

# Exploring linguistic signage in higher education: An empirical study of a linguistically diverse context

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**ABSTRACT:** This study offers a comprehensive examination of the linguistic landscape in a nonmetropolitan university, focusing on the dominant language used in university signage. The study primarily delves into the multilingual characteristics and nature of Western Mindanao State University, situated in a linguistically-diverse environment. The study employed analytical categories, which was utilized to serve as basis in selecting and gathering data from various signages across the university, to ensure the accuracy of the data collection. The findings of the study indicated that the university contains five (5) languages that make its linguistic landscape, specifically: English (95.51%), Filipino (7.81%), Chavacano (3.07%), Tausug (1.28%), and Bisaya (0.64%). The data was analyzed using the content analysis to accurately interpret the taken photographs in the university. The study also uncovers the inequality of the number of signages, wherein majority of the signages are monolingual nature, and only limited on the bilingual and multilingual signs. The investigation also revealed a significant result that English is the dominant language used on signages despite the locale's diverse linguistic and cultural background. The major findings of this study portray that Western Mindanao State University employs both official and non-official signages throughout the campus and in terms of linguistic diversity, local languages are not entirely prevalent and observable on the signages across the entire campus. Consequently, despite the university's focus towards internationalization and global excellence, there is observable scarcity in multilingual signages. It is imperative to acknowledge the value of multilingual signages, not only for the purpose of communication, but for the preservation of local languages, that are crucial for cultural and ethnic representations.

**KEYWORDS:** linguistic landscape; multilingual characteristics; signage; nonmetropolitan university; language; dominance; internationalization; diversity

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## **1. Introduction**

Within the hallmarks of sociolinguistics, investigations concerning linguistic landscapes (LLs) have gained significant attention and prominence in the field of research. As countries aim for a globalized environment, signage employing various languages has become the standard to accommodate those who come from other nationalities and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, signage functions to provide information, raise awareness, display instructions, and present cultural identity and diversity.

McDougall et al. (2001) deduced that signage is mostly used for information dissemination to give directions, provide instructions, and promote and raise awareness. Signages are important tools to convey and transmit information, which is of the utmost importance in our daily lives.

Landry and Bourhis (1997), one of the earliest researchers in this field of research, explained the linguistic landscape as the notable presence of signage in public places utilizing various languages. Specifically, these signs are evident in billboards, posters, names of streets, and shop signage, including the signs located on government-owned buildings. Moreover, the mentioned signs, when combined, create the linguistic landscape of a defined state, location, or metropolitan area. The fundamental goal of the linguistic landscape is to ascertain notable indications concerning the presence of different languages situated in populated locations.

This is further supported by the study of Gorter and Cenoz (2008), which emphasizes that investigations regarding linguistic landscape serve as an effective way for language excellence, as it fosters cultural diversity among learners and students.

Within the confinement of the linguistic landscape, language use is a multifaceted concept. Backhaus (2007) developed analytical categories of LL, which was supported by the model of LL of Reh (2004) to pinpoint the nine analytical categories on the multilingual characteristics of LL. These categories were used to classify the nature of LL, which includes the following: “languages contained, language combinations, official and nonofficial signs, geographic distribution, availability of translation or transliteration, code preference, visibility of a sign’s multilingual nature, idiosyncrasies, and layering.”

As schools nationwide have finally opened and the academic year has officially begun, students all over the Philippines have made their way to their respective schools for education and learning. To accommodate their individual needs, teachers and the school itself have relied on and employed signage for educational and personal purposes. In connection with this, as a multilingual and nonnative English-speaking country, the Philippines is well known for its diverse linguistic background, wherein the whole nation speaks approximately 182 living languages (Eberhard et al., 2020).

Blommaert (2013) extends this understanding by defining the linguistic landscape as encompassing all visible semiotic signs in public space. This definition encompasses a wide array of specifications, including written, carved, printed, sprayed, and observable languages that manifest in the physical world. Additionally, it encompasses categories such as photographs, colors, diagrams, trademarks, and other significant signage. The semantic nature of these signs collectively defines a region’s distinct linguistic landscape.

The significance of investigation on LL lies in its ability to determine the dominant and present languages in a multilingual context. Moreover, the focus of the study is geared on how the linguistic landscape in higher educations, promotes diversity, cultural representation, and goal toward internationalization of the academic institution. The findings of the study will contribute to the pool of knowledge of nonmetropolitan universities set in a linguistically diverse context (Shohamy, 2006). The

results will provide data for further researchers who aim to study LL in the context of academic institutions, as it is under researched and requires more investigation.

Academic institutions hosts diverse range of students, faculty, and staff from various linguistic backgrounds. Exploring linguistic signages acknowledges this diversity. Linguistic signage provides a visible representation of this diversity. By establishing and integrating signs in multiple languages or accommodating various linguistic backgrounds, institutions value and acknowledge the richness of the diverse community (Gorter, 2013).

Signage in multiple languages improves communication and accessibility within the institution. It provides instructions to individuals who are not proficient in the dominant language(s) present within the university. These signages supports better navigation, understanding of directions, and rules, and overall daily activities that involves instructions for all members of the academic community (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010).

One of the major implications is that, as universities and schools strive to achieve globalization and internationalization to foster global excellence, English is utilized to encourage foreign learners to pursue their studies in the country. It also portrays that learners in the Philippines are capable of understanding signage that utilizes English as the preferred code. Moreover, as English continues to gain prominence and presence, policy makers and administrators should also promote the use of the native and local languages in signage to preserve and foster its use despite the dominance of English.

Investigating the linguistic landscape in higher education institutions provides educational and research implications. It enhances curriculum development, language programs, or linguistic research initiatives that cater to the diverse linguistic needs of students. Moreover, it presents ways for academic research on language attitudes, language use patterns, and the socio-cultural implications of linguistic diversity within educational contexts (Malinowski and Tufi, 2017).

This investigation is geared toward determining the linguistic landscape of a nonmetropolitan university, the dominant language used in signage and the languages that are present in signage. The study is focused on determining the linguistic landscape and language present in the university, and to what extent does the numbers of the dominant language have as compared to other languages present in the institution, based on the language that signages use and employ. Moreover, as nonmetropolitan universities are located outside the capital city, it is therefore implied that there is a convergence of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds that make up an institution (Leimgruber and Dagenais, 2020). Hence, it is relevant to investigate this field of LL and determine the extent of the dominance of English used on signage.

As observed, in the context of LL in academic institutions, there are limited and insufficient studies that have prompted intrigue, causing it to become a subject of interest toward scholars worldwide. Drawing from contextualized studies, this investigation seeks to supplement the gap pertaining to the insufficiency of studies of LL in the context of academic institutions, particularly in nonmetropolitan universities. This study is geared toward determining the nature of the LL of signage being dominantly utilized and assessing the prevalence of monolingual, bilingual and multilingual characteristics of languages used. Furthermore, the present investigation strives to inspire future researchers to delve into investigations of LL in the context of academic institutions.

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- (1) What is the predominant language used on the signage of a nonmetropolitan university?
- (2) What are the languages present on the signage posted within the university?

(3) What is the linguistic identity of a nonmetropolitan university?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Significance of linguistic landscape**

The concept of the linguistic landscape has emerged as a prominent area of research, driven by the forces of globalization and cultural diversity, both of which exert profound influences on sociolinguistics. In this context, Gorter (2006) defines linguistic landscape as the systematic examination of the modification and utilization of signs as a means of representing various languages. This concept aligns with the overarching goal of expressing diversity and cultural identity on a global scale, with a notable observation being the prevalence of signs predominantly written in English.

Building upon this foundation, Kasanga (2012) reinforces the idea that the linguistic landscape encompasses signs that employ languages relevant to the local context, as well as languages striving to establish local relevance. This perspective underscores the dynamic nature of the linguistic landscape, reflecting the ongoing interplay of linguistic forces.

Similarly, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) posit that the study of the linguistic landscape involves the recognition of an entity within a universal linguistic concept, emphasizing that signs not only convey information but also serve as vehicles for representing diversity and cultural identity. Furthermore, research in the field of linguistic landscape seeks to identify the widespread presence of multilingual characteristics in signs, both in private and public spaces (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

The identity of the linguistic landscape permeates every corner of society, with data collection extending to various types of signage in offline contexts. These encompass a diverse range of signs, such as posters, traffic signs, placards, signboards, advertisements, and other unique visual symbols (Blommaert, 2013).

In essence, the concept of the linguistic landscape offers scholars the opportunity to delve into the intricacies of language itself (Cenoz and Gorter, 2006). This study underscores the significance of investigating the linguistic landscape, as it unveils the dynamics of multiple languages within a defined sociolinguistic context. Moreover, it acknowledges that the languages in use directly influence speakers' perspectives regarding the prominence and vitality of various linguistic forms.

### **2.2. Dimensions of linguistic landscape**

Landry and Bourhis (1997) underscore the essential nature of investigating the linguistic landscape (LL), which comprises two pivotal components: the symbolic function and the informational function. The informational function primarily pertains to the written and printed elements within the linguistic landscape of a particular setting.

It serves as a vehicle for dispensing vital information to the public, fulfilling purposes such as providing instructions, giving directions, raising awareness, and offering guidance. In essence, the informational function serves the foundational purpose of the linguistic landscape. Conversely, the symbolic function is intrinsically linked to the prevalence and prominence of a specific language within a defined location. It symbolizes the prestige and influence held by a language in that locale while also portraying the cultural identity and diversity of its speakers (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

As elucidated by Backhaus (2006), data can be systematically collected within academic premises by examining various types of signage, including billboards, printed canvases, streamers, advertisements, placards, sheets, and signboards. In alignment with this, Li (2015) introduces a

classification scheme that distinguishes the study of LL into two significant categories: the top-down category and the bottom-up category.

