Characteristics of the Linguistic Landscape of Downtown Ciudad Del Este: An Overview of a Multilingual Trade

Características del paisaje lingüístico del centro de Ciudad del Este: un panorama a un comercio multilingüe

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the commercial linguistic landscape (LL) downtown Ciudad del Este, a border city located on the east side of Paraguay. It is known for being a vibrant economically active city, and home to several immigrant groups who established there. A total of 740 signs were collected and analyzed through a mixed methods approach to find out the languages present in the LL, their frequency, and the relation between language and the commercial activity. Additionally, open-ended interviews were conducted to some businesses to enrich the data. The results indicate a wide spectrum of languages unequally distributed in the LL in terms of their visibility, having English the dominance over all foreign languages; as well as some differences between language use on the signs among the different commercial activities, especially when comparing shops offering services and shops selling products. The findings reveal the commercially driven character of the LL through the informative and strongly symbolic functions of language.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape; sign; multilingualism; language contact; Ciudad del Este.

RESUMEN

El enfoque de esta investigación es el paisaje lingüístico comercial del centro de Ciudad del Este, una ciudad fronteriza situada en el extremo este del Paraguay. Es conocida por ser una ciudad dinámica y económicamente muy activa. Es también hogar de varios grupos inmigrantes que se establecieron allí. Se analizaron un total de 740 carteles mediante un enfoque mixto para averiguar los idiomas presentes en el paisaje lingüístico, su frecuencia y la relación entre el idioma y la actividad comercial. Además, se realizaron entrevistas abiertas a algunos comercios para enriquecer los datos. Los resultados indican un amplio espectro de idiomas distribuidos de manera desigual

en cuanto a su visibilidad en el paisaje lingüístico, teniendo el inglés el dominio sobre todos los idiomas extranjeros. Se observaron también diferencias en el uso del idioma en las diferentes actividades comerciales, especialmente al comparar las tiendas que ofrecen servicios y las que venden productos. Los resultados revelan el carácter comercial del paisaje lingüístico estudiado expresado mediante las funciones informativas y fuertemente simbólicas del lenguaje.

Palabras Claves: paisaje lingüístico; cartelería; multilingüismo; contacto lingüístico; Ciudad del Este.

Ciudad del Este is the capital of the department of Alto Parana, and one of the border cities that forms the tri-border region within the confluence of the Parana River and the Iguazu River. The other two cities are Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil, and Puerto Iguazú in Argentina. It became home for various immigrant communities: Brazilians, Chinese, Arabs, Japanese, Koreans, and Hindus (SIC 2018). Most of the immigrants run their businesses or work in a family business downtown Ciudad del Este, where they offer a variety of imported items. It is estimated that 80% of the customers are Brazilian, 15% are Argentinian, and only 5% are Paraguayan (Griebeler 2020; Masi 1997).

Regarding language, it is a multilingual place where approximately 94% of its population declare to speak both official languages (Spanish and Guarani), and 47% also declared to know Portuguese, (DGEEC 2012). This skill is predominantly oral, since the foreign language acquisition process is quite spontaneous, motivated by the media, the migratory scenario, the commercial dynamics downtown, and the employment benefit of knowing the language (Cantero 2019). Other foreign languages present in Alto Parana are German, Arabic, Mandarin, Taiwanese Mandarin, Japanese, and Portuguese (Secretaría de Políticas Lingüísticas 2018). All the different aspects of their culture and the influence of the proximity to Brazil have given Ciudad del Este a unique identity reflected in the city's LL.

LITERATURE REVIEW

LL Overview

Linguistic landscape can be understood from its physical constituent elements, the signs, defined as "any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame" (Backhaus 2007, p. 66). It includes "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government" (Landry and Bourhis 1997, p. 25). From a wider sense, LL is seen as a mirror that displays the complex interaction between the different languages and has a sociocultural meaning, manifesting underlying linguistic ideologies (Backhaus 2007; Scollon and Scollon 2003; Wardhaugh and Fuller 2014). It is "a public arena where language battles are taking place and where the choice of languages can establish a domination of space" (Shohamy 2006 cited in Hristova et al. 2017, p. 8). LLs do not straightforwardly reflect the languages' official status or the diversity within the linguistic groups present in a place. However, they are the only element in a city in which the actors decide how they shape it and change it, giving the city its unique personality (Ben-Rafael 2009).

LL categorization varies depending on the author and the purpose of the research. The most relevant classification for this study are Landry and Bourhis' (1997) functional classification into informational and symbolic, and Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) division between top-down and bottom-up signs. *Informational function* is the denotative use of language, chosen so the message is understood. It is the basic information conveyed by the sign, including government signs (road signs and signs on government buildings) and private signs language

chosen. It (advertising and commercial signs). *Symbolic function* refers to the connotative use of language, used to appeal to emotions or to associate the message to the stereotypes of the language chosen. It concerns language policy and identity, language hierarchy and status, and the reasons behind language use and the dominance of some languages above others (Edelman and Gorter 2010; Landry and Bourhis 1997). *Top-down* signs are issued by public institutions, government, and include street names. The *bottom-up* signs are displayed by the citizens, such as shop signs, companies, offices, and other announcements (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006).

