 3.6% of all the shop signs themselves. This also suggests that Tamil is being used to portray Little India as an authentic place where Tamil is used.

5.4 Importance of English

It is clear from the results that English is, by far, the most frequent language appearing on both top-down and bottom-up signs. However, due to the methodology of counting only one sign per shop, its prevalence may have been understated. This is because some shops in Chinatown, where the signboard contains only Mandarin Chinese, also include English in another sign. Figure 63 shows an example of a monolingual Mandarin Chinese signboard, and Figure 64 shows another sign that is at the same shop and provides an English translation.

[44] Cf. Shang, G., & Guo, L., (2016), cit., pp. 183-201.
[45] Cf. Shang, G., & Guo, L., (2016), cit., pp. 183-201.

Figure 63. A monolingual Mandarin Chinese signboard

Figure 64. A separate sign including English

While some shops may consider it important that the signboard is in Mandarin Chinese only, they may also feel the need to include English in another sign, so that people who do not understand Mandarin Chinese would feel welcome to walk into the shop as well. This shows that English is an important language to shop owners, whether they choose to include it on their signboards or not.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study has been able to provide a clearer picture of the linguistic landscape of tourist attractions in Singapore, one limitation is the lack of input from shop owners at these attractions. This study had originally intended to interview shop owners, in order to investigate their reasons for including or excluding certain languages from the shop signs, but this was unfortunately not possible, due the COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) situation, which meant that many shop owners were not available to be interviewed. Another limitation was represented by the small number of top-down signs, compared to the significantly larger number of bottom-up signs, which means that the differences in percentages of languages present in top-down and bottom-up signs may not be the best illustration of the actual differences of the two. Future research could focus on a qualitative approach, with attention to the shop owners and also other major players in the tourism industry. This could include the Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) – which operate not only the Singapore Zoo and the Jurong Bird Park covered in this study, but also the River Safari and the Night Safari –, as well as other tourist attractions not analysed in this work, such as the island of Sentosa and the Integrated Resorts. This would enable us to study Singapore's linguistic landscape, in the context of tourism, in greater detail, and help us to understand the reasons behind the languages present in the linguistic landscape itself.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the linguistic landscape of tourist attractions in Singapore, by observing the languages present in both top-down and bottom-up signs in eight different locations. Specifically, the analysis aimed to ascertain if the languages present at the different attractions were a good reflection of the nationality of tourists who visited them, and also investigate the differences between the top-down and bottom-up signs in these attractions. This study also aimed to explore any commodification of language in Singapore's tourism industry reflected by the tourist signs. The results showed that the languages present on signs at a few attractions did reflect the nationality of tourists who visited them, but also that the absence of foreign languages did not mean that there were few tourists visiting from countries where English is not the primary language spoken. This means that the languages present on signs at the tourist attractions are not always the best reflection of the number of tourists from the different visiting countries. This was because the different attractions had their own strategies in deciding what language to include on the signs, with English appearing on almost all top-down signs and the majority of bottom-up signs as well. Paid attractions, such as the Singapore Zoo and the Jurong Bird Park, included Japanese, and also Korean for the Jurong Bird Park, on top of English and Mandarin Chinese. This can be seen as a way to help tourists navigate their way around the large areas both attractions cover, as well as to enable them to enjoy the attractions with a greater understanding of the exhibits.

The results also show that there were not huge differences between top-down and bottom-up signs, with distinct differences observed in Chinatown in terms of code preference as well as the absence of Malay and Tamil on bottom-up signs. Commodification of languages was also observed in a few of the attractions. The results showed that there were higher percentages of Mandarin Chinese and Tamil present in both top-down and bottom-up signs in Chinatown and Little India, respectively, if compared to shop signs in neighbourhood centres. Mandarin Chinese and Tamil can thus be considered to have been commodified, to give tourists a more authentic experience of the two ethnic enclaves.

What we have found out can be very indicative as a starting point of a possible series of studies on tourist trends and dynamics in Singapore and in other local contexts not only at the level of management, preferences, and needs of the users, but also at the level of decision-making and strategies by the touristic institutions in charge of developing the naming and the description of touristic attractions and landmarks and, inherently in that, their choices of the languages (and, with that, the consequent linguistic tendencies) to be used in the process.

The association of the analysis of touristic patterns with sociolinguistic elements involved in the visual and informational interaction, through signs and indications, between tourists and touristic attractions can highlight a paradigm that could be, potentially, used as a term of comparison with other contexts and other places all over the world.

The present article, therefore, provides the field of Tourism Studies with a consistent, analytical sample which highlights valuable findings both at the sociological and linguistic level.

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