The top-down category encompasses official signs employed within public spaces, encompassing those used by government organizations, academic institutions, official announcements, street names, and advertisements related to public services. Conversely, the bottom-up category encompasses the private and commercialized landscape, including signs used by private stalls, shops, resorts, hostels, accessory stores, and commercial advertisements.

### **2.3. Linguistic landscape studies**

Despite the growing prominence of linguistic landscape (LL) studies, it is important to recognize that this field is still relatively young and has considerable room for further investigation and exploration. However, several noteworthy contributions to LL research have emerged, shedding light on its significance and potential implications.

For instance, Djonda and Madrunio's study (2023) revealed that English serves as the dominant multilingual language within a resort, with Indonesian and Manggarai following suit. This observation underscores the economic advantages associated with using English to attract tourists and foster regional stability.

Within the realm of academia, Abbas et al. (2022) conducted a recent study that unveiled a diverse and multilingual environment within a university. Despite this diversity, English emerged as the dominant monolingual language. This phenomenon aligns with the global trend of prioritizing English for internationalization, surpassing the use of native languages such as Filipino/Tagalog and Meranaw.

Similar patterns have been observed in LL studies conducted within the Philippines. Research by Astillero (2017) and Magno (2017) found that English occupied a prominent role across various contexts, including signage and bulletin board displays in Communication Departments. Al-Qenaie and Naser (2023) noted the global preference for English, attributing it to factors such as globalization, significance, internationalization, and the opportunities it offers.

In the Philippine context, Eclipse et al. (2018) examined LL at the Manila Post Office and discovered that English was the prevalent language used on signage. Despite the plethora of studies focusing on the linguistic landscape of public spaces and government offices, there is a noticeable gap in research concerning LL within academic institutions.

This investigation seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual characteristics of languages used in a nonmetropolitan university. This approach aligns with studies conducted in other countries, such as China, where a combination of Chinese and English is used on signage to facilitate international development (Cao et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2020).

The advantages of LL research extend beyond mere documentation. It provides opportunities for language learning and enhances linguistic awareness (Sayer, 2010; Gorter and Cenoz, 2008). Chern and Dooley's study (2014) in Taipei revealed that foreign students often lack awareness of bilingual signs but noted the continued prominence of English alongside local languages.

The exploration of LL in Manila's Chinatown, Binondo, found that English dominated signage. This was driven by the need to cater to both local and international clientele, as business owners assumed that Filipinos understand English and are the primary consumers of their services and products (Devanadera and Cortez, 2023).

The field of linguistic landscape (LL) research, while still in its early stages, has made significant strides in understanding the complex interplay of languages in various contexts. These studies have unveiled the undeniable prominence of English, both as a global lingua franca and as a key driver in economic and educational settings. The findings from diverse regions, including resorts, universities, and public spaces, consistently highlight English's pivotal role, often at the expense of local languages (Spolsky, and Shohamy, 2021).

The potential of LL research extends far beyond documentation, offering valuable insights into language learning, cultural awareness, and internationalization. However, one notable gap in this body of research is the limited exploration of LL within academic institutions, particularly nonmetropolitan universities. By addressing this gap, future investigations can contribute to a deeper understanding of linguistic landscapes and their implications on a broader geographical and cultural scale.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Research design**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative cross-sectional research design to investigate the prevalent language usage and linguistic landscape of signage within a nonmetropolitan university, as captured through photographs during the study's duration. The descriptive design, following Creswell (2014), is chosen for its ability to systematically describe phenomena or communities. In this case, it is used to describe and analyze the linguistic landscape of a nonmetropolitan university.

Data collection involves a one-shot procedure using photography, making it a cross-sectional study, in line with Creswell's approach (2014). Qualitative research design, according to Creswell (2007), entails the exploration and analysis of the linguistic landscape and languages present in a nonmetropolitan university.

#### **3.2. Research locale**

The current investigation is conducted at Western Mindanao State University (WMSU), which is situated in Zamboanga City, Philippines. The data are collected to determine each university's linguistic landscapes (see **Figure 1**: Map of Zamboanga City).

This study focuses on a specific research locale, namely, Western Mindanao State University (WMSU), chosen for its status as a nonmetropolitan university, a key focus of this research. nonmetropolitan universities are academic institutions that are located outside major metropolitan or capital cities of a country or region. Moreover, since this university is located outside the metropolitan area and the capital city, there are numerous languages that are present and are being used for communication. Hence, there is significance in exploring the linguistic identity of a nonmetropolitan university (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes, 2019). This variety of language reflects the diverse linguistic background of the university, which was purposely selected for this reason.

The WMSU is situated within Zamboanga City, a unique cultural melting pot characterized by the convergence of diverse cultures, traditions, and ethnicities. This cultural diversity is instrumental in understanding the linguistic landscape of academic institutions in the area (Lanza and Woldemariam, 2018). Zamboanga City is home to several languages, including Chavacano, Filipino, English, Cebuano, and Tausug, a reflection of its population's varied cultural backgrounds (Philippine Statistics, 2020).

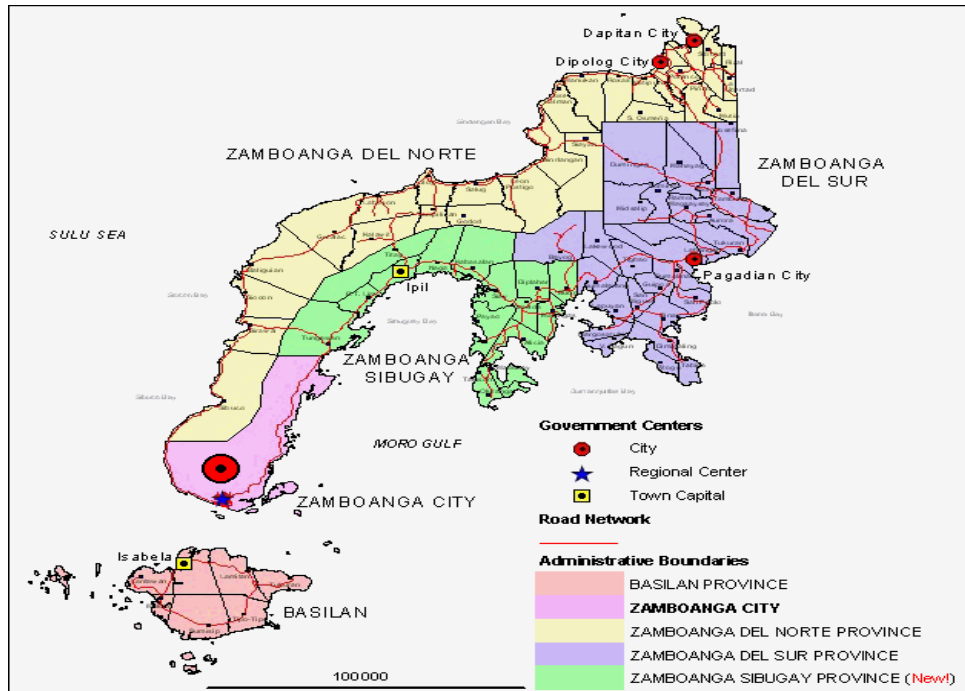


Figure 1. Map of Zamboanga City, Philippines (illustration by Zamboanga.com, (2015)).

Known as “Asia’s Latin City,” Zamboanga City is famous for its native language, Chavacano, a Spanish-based creole that developed after the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. Chavacano remains in use as a means of communication in the present day, distinguishing Zamboanga City, along with Cavite and Ternate, Philippines (Taylor, 1957). The city serves as a linguistic hub, with Chavacano as the dominant first language among locals and English as a second language, depending on one’s family background.

The Chavacano language is the dominant language spoken in the city. It is a Creole language (Eijansantos et al., 2023; Barrios, 2006) and the only surviving Creole in Asia (Lipski, 2001). This creole is perceived to flourish and progress and has the largest population of speakers (Grant, 2007; Lipski, 2001).

The selection of this locale is deliberate, as during the 20th century, Chavacano was the predominant language spoken in the city. Nonnative speakers faced communication challenges without knowledge of the language. It was only in the early 2000s that Zamboanga City, including its academic institutions, adopted English as a universal lingua franca to accommodate learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. English gradually gained prominence and became the preferred language for signage within the university (Valles-Akil, 2000).

Nearly all residents of Zamboanga City are bilingual (Valles-Akil, 2000). The city is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and diverse ethnic makeup, particularly its widespread use of the Spanish-creole language, Chavacano, among locals. With an estimated population of approximately 977,000 individuals, Zamboanga City ranks fifth among the most densely populated areas in the Philippines and third among urban regions/cities with the largest land area in the country (Philippine Statistics, 2020). Moreover, the city attracts students and individuals seeking educational opportunities, resulting in a convergence of social, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and the blending of different languages (Gogonas and Baynham, 2019).

As a multilingual and nonnative English-speaking locale, there is a need to investigate and analyze

the linguistic landscape within academic institutions due to the limited and insufficient data available in the literature on this subject. This study aims to determine whether the dominance of the English language remains prominent in the context of such a culturally diverse setting, expanding upon prior research in this area.

### **3.3. Data gathering procedure**

Collection of data was performed through the process of taking photographs according to the inclusion criteria of 781 photos taken from Western Mindanao State University, which will serve as the research corpus of this study (Kallen, 2009). Furthermore, Kallen (2009) highlighted the basis of selecting signage for the study, as he defined the sign “as a *single visible unified presentation*”. The researcher will utilize a cellphone by capturing photographs of public signage displaying the use of various languages.

The gathering of data was anchored on Backhaus (2007) for coding reference to determine terms and conditions to consider signage as a potential source of essential data, specifically: 1) languages contained; 2) language combinations; 3) official and nonofficial signs; 4) geographic distribution; 5) availability of translation or transliteration; 6) code preference; 7) visibility of a sign’s multilingual nature; 8) idiosyncrasies; 9) layering.

On the same account, this study applies the following categories and excludes the 4th, 8th and 9th variables. The exclusion of this category is because it does not present any relevance in determining the LL of a nonmetropolitan university, specifically for the following reasons: 1) since the study will only be conducted in a single locale (university), there is no need to include the geographic distribution variable because the study will not be gathering data on different places; 2) idiosyncrasies are a different field of study, using this variable might confuse the researcher and might face problems in answering and addressing the objectives of the study; 3) layering is not the main objective of the study, but to determine the linguistic landscape of a specified scope; hence, it is not applicable to the study.

### **3.4. Data analysis procedure**

The collected data underwent rigorous analysis employing the content analysis method to unveil the underlying patterns and characteristics of languages featured on the various signage scattered throughout Western Mindanao State University (Krippendorff, 1989; Neuendorf, 2017). This analytical approach aims to provide insights into the linguistic landscape of a nonmetropolitan university situated in a multilingual and culturally diverse context.

The analysis of photographs captured from both official and nonofficial signs, which serve as the primary means to decipher the linguistic landscape, adheres to the comprehensive content analysis process. This process comprises distinct stages, including design, unitizing, sampling, coding, drawing inferences, and validation, as outlined by Krippendorff (1989).

To facilitate the interpretation of the gathered data, a meticulously crafted coding table has been developed. This coding table serves as a tool to present the analysis of the multilingual characteristics observed within the linguistic landscape items under scrutiny in this study. Moreover, it encompasses various aspects, including the number of multilingual characteristics identified, signage characteristics, linguistic landscape items, percentage representation, and the cumulative total (Djonda and Madrunio, 2023). This structured approach ensures a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the linguistic landscape within the university’s diverse environment, contributing to a nuanced understanding of language use in this nonmetropolitan educational setting.



## 4. Results

The foremost objective of this study is to determine the linguistic landscape of nonmetropolitan universities in a culturally diverse context. Focusing on this goal, the researcher analyzes the data of the study by utilizing the inclusion criteria presented by Kallen (2009); Backhaus (2007) to specifically select accurate signage.

Content analysis is used (Krippendorff, 1989) to analyze and interpret the data, which are used to arrive at the result for determining the linguistic landscape of nonmetropolitan universities.

### 4.1. Contained languages

After the collection and interpretation of data, there are three (5) languages that are currently present and visible on the signage located within the nonmetropolitan university. These languages include English (international language), Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug and Bisaya (local languages of Zamboanga City).

The characteristics of the languages present occur in monolingual, bilingual and multilingual natures. Furthermore, most of the signage belongs to monolingual characteristics, followed by bilingual and then multilingual characteristics, where there is limited signage associated with monolingual characteristics.

The table below presents the characteristics of the signage of Western Mindanao State University.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Signages of a Non-Metropolitan University (WMSU).

No	Signage characteristics	Items	Percentage (%)
1	Monolingual characteristics	722	92.45
2	Bilingual characteristics	56	7.17
3	Multilingual characteristics	3	0.38
	Total	781	100

The distribution of languages within Western Mindanao State University, as presented in **Table 1**, provides valuable insights into the linguistic landscape of the institution. This breakdown reveals a dominant presence of monolingual signage, followed by bilingual signage, and a notably smaller amount of multilingual signage. This pattern highlights a prevailing trend where most of the university's signage relies on a single language to convey information and instructions.

What particularly stands out is the existence of bilingual signage, which signifies the university's bilingual nature. These bilingual characteristics serve as a reflection of linguistic diversity and cultural complexity within the university community. They acknowledge and cater to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of both students and stakeholders, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and effective communication.

However, despite the university's advantageous position in a culturally diverse city and its role as an educational institution welcoming student from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the utilization of multilingual signage remains limited. This observation prompts important questions about the extent to which linguistic diversity is adequately represented and accommodated within the university's overall linguistic landscape.

The result suggests the potential for further exploration into strategies for enhancing multilingual communication and fostering an even more inclusive environment within the institution. The results

correspond to the study of Djonda and Madrunio (2023), where most signages employ one language to convey message and instruction, but is limited to the use of multilingual signages. The detailed distributions of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signage are presented in **Tables 2–4**, utilizing images as illustrations.

**Table 2.** Distribution of the monolingual signage.

No	Monolingual signage	Items	Percentage (%)
1	English only	687	95.15
2	Filipino only	13	1.80
3	Chavacano only	10	1.39
4	Tausug only	7	0.97
5	Bisaya only	5	0.69
	Total	722	100

**Table 2** serves as an invaluable source of insight into the linguistic characteristics of monolingual signage within the specific research context. These signs have been methodically categorized into discrete language groups, including English only, Filipino only, Chavacano only, Tausug only, and Bisaya only. This categorization is based on their alignment with the predominant languages spoken in both Zamboanga City and the university.

The empirical findings derived from the analysis conducted in **Table 2** underscore a remarkable phenomenon—the unmistakable prevalence of the English language in the realm of monolingual signage across the entire university. This prevalence is not only apparent but also substantial, with English occupying the foremost position. Following English in descending order of prominence are the languages Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug, and Bisaya.

These findings convey a compelling narrative: English has asserted itself as the favored and dominant language of choice for monolingual signage within the university’s milieu. This observation is consistent with a broader trend observed in numerous academic institutions worldwide, where there is a deliberate and strategic emphasis on the adoption of English as a medium for communication and interaction. This trend aligns with the scholarship of Cenoz and Gorter (2006), as referenced by Shohamy and Gorter (2009), who assert the growing prominence of English in higher education institutions seeking to globalize and internationalize their academic environments.

In essence, the outcomes gleaned from **Table 2** illuminate a linguistic landscape within the university where English not only retains its prominence but also has emerged as the unequivocal dominant language in monolingual signage. This trend reflects the university’s commitment to the globalization and internationalization of its academic sphere, acknowledging English as a global lingua franca. Furthermore, the descending order of prominence of other languages highlights the intricate linguistic diversity that pervades the university, with each language playing a unique role in the broader context of communication and identity.

The presence of the Filipino language as the next most preferred language among monolingual signages underscores its significance as the national language of the country. This presence suggests that despite the dominance of English, the university places a premium on preserving the use of both the national language and English.

The inclusion of Chavacano, Tausug, and Bisaya in monolingual signage highlights the

university's dedication to acknowledging and conserving the rich linguistic tapestry within Zamboanga City and its neighboring regions. This commitment emphasizes the university's role in providing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for students of various language backgrounds.

However, the continued prominence of English in signage usage raises concerns about its potential impact on the utilization of local languages within the university. While English serves as a conduit for international and foreign students and facilitates partnerships with global institutions, it also poses challenges regarding the preservation of local languages. The results relate to Djonda and Madrunio (2023) in revealing that English remains to be the dominant language used.

The coexistence of multiple languages in monolingual signage underscores the university's embrace of multilingualism, fostering an inclusive environment that caters to students and educators from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This multifaceted linguistic landscape aligns with the university's overarching mission to offer an educational experience that respects and accommodates linguistic diversity.

**Figures 2 and 3** present illustrations of English-only signage.



**Figure 2.** English-only sign.



**Figure 3.** English-only sign.

The research data include two figures, **Figures 2 and 3**, which offer valuable insights into the monolingual characteristics of signage within the university context.

**Figure 2** presents signage featuring the word “notice” and explains that it is strategically located in the CTE (College of Teacher Education) park. The primary purpose of this signage is to serve as a reminder to students regarding proper waste disposal practices. In essence, this sign functions as a form of environmental education, encouraging responsible behavior among students. By employing the English language exclusively, the university communicates this important message effectively.

**Figure 3** showcases another English-only signage positioned in a public area within the university's walkways. This sign plays a different role—it serves as a cautionary message to both students and teachers, explicitly stating that the area is off-limits to vehicles. It contributes to maintaining safety and order within the university premises.

Both types of signage share a common characteristic: they deliver instructions and reminders about

appropriate conduct within the school environment. However, what makes them particularly noteworthy is their exclusive use of the English language.

The prominence of English-only signage in the university's landscape has several implications: (1) Universal comprehension: The use of English ensures that all students, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, can understand and interpret the messages conveyed by these signs. This inclusivity aligns with the university's commitment to providing a clear and comprehensible environment for its diverse student body. (2) Language of instruction: The prevalence of English in these signages underscores its status as the language of instruction and communication within the university.

It reflects the institution's stance on the importance of English proficiency in academic and administrative contexts. (3) Efficient communication: English-only signage eliminates potential language barriers, enabling efficient and effective communication of essential information and instructions. This is especially crucial in conveying critical messages related to safety, rules, and guidelines.

(4) Global perspective: The use of English in these signages resonates with the broader trend in higher education institutions worldwide, where English is favored as a medium for globalization and internationalization. It positions the university as part of the global academic community. (5) Cultural implications: While English is a unifying language, it may also raise questions about the preservation of local languages and cultural diversity within the university. The prevalence of English should be balanced with efforts to promote and respect local languages and cultures.

**Figures 4 and 5** provide insight into the presence of Filipino-only and Bisaya-only signage within the university, each carrying its unique significance.

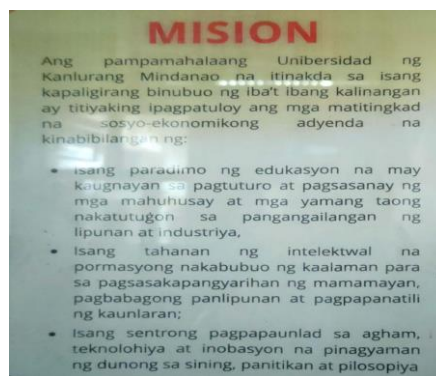


Figure 4. Filipino-only sign.

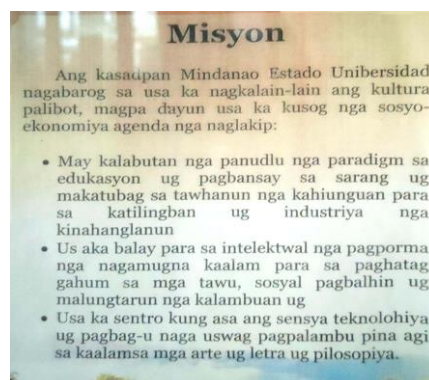


Figure 5. Bisaya-only sign.

**Figure 4** presents a Filipino-only sign located in the College of Liberal Arts. This choice of language is not only logical but also contextually relevant. The College of Liberal Arts, by its nature, addresses subjects that revolve around the Filipino language and its associated cultural and contextual aspects. Therefore, employing Filipino as the exclusive language for this signage aligns with the department's academic focus and objectives. It reflects a purposeful decision to use the language that is integral to the department's mission and curriculum.

In **Figure 5**, we encounter a Bisaya-only sign, also situated within the College of Liberal Arts. This sign stands out as it conveys the institution's mission and vision in a monolingual Bisaya format. This demonstrates a clear commitment to the inclusivity and recognition of the Bisaya-speaking community within the university's mission of achieving excellence.

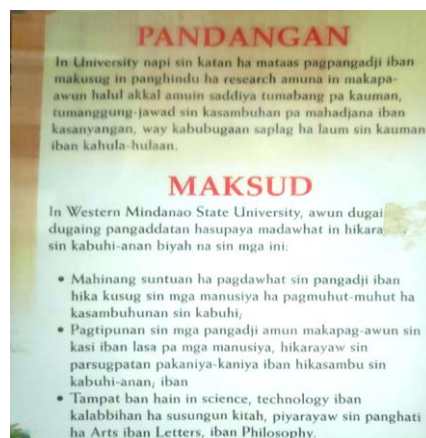
By providing information in Bisaya, the university acknowledges and values the linguistic diversity present among its students and stakeholders. This inclusivity extends the institution's outreach and communicates that individuals who speak Bisaya are integral to the university's overarching goals.

These two examples of monolingual signage hold several important implications: (1) Contextual relevance: The choice of language for each sign is contextually appropriate, aligning with the specific functions and academic focus of the College of Liberal Arts. This demonstrates a thoughtful approach to linguistic choices in signage. (2) Inclusivity: By employing Filipino and Bisaya in these signs, the university showcases its commitment to inclusivity and acknowledges the linguistic diversity of its community.

It communicates that individuals who speak these languages are valued members of the university. (3) Mission and vision: Presenting the university's mission and vision in multiple languages, including regional languages such as Bisaya, underscores the institution's dedication to making these core principles accessible to all, regardless of their linguistic background.

(4) Cultural preservation: The presence of Bisaya signage, in particular, reflects a commitment to preserving and promoting local cultures and languages within the academic environment. (5) Academic focus: The choice of language in these signs also communicates the academic focus and specialization of the College of Liberal Arts, reinforcing its identity as a department dedicated to the study and appreciation of language and culture.

**Figure 6** offers an illustrative example of a Tausug-only sign within the university's premises. This signage carries significant meaning and implications for the institution's approach to language and culture.



**Figure 6.** Tausug-only signage.

The presence of a Tausug-only sign demonstrates the university's commitment to recognizing and valuing Tausug speakers within its community. In this specific case, the university has taken the deliberate step of translating its mission and vision into the Tausug language. This decision reflects a profound respect for cultural identity and diverse ethnic backgrounds among its student body and stakeholders.

Several key points can be drawn from **Figure 6**: (1) Cultural respect: The translation of the mission and vision into Tausug signifies a deep respect for the cultural identity of Tausug speakers. It acknowledges their presence within the university and communicates an inclusive approach. (2) Linguistic diversity: This Tausug-only sign highlights the linguistic diversity present in the university community. By accommodating the Tausug language, the institution demonstrates its commitment to embracing and celebrating this diversity. (3) Accessibility: The translation of important documents such as the mission and vision into Tausug makes these essential principles accessible to Tausug speakers.

This inclusivity ensures that all members of the university community can fully engage with and understand its core values and goals. (4) Cultural heritage preservation: By recognizing Tausug as a legitimate language for official communication within the university, the institution indirectly contributes to the preservation and promotion of Tausug cultural heritage. (5) Inclusive environment: This Tausug-only sign creates an environment that is welcoming and respectful of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It fosters a sense of belonging among Tausug speakers within the university community.

**Table 3** presents the distribution of bilingual signage.

**Table 3.** Distribution of bilingual signage.

No	Bilingual signage	Items	Percentage (%)
1	English and Filipino	45	80.36
2	English and Chavacano	11	19.64
3	Filipino and Chavacano	0	0
4	Tausug and English	0	0
5	Tausug and Chavacano	0	0
6	Filipino and Tausug	0	0
	Total	56	100

**Table 3** offers valuable insights into the use of bilingual signage within the university, revealing key patterns and language combinations employed. One striking finding is the substantial prevalence of bilingual signs that feature a combination of English and Filipino, accounting for an overwhelming 80.36% of the total number of signages. This dominance of English and Filipino as the most common bilingual characteristic of signage is noteworthy, especially considering that the Philippines is not a native English-speaking country, and the university is in a city with a diverse linguistic landscape.

The secondary language combination observed in the data is English and Chavacano, making up 19.64% of the bilingual signage. This usage highlights the significance of Chavacano in the local context and its relevance in facilitating bilingual communication within the university. It reflects the institution's recognition of the importance of this language for certain segments of its community.

Bilingual signage within the university serves distinct purposes. English and Filipino signage

primarily aim to provide information, raise awareness, and offer reminders to a diverse audience, including professionals, students, and those proficient in the English language. Simultaneously, the use of the Filipino language in signage serves to provide essential information and directions to local individuals who may not be well-versed in English but can readily comprehend Filipino. This dual-language approach ensures that information is accessible to a broad range of individuals, fostering inclusivity and effective communication.

One noteworthy observation is the absence of other potential bilingual characteristics in the university's signage, such as Tausug and English, Tausug and Chavacano, and Filipino and Tausug. This absence may suggest opportunities for further exploration or consideration of linguistic inclusivity within the university's signage, acknowledging the diverse linguistic backgrounds of its community members and potentially expanding the range of languages used for effective communication and inclusiveness in the future.

**Figure 7** presents an illustration of bilingual signage.



**Figure 7.** English and Filipino signage.

**Figure 7**, as part of the bilingual characteristics of the university's signage, provides a notable example of the use of both English and Filipino languages. This signage, located at the College of Engineering, conveys a clear message: students are not permitted to enter a specific room, and the phrase "Bawal Tambayan" serves as a direct prohibition against loitering or staying in that room.

The presence of bilingual signage, such as the one depicted in **Figure 7**, highlights an important aspect of communication within the university. It demonstrates that certain instructions and information conveyed on signage make use of both English and Filipino languages, allowing for effective communication with a diverse audience. In this context, English serves as a medium for global communication and comprehension, while Filipino, as the national language of the Philippines, ensures accessibility for local individuals.

Despite the growing prominence of English in various aspects, including signage, within the university, the continued use of Filipino is significant. It not only reflects the institution's commitment to linguistic diversity and inclusivity but also acknowledges the importance of preserving and promoting the national language. This dual-language approach caters to a broad spectrum of individuals, accommodating both those who are proficient in English and those who rely on Filipino for comprehension.

The findings regarding bilingual signage in the university offer a distinct perspective, with a focus on the use of English and Chavacano as the language combination, accounting for 19.64% of the total. Two specific examples, **Figures 8** and **9**, provide valuable insights into the role and significance of bilingual signage within the university context.



Figure 8. English and Chavacano signage.



Figure 9. English and Chavacano signage.

**Figure 8** features bilingual signage related to the state of construction of the university registrar building. This signage is particularly significant, as it exemplifies a bilingual characteristic that aligns with the local context of Zamboanga City.

Given that this building is locally constructed within the city, the use of English and Chavacano languages serves to communicate essential information effectively to both English-proficient individuals and the local community that primarily uses Chavacano for communication. This bilingual approach ensures that information about the building's progress is accessible and comprehensible to a wide audience, reinforcing the university's commitment to effective communication within its local context.

**Figure 9** offers another example of bilingual signage that combines English and Chavacano languages. This signage stands out as unique and informative in nature, as it provides both the local and scientific name of a tree, its age, and a tree registry number. This detailed information not only educates visitors and guests but also conveys the university's profound appreciation for the presence of trees and their environmental benefits.

This signage plays a crucial role in raising awareness among students and teachers about the importance of preserving and protecting the environment. It underscores the university's commitment to environmental conservation, a message that resonates positively with visitors and the broader community. Moreover, this signage goes beyond mere information dissemination. It actively promotes the preservation and protection of trees, as indicated by the statement that translates to "The City Government of Zamboanga declares this tree as 'generation tree' and appeals to the people to continue to protect and preserve this tree as part of our heritage". This message reflects the university's role in advocating for environmental stewardship and heritage preservation, instilling a sense of responsibility and pride among its community members.

The use of the Chavacano language in these bilingual signages is of particular significance. It



reinforces the cultural identity of the city and serves as a reminder that, despite the increasing use of English within the university, the local culture and heritage remain represented and preserved. This linguistic diversity within signage not only fosters effective communication but also celebrates the richness of local culture and language.

**Table 4** presents the distribution of multilingual signage.

**Table 4.** Distribution of the multilingual signage.

No	Multilingual signage	Items	Percentage (%)
1	English, Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug	3	100
2	English, Filipino, Chavacano	0	0
3	English, Filipino, Tausug	0	0
	Total	3	100

**Table 4** offers a comprehensive view of the distribution of multilingual signage within the university, featuring a combination of English, Filipino, Chavacano, and Tausug languages. What stands out in this Table is the consistent prevalence of English across these multilingual signages, reinforcing its role as a widely understood and recognized language within the university's community.

This finding underscores the significance of English as a common denominator among individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds, serving as a bridge language for effective communication. Moreover, it contradicts previous studies, as multilingual signages in this setting is not appropriately established and lacks the numbers, as compared to monolingual signages (Djonda and Madrunio, 2023; Backhaus, 2007).

The data also imply that a significant portion, if not the majority, of the university's community members are familiar with the English language. This familiarity reflects the global nature of English and its prominence in academic and professional contexts, aligning with the university's goals of internationalization and globalization. Furthermore, the presence of other languages, such as Filipino, Chavacano, and Tausug, in this multilingual signage signifies the university's commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. It ensures that information is accessible to a wide audience, accommodating both local and global perspectives.

Multilingual signage, as demonstrated in **Table 4**, plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective communication within the university. They serve to convey information and instructions clearly and comprehensively to a diverse audience, regardless of their primary language. Additionally, the inclusion of multiple languages in these signatures recognizes and respects linguistic diversity and cultural richness within the university environment. In essence, the table reflects the institution's dedication to fostering an inclusive and communicative atmosphere while acknowledging the importance of linguistic diversity.

**Figure 10** offers a unique glimpse into the use of multiple languages in a single sign within the university context. This multilingual signage incorporates four distinct languages: English, Filipino, Chavacano, and Tausug. The presence of such a sign is noteworthy, as it represents a rare instance where multiple languages are used concurrently.



Figure 10. English, Filipino, Chavacano, and Tausug sign.

The location of this multilingual signage is in the canteen, a space within the university where various commercial shops and stores displays their menus and item lists. These menus feature a wide array of food items representing different culinary traditions and cultures from across the city.

English takes center stage in this multilingual sign, serving as the primary language for several items, such as “refreshments” and “rice in a bowl.” This predominance of English reflects its status as a globally understood and used language, ensuring that the menu items are accessible to a diverse audience. Furthermore, the sign presents an intriguing linguistic fusion with the item “Saging Rebusado.” Here, we witness a combination of Filipino and Chavacano languages. “Saging” translates to “Banana” in Filipino, while “Rebusado” means “being coated or marinated with something.”

This combination not only showcases the rich linguistic diversity within the city but also highlights the fusion of cultural and culinary influences in the region. Additionally, the presence of the word “Satti” is significant. “Satti” is a local cuisine of the Muslim community, and it typically consists of skewered meat, predominantly chicken, that is marinated and grilled. The word “Satti” on the menu underscores the importance of local cuisine and cultural diversity within the canteen’s offerings, promoting an appreciation for the city’s culinary heritage.

#### 4.2. Language combinations

As previously stated in the bilingual distribution of signage, English and Filipino remain the dominant bi or multilingual language used within signage. **Table 5** presents 59 signage items that have language combinations, with English and Filipino having the highest percentage (61.02%).

This is a clear demonstration that the creators of the signage are mostly familiar with both languages. Furthermore, if the language is mentioned first in the table, most of the words found in the signage use that specific language.

Table 5. Language combinations in signage.

No	Language combinations	Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1	English + Filipino	36	61.02
2	Filipino + English	9	15.25
3	English + Chavacano	8	13.57
4	Chavacano + English	3	5.08
5	English + Filipino + Chavacano + Tausug	3	5.08
	Total	59	100

**Table 5** offers valuable insights into the use of language in both bi and multilingual signage within the university context. One of the key findings highlighted by this table is the continued predominance

of the English language. Regardless of whether the signage is bilingual or multilingual, English consistently emerges as the primary language used (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

This observation underscores the significant role that English plays in the university's communication strategy. English serves as the main vehicle for conveying information and instructions, ensuring that messages are universally understood across the diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. It reflects the global prominence of English as a lingua franca and its importance in academic and professional contexts (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009).

One noteworthy aspect highlighted by **Table 5** is the interplay between English and other languages. While there are various signages that employ other languages, they often do so in conjunction with English. In some cases, a direct translation into English accompanies the use of another language to ensure clarity and comprehension. In other instances, both languages are presented simultaneously to convey more nuanced meaning and instruction. This dual-language approach caters to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the university's community, promoting effective communication and inclusivity.

The table provides insights into which language typically takes precedence in bilingual and multilingual signage. English and Filipino stand out as the most preferred language combination, with English frequently leading the way. This preference aligns with the Philippines' bilingual education system, which places a strong emphasis on both English and Filipino as essential languages for education and communication. It also reflects the recognition of the national language, Filipino, alongside English as integral components of the university's linguistic landscape.

**Figures 11 and 12** present compelling examples of signage in a bilingual context, combining English and Filipino languages. These signs serve as powerful tools for conveying important messages related to data privacy and government transparency.



Figure 11. English and Filipino combinations.



Figure 12. Filipino and English combinations.

In **Figure 11**, the bilingual sign underscores the significance of data privacy accountability. By utilizing both English and Filipino, the sign sends a clear message that data privacy is not only an international concern but is also being promoted at the local and national levels. This dual-language approach acknowledges that knowledge about data privacy is still insufficient and lacking in many areas. The sign's primary objective is to raise awareness about the importance of safeguarding personal data from unauthorized access and dissemination. Employing both languages ensures that a broader audience, including those who may not be proficient in English, can grasp the message.

**Figure 12**, on the other hand, employs a combination of Filipino and English to advocate for transparency in government services. The primary focus here is on soliciting public support for this initiative, recognizing that the audience is predominantly composed of local citizens who may have a better understanding of the law in their native language. The use of bilingual signage, incorporating both Filipino and English, facilitates easy comprehension and accessibility of the information.

These examples emphasize the importance of clear communication when raising awareness and educating the public about laws and initiatives. By incorporating both English and the native language, these signs ensure that essential information is easily comprehensible to a wide range of readers. This bilingual approach is particularly valuable when conveying legal or regulatory information, as it reduces the potential for misunderstandings and ensures that citizens are well informed and engaged in matters that affect them.

**Figure 13** prominently displays a bilingual sign at the university's front gate, effectively combining both English and Chavacano languages. This sign serves a critical public advisory role, delivering essential information and guidance to motorists and drivers. Its primary purpose is to communicate the specific regulations governing vehicle parking. By clearly marking areas where parking is prohibited, the sign plays a vital role in preventing road obstruction and traffic congestion, which can lead to significant disruptions for both drivers and pedestrians.



Figure 13. English and Chavacano combination.

The choice of employing both English and Chavacano in this bilingual sign is significant on several fronts. First, it ensures accessibility to a diverse audience, accommodating individuals who may be more comfortable with one language over the other. Second, it underscores the local relevance of Chavacano, acknowledging its importance as a commonly spoken language in Zamboanga City. This inclusion demonstrates cultural sensitivity and respect for the linguistic diversity of the community. Last, the bilingual approach enhances the sign's overall effectiveness by reducing the potential for misunderstandings or misinterpretations. This clear communication contributes to road safety and the efficient management of traffic flow at the university's entrance, benefiting all who pass through it.

### **4.3. Official and nonofficial signs**

The findings of the study shed light on the classification of signage into two distinct categories, as proposed by Li (2015): The top-down category and the bottom-up category. These classifications are pivotal in understanding the linguistic landscape of signage within the university context and the implications of signage ownership and purpose.

The top-down category encompasses official and government-owned signage that is typically found within specific locations or establishments. In the context of the university, these may include signs related to campus regulations, safety guidelines, and official announcements. Such signages are characterized by their authoritative and institutional nature, often serving to convey important information and directives to the university community.

On the other hand, the bottom-up category pertains to signage that is privately owned and commercially available for purchase and promotion. These signs may be related to advertising, branding, or promotional activities within the university premises. They are typically produced by private or nongovernment agencies and serve commercial or promotional purposes.

The study's findings indicate that the university's signage is distributed between these two classifications. Approximately 90.27% of the signage falls within the top-down category, signifying their official and institutional nature. These signs play a crucial role in disseminating essential information and maintaining order within the university. In contrast, approximately 9.73% of the signage belongs to the bottom-up category, indicating private ownership and commercial intent. These signs may contribute to the university's branding, advertising, or promotional efforts.

This categorization is significant for several reasons. First, it helps in understanding which languages are frequently featured in university signage, as different purposes and audiences may influence language choices. Second, it highlights the dominant language codes used in each category, shedding light on the linguistic preferences and communication strategies employed by the university and private entities.

**Table 6** offers a comprehensive overview of the ownership and purpose of signage within the university, distinguishing between official and government-owned signage and privately owned signage. The data presented in this table provide valuable insights into the prevalence and significance of these two categories of signage in the university environment. The results oppose the study of Djonda and Madrunio (2023), where the majority of the signages are nonofficial signages, as compared to the current results of the study having official signage being more numerous compared to its counterpart.

**Table 6.** Official and nonofficial signage.

No	Official and nonofficial signage	Items	Percentage (%)
1	Official signage	705	90.27
2	Nonofficial signage	76	9.73
	Total	781	100

The table reveals a clear dominance of official and government-owned signs, which constitute most of the signage within the university premises. This observation is not surprising, given that the university operates as an academic institution with a range of administrative, educational, and safety-related needs.

These official signs play a crucial role in serving as sources of vital information and direction for the university community.

Official and government-owned signs can include a wide array of messages and directives. They may encompass campus regulations, safety guidelines, academic notices, directional signage, and official announcements. Their presence is indispensable in maintaining order, ensuring safety, and providing clear communication within the university environment. Conversely, the table also highlights the existence of privately owned signs, although they represent a smaller proportion within the university. These signs typically serve commercial purposes, promoting products and services to the university community. Examples of privately owned signage may include advertisements for food items and beverages, as commonly found in the university’s canteen.

The distinct roles of these two categories of signage are significant. Official and government-owned signs contribute to the efficient functioning of the university, facilitating information dissemination, ensuring campus safety, and maintaining a well-organized environment. Privately owned signs, on the other hand, serve the interests of businesses and commercial enterprises, providing a platform for advertising and promotion within the university’s premises.

**Table 7** offers a detailed breakdown of the characteristics and language distribution among official signage within the university. This data analysis provides valuable insights into the prevalence of monolingual and bilingual characteristics in official signage and the dominant language choices employed within this category.

**Table 7.** Distribution of official signage.

No	Characteristics	Languages in the signage	Items	Percentage (%)
1	Monolingual	English only	658	88.44
		Filipino only	13	1.75
		Chavacano only	10	1.34
		Tausug only	7	0.94
		Bisaya only	5	0.67
2	Bilingual	English and Filipino	40	5.38
		English and Chavacano	11	1.48
3	Multilingual	English, Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug	0	0
	Total		744	100

The table indicates that most of the official signage within the university exhibits monolingual characteristics. Monolingual signages convey their messages in a single language, and in this case, English stands out as the most used language for such official signages. This observation aligns with the

institution's status as an academic environment where English is often the primary medium of instruction and communication.

The table shows that a smaller percentage of official signage exhibits bilingual characteristics, where two languages are used. Despite being less prevalent, these bilingual signs provide additional language support and accessibility for a broader range of readers.

English emerges as the dominant language in all categories of official signage, including both monolingual and bilingual types. This finding underscores the university's preference for using English as the primary language of communication in official contexts.

This suggests that most instructions and information conveyed through official signage are designed to be easily understood by both students and faculty members, reflecting the institution's commitment to clear and effective communication. Additionally, the absence of multilingual signage among the official signage indicates a focused approach to using English as the primary language for conveying official messages. This choice may assume that the university community is proficient in English, reducing the need for translations or the integration of other languages.

**Figure 14** depicts an official sign situated at the entrance of the College of Teacher Education within the university. This official sign serves a dual purpose: it provides valuable information to students, teachers, and guests while also establishing an official identity for the department. The primary function of this sign is to offer clear way of finding and identification. By prominently displaying the name "College of Teacher Education", it effectively guides individuals entering the building, ensuring that they are aware of the specific college department they are visiting. This is particularly important in a large educational institution such as a university, where various departments and buildings may be spread across the campus.



**Figure 14.** Official signage.

The sign serves as an official marker for the College of Teacher Education. It helps establish the department's presence within the university and reinforces its identity. This is essential for creating a sense of belonging and recognition among students, faculty members, and visitors. An official sign such as this not only aids in navigation but also contributes to the department's branding and institutional visibility.

From a linguistic perspective, the sign in **Figure 14** is monolingual, utilizing only the English language. This language choice is in line with the broader trend observed in official signage within the university, where English is the predominant language used for communication. The decision to use English exclusively reflects the institution's aim to ensure that its messages and information are readily

comprehensible to a wide audience, which may include individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Other official signs are illustrated in **Figures 15** and **16**.



Figure 15. Official English-only sign.



Figure 16. Official English and Filipino sign.

**Figures 15** and **16** represent official signs within the university, each serving specific informational purposes and incorporating English as the primary language of communication.

**Figure 15** is an official English-only sign that provides direction and guidance to students seeking information about the university's records and historical accounts. This sign serves as a valuable resource for students who may encounter difficulties in locating the appropriate office or department related to university records and history. It simplifies the navigation process within the university, ensuring that students can easily access relevant information and resources.

In a similar vein, **Figure 16** is an official sign that conveys critical information about COVID-19, utilizing both English and Filipino languages. This sign is particularly significant, given the global pandemic's impact on health and safety. It offers essential guidance and safety precautions to help individuals avoid contracting the virus. The sign emphasizes the importance of practices such as handwashing with soap, the use of hand sanitizers, maintaining social distancing, and thorough washing of food before cooking. Additionally, it provides clear indicators for identifying potential



symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

The use of English as the primary language in both signs reflects the university’s commitment to clear and effective communication. English is a widely understood language among students, faculty, and visitors, making it an ideal choice for conveying important information. Moreover, it ensures that critical messages reach a broader audience, including individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds who may have a reasonable proficiency in English.

The inclusion of the Filipino language in **Figure 16** serves as a valuable tool for accessibility and inclusivity. It recognizes that not all individuals within the university community may be proficient in English and may require information in their native language. The Filipino language provides an accessible translation of the information, ensuring that a wider range of people can comprehend and follow the safety guidelines.

**Table 8** provides an insightful breakdown of nonofficial signage within the university, categorizing them based on their characteristics as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. This analysis sheds light on the languages used in nonofficial signage and highlights the prevalence of English in this category, mirroring the findings observed in official signage, as shown in **Table 7**.

**Table 8.** Distribution of nonofficial signage.

No	Characteristics	Languages in the signage	Items	Percentage (%)
1	Monolingual	English only	29	78.38
2	Bilingual	English and Filipino English and Chavacano	5 0	13.51
3	Multilingual	English, Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug	3	8.11
	Total		37	100

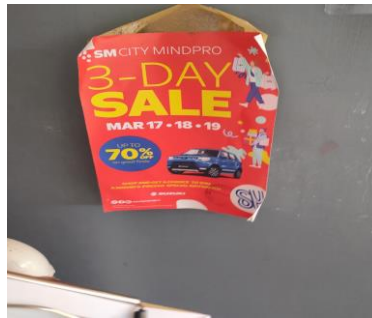
First, the table reveals that all nonofficial signage, regardless of their characteristics, belongs to the nonofficial category. These nonofficial signages typically pertain to privately owned businesses, commercial establishments, or other nonuniversity entities operating within the university campus. They serve various purposes, including advertising, promotions, and information dissemination.

Second, the data in **Table 8** underscore the continued dominance of the English language within the nonofficial signage category. English remains the most frequently used language in nonofficial signage, aligning with the pattern observed in official signage. This prevalence of English suggests that businesses and commercial brands operating within the university environment prioritize the use of English as the primary language for communication.

An important implication of this observation is that nonofficial signage often employs English not only to cater to the local population but also to attract and engage with a broader, potentially international clientele. English is recognized as a global lingua franca, and its use in nonofficial signage reflects an awareness of the diverse linguistic backgrounds of potential customers, including both local and foreign individuals.

**Figure 17** illustrates a nonofficial sign prominently placed within the university campus, primarily intended for promoting a commercial business establishment and advertising its services and products. This nonofficial sign reflects the broader trend observed in nonofficial signage within the university, where businesses seek to engage with a diverse clientele by using English as the primary language of communication. The specific location of this sign at the canteen is strategic, as it targets a concentrated

population of students and teachers who gather daily during lunchtime.



**Figure 17.** Nonofficial English-only sign.

The canteen serves as a central hub within the campus, attracting a significant number of potential buyers and consumers for the advertised services and products. Given the diverse composition of the university community, which includes local and international students and faculty, the choice of language for the sign becomes crucial.

In this case, the business organization behind the sign opts to use only the English language. This linguistic choice aligns with the strategic goal of appealing not only to local consumers but also to international and foreign visitors and clients. English is recognized as a global language and a common medium for communication in diverse contexts, making it an effective choice for reaching a broad audience.

The use of English in this nonofficial signage reflects a business-oriented approach aimed at maximizing outreach and engagement. By using English exclusively, the business signals its readiness to serve a wide range of customers, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds. This approach is particularly relevant in an educational institution such as a university, where students and faculty may come from various countries and linguistic backgrounds.

#### **4.4. Translations**

The signages that are posted within the university have some form of translations from the local language to English, although not all signs have these translations; it should be noted that translations can be useful to visitors and guests who are not familiar with the local language.

A significant translation to the words or phrases is observed. English to Filipino is the most frequent (91.30%), followed by English to Chavacano (8.70%). These languages are the only recorded and occurring signs in the university to have translations.

**Table 9** provides valuable insights into the presence of translations in the university's signage, shedding light on the extent to which signage is available in multiple languages to cater to a diverse audience. The table highlights that while translations exist, they are relatively limited in number, with the majority involving translations from English to Filipino, followed by English to Chavacano. Moreover, the study is in parallel to the investigation of Lu et al. (2020), where translation on signages became a crucial part in providing directions and information in a multilingual setting.

**Table 9.** Translations in signages.

No	Translations	Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1	English (Filipino)	21	91.30
2	English (Chavacano)	2	8.70
	Total	23	100

The prevalence of translations from English to Filipino primarily occurs in the context of garbage bins and trash cans within the university. These bilingual signs serve a practical purpose by providing clear instructions to individuals regarding the proper disposal of different types of garbage or waste. This inclusion of translations aligns with the university's commitment to ensuring that essential information, such as waste disposal guidelines, is accessible to everyone within the community, regardless of their language proficiency.

Conversely, translations from English to Chavacano are less common and are primarily utilized to identify the entrances of specific buildings within the university. It is noteworthy that these translations are not as widespread as the English-to-Filipino translations and are specifically linked to building entrances.

The limited presence of translations in the university's signage suggests that while efforts are made to accommodate different language speakers, there may be room for further enhancement in this regard. The focus on practical and essential areas such as waste disposal reflects a commitment to community welfare and environmental responsibility. However, expanding the use of translations to other aspects of campus life could contribute to a more inclusive and accessible environment for individuals from various linguistic backgrounds, as asserted by Abbas et al. (2022).

**Figures 18** and **19** both exemplify the practical use of translations in the university's signage, highlighting the importance of making information accessible to individuals who may have varying language preferences and proficiencies.



**Figure 18.** English to Filipino translation.



**Figure 19.** English to Chavacano translation.

**Figure 18** provides a clear example of the use of this translation in garbage bins, and trash cans within the university reflect a commitment to teaching and reinforcing the importance of the native

language, Filipino, in everyday life, including the proper disposal of waste. This approach not only serves a practical purpose by ensuring that everyone can understand and follow waste disposal guidelines but also reinforces the cultural and linguistic importance of the native language.

**Figure 19** showcases a direct translation from English to Chavacano, particularly employed at the entrances of various buildings and departments within the university. This use of translation is especially relevant considering that the university welcomes parents, visitors, and guests who may be more familiar with the local language, Chavacano. By providing clear translations at building entrances, the university aims to create a welcoming and inclusive environment, ensuring that individuals who prefer or are more comfortable with Chavacano can navigate the campus with ease.

Both figures underscore the university's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. They demonstrate an understanding that linguistic diversity is present within the university community and that providing translations is a practical and considerate way to ensure that information is readily understood by all individuals, regardless of their language background. These translations also honor the historical and cultural significance of Filipino and Chavacano, contributing to a sense of cultural identity and pride within the university.

#### 4.5. Code preference

Among the recorded signs, ranging from bilingual to multilingual characteristics in the study corpus, English is the most preferred language to use in signage within the university. The English language appeared (48%) in all the signage, followed by the Filipino language (38.4%), Chavacano (11.2%), and Tausug (2.4%), with the least preferred language. This reveals that the academe considers English and Filipino as the most important languages to use to convey messages, deliver instructions and give directions.

The code preference refers to how frequently the languages are repeated and found in different signages across the university. The items do not necessarily reflect the total amount of bi/multilingual signage but rather how many times a language was repeated and found in a single piece of signage.

**Table 10** presents a significant observation regarding the language preferences within the Western Mindanao State University. It clearly demonstrates that English is the overwhelmingly preferred language used within the university's signage. This finding holds substantial implications for the institution's identity and its pursuit of academic excellence.

**Table 10.** Code preference of the bi/multilingual signage.

No	Code preference	Items	Percentage (%)
1	English	60	48
2	Filipino	48	38.4
3	Chavacano	14	11.2
4	Tausug	3	2.4
	Total	125	100

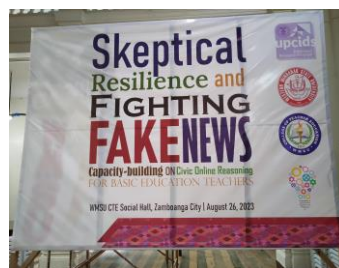
The prominence of English within the university's signage is indicative of the institution's commitment to global standards and academic excellence. It reflects a conscious choice to prioritize English as the primary language for communication and instruction within the university. This alignment with English as the dominant language mirrors the broader trend observed in many academic institutions worldwide, particularly those aiming for globalization and internationalization of their academic environments.

The prevalence of English signage suggests that the university recognizes the importance of preparing its students for a globalized world where English often serves as a lingua franca for communication and collaboration. English proficiency is a valuable skill in international academic and professional contexts, and the university's emphasis on English language usage aligns with this global perspective.

While the dominance of English is clear, it is important to acknowledge that the presence of other languages, such as Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug, and Bisaya, underscores the university's commitment to linguistic diversity and inclusivity. These languages reflect the cultural and linguistic richness of the university's community, and their presence in signage demonstrates a dedication to accommodating the needs and preferences of diverse language speakers.

The results show that English remains to be the preferred code to be utilized, as majority of the learners and individuals have good understanding and grasp of the English language. Resulting in a specified location to use for directions, information dissemination, and presentation of policies (Lu et al., 2020; Li, 2015).

**Figures 20** and **21** illustrate the code preference of signage using the English language.



**Figure 20.** English code preference.



**Figure 21.** English code preference.

**Figures 20** and **21** provide further insights into the language preferences and code preference of Western Mindanao State University, highlighting the predominant use of English within the institution.

**Figure 20** illustrates a sign entirely in English located in the social hall of the College of Teacher Education during a university-wide research conference. The choice of English for this sign is apt, given that research conferences often employ English as the medium of communication and instruction.

This finding reinforces the university's clear preference for English as the primary language for academic and scholarly activities. This signifies that English is the language of choice when disseminating information and organizing events of academic significance, aligning with the institution's emphasis on English as the dominant code.

**Figure 21** presents a common warning sign related to ongoing construction within the university. This sign serves both as a precautionary measure and an informative notice about the construction of

an important building. Once again, the sign is predominantly in English, reflecting the institution’s code preference for English in conveying essential information. The consistent use of English in such signage demonstrates a practical approach, as it ensures that a majority of learners, faculty, and visitors can easily understand the instructions and directions provided.

These examples underscore the university’s commitment to effective communication and inclusivity, as English is a language widely understood by the university’s diverse community. The prevalence of English in these signages aligns with the institution’s broader goals of preparing its students for a globalized world and academic excellence, where proficiency in English is often a key factor in achieving success.

#### 4.6. Visibility of signs bi/multilingual nature

The visibility of the bi/multilingual nature of signs is further classified into four (4) categories by Backhaus (2007): Complementary, duplicating, fragmentary and overlapping. These classifications indicate that signs contain various languages employing different structures and information to readers and individuals, which are crucial in explaining their nature in a more specific way.

**Table 11** provides valuable insights into the prevalent bi/multilingual nature of signage within Western Mindanao State University, with the complementary category being the most dominant. The results oppose the findings of Djonda and Madrunio (2023) who investigated a similar study, and found out that Duplicating signages were the most prevalent in the context of multilingual signages.

**Table 11.** Bi/multilingual nature of signs.

No	Characteristics of bi/multilingual visibility	Items	Percentage (%)
1	Complementary	44	74.58
2	Duplicating	8	13.56
3	Fragmentary	4	6.78
4	Overlapping	3	5.08
	Total	59	100

According to Backhaus (2007), the complementary nature of signage involves the use of multiple languages to convey information or words effectively. In this context, the complementary category signifies that the university often employs a combination of languages within its signage to ensure that information is accessible and understandable to a diverse audience.

This approach aligns with the institution’s commitment to inclusivity and effective communication, catering to individuals who may have varying levels of proficiency in different languages. The presence of a substantial number of complementary signs implies that Western Mindanao State University recognizes the linguistic diversity of its community and strives to accommodate the needs of its students, faculty, and visitors, who may come from various linguistic backgrounds.

By using multiple languages in these signages, the university aims to bridge language barriers and facilitate a smoother flow of information. Furthermore, the complementary category underscores the university’s dedication to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for individuals with different language skills. It signifies that the institution values the linguistic diversity within its community and seeks to ensure that everyone can access important information easily.

**Figure 22** provides an illustrative example of complementary bilingual signage characterized by

the presence of two languages, English and Filipino, with additional elements in Chavacano. This complementary nature of signage is designed to convey diverse meanings, as outlined by Backhaus (2007). In this signage, the English language is used to prominently display the brand name “Nature’s Spring,” which is a local water distillery. The inclusion of English is common for brand names and internationally recognized terms, aligning with the globalizing trend observed in many signages.



Figure 22. Complementary sign.

The word “festival” in English is used to reference a celebrated event in Zamboanga City. This demonstrates the flexibility of using English for concepts that have global significance, even within a local context. The presence of Filipino is also evident in the signage, particularly in the phrase “celebracion de colores,” which translates to “celebration of colors.” This showcases the use of Filipino for conveying a festive and celebratory theme, aligning with its role as the national language of the Philippines.

Chavacano, the local language of Zamboanga City, is integrated into the signage. The Chavacano phrases “vamos” (meaning “let us go”) and “celebracion de colores” contribute to the cultural identity of the city, reflecting the local celebration and the spirit of inclusivity.

Figure 23 provides an example of a duplicating bilingual signage characterized by the repetition of the same message in two languages, English and Filipino, in a manner in which each word has an equivalent counterpart in the other language, as described by Backhaus (2007).



Figure 23. Duplicating.

In this signage, the term “biodegradable” in English is presented alongside its Filipino translation, “nabubulok,” which carries the same intended meaning. This approach is a straightforward way of ensuring that individuals who speak either language can readily understand the message.

The duplicating nature of this bilingual signage is particularly useful when precision in conveying information is crucial. It eliminates any potential language barrier, allowing both English and Filipino speakers to grasp the concept of biodegradability easily.

This kind of signage is commonly employed for conveying important information, especially in settings where clear understanding is essential, such as environmental instructions, safety guidelines, or

health-related messages. It reflects the university's commitment to providing information comprehensively to its diverse community, regardless of their language proficiency.

**Figure 24** showcases bilingual signage with a fragmentary nature, characterized by the predominance of one language (Filipino) and the partial translation or inclusion of words in another language (English), as per Backhaus's (2007) typology of bilingual signage.



**Figure 24.** Fragmentary sign.

In this signage, most of the content is written in the Filipino language, reflecting its primary usage. The phrase “bayan hwag talo” in Filipino translates to “nation, do not lose” in English. However, the English word “fixer” is incorporated within the same phrase, serving as a partial translation or inclusion of an English term. The fragmentary nature of this bilingual signage is often employed to emphasize or highlight specific terms or concepts that are deemed more impactful or significant in the other language. In this case, the inclusion of the English term “fixer” draws attention to a particular issue or concern related to the university community.

Such bilingual signage can be particularly effective when it is essential to convey a strong or memorable message while ensuring that the primary language remains intact for clear understanding. It serves to reinforce the message and make it more accessible to those who understand both languages. This type of signage highlights the university's dedication to addressing important issues and concerns within its community, and it demonstrates its commitment to reaching a broader audience by using a combination of languages.

**Figure 25** illustrates bilingual signage with an overlapping nature, characterized by the presence of multiple languages (English and Filipino) in the same sign but not necessarily sharing the same meaning or context, as per Backhaus's (2007) typology of bilingual signage.



**Figure 25.** Overlapping sign.



In this bilingual sign, both English and Filipino languages are utilized to convey a message or provide information. The presence of both languages in the sign demonstrates the university's commitment to reaching a diverse audience and ensuring that important information is accessible to individuals who are proficient in either language. However, the overlapping nature of this sign implies that while both languages are present, they may not always share the same meaning or context. This is evident when certain translations or equivalents are not explicitly provided in the sign. In some cases, words, or phrases in one language, may not have direct counterparts in the other language, leading to variations in meaning or interpretation.

The overlapping nature of bilingual signage can be advantageous when the goal is to cater to a broad and diverse audience with varying language proficiency. It acknowledges the linguistic diversity within the university community and aims to provide information in a way that is comprehensible to a wider range of individuals. It is important to recognize that in bilingual signage with an overlapping nature, the focus is on ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, even if there are subtle differences in meaning or interpretation between the languages used. This approach aligns with the university's commitment to effective communication and engagement with its diverse stakeholders.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of the gathered data from Western Mindanao State University's linguistic landscape provides several significant insights into the language usage within this nonmetropolitan academic institution.

First, the study reveals that Western Mindanao State University employs both official and nonofficial signs throughout its campus. Official signs are typically government owned and serve as sources of information and guidance, while nonofficial signs are often privately owned and used for promotional or commercial purposes.

Second, in terms of language diversity, the identified local languages within the university include Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug, and Bisaya. However, these local languages are not prevalent across the entire campus, as they only appear in a relatively small number of signs, constituting 12.42% of the total signs analyzed. Filipino is the most used local language, appearing in 7.81% of the signs, followed by Chavacano (3.07%), Tausug (1.28%), and Bisaya (0.64%).

In contrast, as presented in **Table 12**, the English language dominates the linguistic landscape of Western Mindanao State University, appearing in most signs (95.51%). This dominance of English is noteworthy, especially considering that the region is not a native English-speaking area. Despite the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the university's community members, English emerges as the primary language of communication within the academic institution.

**Table 12.** The linguistic landscape of Western Mindanao State University.

No	Language present	Items	Percentage (%)
1	English	781	95.51
2	Filipino	61	7.81
3	Chavacano	24	3.07
4	Tausug	10	1.28
5	Bisaya	5	0.64
	Total	722	100

This finding aligns with existing research and studies that emphasize the continued preference for and dominance of the English language in educational settings, even in nonnative English-speaking regions (Backhaus, 2007; Shohamy, 2006; Li, 2015). The influence and impact of English in higher education play a crucial role in propelling universities toward international excellence and global standards.

The study identifies that the bi/multilingual signage within the university primarily involves a combination of English and Filipino. This choice reflects the importance of the Filipino language as a means of communication that can be understood by individuals from various cultural backgrounds and dialects (Astillero, 2017).

The nature of bi/multilingual signs in Western Mindanao State University is predominantly complementary, indicating that the presence of multiple languages in a single sign serves the purpose of providing information and directions to a diverse readership. However, it is essential to note that the multilingual characteristic of official signage in the university is not as prevalent and is mostly observed in nonofficial signage, particularly in the canteen, where businesses promote their products and services. This suggests a potential area for improvement in terms of incorporating multilingualism into official university signage.

## **6. Conclusions**

This investigation into the linguistic landscape of a nonmetropolitan university has revealed critical recommendations based on its results and findings. Notably, the absence of official multilingual signage within the university stands out as a significant issue. Despite the institution's focus on international excellence and global competence, the scarcity of multilingual signage is evident. It is imperative to recognize the value of multilingual signage, not only for effective communication but also for the preservation of local languages, which play a pivotal role in representing cultural and ethnic identities. Therefore, it is highly advisable for the university to consider the implementation of official multilingual signage to promote linguistic diversity and cultural inclusivity.

The linguistic landscape at Western Mindanao State University is undeniably diverse, encompassing a wide range of languages, from international to local dialects. This study aims to examine and delineate the underlying characteristics of languages and signs within academic institutions, emphasizing their dual roles as sources of information and vehicles for cultural representation and identity.

The results and findings of this investigation contribute valuable data to the existing body of knowledge on linguistic landscape studies within academic institutions. It is noteworthy that this area of research has received relatively limited attention, and the insights gained from this study bridge a gap in the literature. Scholars and researchers interested in linguistic landscape studies now have access to pertinent information and observations from a nonmetropolitan university setting, enriching the discourse on language use and signage in educational contexts (Blommaert and Marten, 2020).

Considering the outcomes derived from this research, there is a compelling call for further exploration and expansion of linguistic landscape studies. Future investigations should encompass various educational levels, from primary and secondary to tertiary institutions. While the prevalence of English as a medium of instruction is prominent at the tertiary level, understanding its impact and language preferences at earlier education stages can provide a more comprehensive view of linguistic dynamics in the Philippines' educational landscape.

Researchers should explore additional variables that can contribute to a deeper understanding of linguistic landscape studies. Factors such as language policy, language attitudes, and the role of signage in shaping language behavior could be incorporated into future research designs. Expanding the research locale to encompass a broader geographical area may also yield insights into the multifaceted and multicultural nature of linguistic landscape studies, enhancing our understanding of language use in diverse contexts (Blommaert et al., 2020).

The investigation into the linguistic landscape of Western Mindanao State University has uncovered critical recommendations and implications. First and foremost, the absence of official multilingual signage within the university is a significant issue that needs immediate attention. Despite the university's aspirations for international excellence and global competence, the lack of multilingual signage is apparent. Multilingual signage not only facilitates effective communication but also plays a vital role in preserving local languages, which are integral to cultural and ethnic identities. To promote linguistic diversity and cultural inclusivity, it is highly advisable for the university to consider implementing official multilingual signage (Williams and Lewis, 2021).

The linguistic landscape at Western Mindanao State University is inherently diverse, encompassing a wide array of languages, from international to local dialects. This study has aimed to explore and delineate the underlying characteristics of languages and signs within academic institutions, emphasizing their dual roles as sources of information and vehicles for cultural representation and identity.

The results and findings of this investigation contribute valuable data to the existing body of knowledge on linguistic landscape studies within academic institutions. It is noteworthy that this area of research has received relatively limited attention, and the insights gained from this study bridge a gap in the literature. Scholars and researchers interested in linguistic landscape studies now have access to pertinent information and observations from a nonmetropolitan university setting, enriching the discourse on language use and signage in educational contexts.

Culturally, the implications of this study underscore the importance of preserving and celebrating linguistic diversity. Local languages, such as Filipino, Chavacano, Tausug, and Bisaya, should not be overshadowed by the dominance of English. Efforts to maintain and promote these languages through multilingual signage can contribute to a more inclusive and culturally rich educational environment (Gorter and Marten, 2020). By recognizing and respecting the linguistic heritage of the region, the university can foster a sense of cultural identity among its students and staff.

Educationally, this investigation prompts further exploration and expansion of linguistic landscape studies. Future research endeavors should encompass various educational levels, ranging from primary and secondary to tertiary institutions. Understanding the impact of language preferences at different stages of education can provide comprehensive insights into linguistic dynamics in the Philippines' educational landscape. Additionally, researchers should consider examining variables such as language policy, language attitudes, and the role of signage in shaping language behavior (Barni and Cadierno, 2020). Expanding the research locale to encompass a broader geographical area may offer deeper insights into the multifaceted and multicultural nature of linguistic landscape studies, ultimately enhancing our understanding of language use in diverse contexts.

## **Author contributions**

Conceptualization, FDDC and EOA; methodology, AJB and BAE; software, FDDC and AHD;

validation, GAE, SEA and AOP; formal analysis, FDDC and EOA; investigation, FDDC; resources, ACD, RMR and EOA; data curation, EOA and YA; writing—original draft preparation, FDDC; writing—review and editing, BAE, AHD, and AOP; visualization, RMR and YA; supervision, EOA; project administration, FDDC, AHD, and ACD; funding acquisition, AJB, BAE, AHD, GAE, SEA, AOP, RMR, YA, and EOA. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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