Language use in border regions

Border regions are places where different cultures and languages are in contact. In these places, people may acquire the language of speakers of another linguistic group they are being exposed to. In border regions, languages serve both communicational and symbolic functions since they reflect the different groups that are in contact and the status of languages (Novak Lukanovic 2011). Gerst and Klessmann (2015) talk about the influence of this multilingualism to commerce, stating that "it plays a major role in addressing specific customers, their language preferences and shopping habits, as well as in transmitting certain images and self-conceptions of corporate identities" (p.22).

LL Research (LLR) Theoretical framework

Three theoretical approaches were considered for this research, the four dimensions analysis by Huebner (2006), the four structuration principles by Ben-Rafael (2009), and the three basic questions in LLR by Backhaus (2007).
The four dimensions' analysis

Huebner (2006) distinguishes different dimensions by which a sociolinguistic LLR can be carried out and analyzed. These dimensions include variations in the *type of use*, meaning official or government versus non-official or private use of signage. Variation in the *patterns of languages* used, whether it is dominantly monolingual or multilingual, and the combinations of languages present. A *synchronic perspective*, which reflects if there is a lack of connection between official versus de facto language policy. A *diachronic perspective*, which reflects the changes in the patterns of language use across older versus newer neighborhoods (pp. 37-38). Of the four principles, the variation in the patterns of languages was applied in the analysis.
The four structuration principles

Ben-Rafael (2009) talks about four principles that structure LLR, which are the presentation of self, the good-reasons, the collective identity, and the power-relation. In this study, the first two were applied. The first principle focuses on LL relation to actors, meaning that they want to outstand and differentiate themselves from the competition. They shape their appearance and intentionally use language in an appealing way to attract passers-by. The second principle focuses on LL relation to clients. It states that actors will decide according to the tendencies to correspond to the values and tastes of the target population. The third principle focuses on the identity markers and how LL reflects the particularities of the actors, meaning, who they are and who they are not. The last principle focuses on the dependence relation between the different groups of actors and how the dominant groups set the boundaries on the dominated groups.

The three basic questions in LLR

Concerning LL analysis, Peter Backhaus (2007) stated that the problems in LL research can be summarized into three questions:

1. Linguistic landscaping by whom?

Refers to the authorship of the sign. Considered within this are a distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs, the geographic distribution of the languages (if the visibility of a language corresponds to the linguistic groups present), the relationship between the linguistic characteristics of the sign and the author's background, and the association between the languages used and the commercial domain, which is an important variable in this respect.

2. Linguistic landscaping for whom?

It concerns the readers of the sign. Under it is the assumption that the readers are capable of understanding what is written, for which the target linguistic group must be determined. However, the relation between both is not always straightforward. Using a foreign language in a sign does not mean that there is a foreign target group related to that language (Backhaus 2007). Instead, foreign languages might be chosen to seem appealing, stimulating, "to symbolize foreign taste and manners" (Scollon and Scollon 2003, p. 118).

3. Linguistic landscape *quo vadis*?

It refers to the dynamics of the languages in contact and the LL's diachronic development, meaning, what the signs reveal about LL changes over time. This last was not applied to the research due to the nature of the question. Two points are frequently discussed within this matter: language and script mixing; and change in language preference patterns, exemplified by the increasing presence of English in LL worldwide.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Research Questions

The general purpose of the study was to describe the outstanding characteristics of the LL of downtown Ciudad del Este, specifically the bottom-up or commercial signage, to understand how is the city's identity portrayed and how did the different linguistic communities influenced the written language used in the public space. For that aim, the following questions guided the process.

1. Which are the different languages represented in the LL?
2. What is the frequency of the languages represented in the LL?
3. How are the different languages used in the LL related to the commercial activity?

Research Design

This research followed a descriptive, social empirical, ex post facto, non-experimental mixed-method, using ethnographic approaches such as observation of the signage in a geographical area, categorizing and quantifying them according to its characteristics, as well as open-ended question interviews (Nunes Silva, 2010) (Bijeikienė & Tamošiūnaitė, 2013; Neufeld et al., 2014).

Setting and Sample

The study takes place in downtown Ciudad del Este, known for being a multicultural and commercial city, and Brazilian tourists represent much of the clientele. The different immigrant communities settled there are Brazilians, Arabs, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Hindus, who usually run their businesses. The sample is the linguistic content of the

commercial signage (shop signs, billboards, and advertising) displayed on the three main streets, around 2,5 kilometers in total. A total of 740 signs were distinguished, 379 in Adrian Jara Ave. (nine blocks), 209 in Monseñor Rodriguez St. (ten blocks), and 152 in San Blas Ave. (four blocks). These streets were selected since they are main access routes to and out of downtown either from the customs office neighboring Brazil or from other parts of the country. They are also among the densest regarding the flow of people and commercial activity.
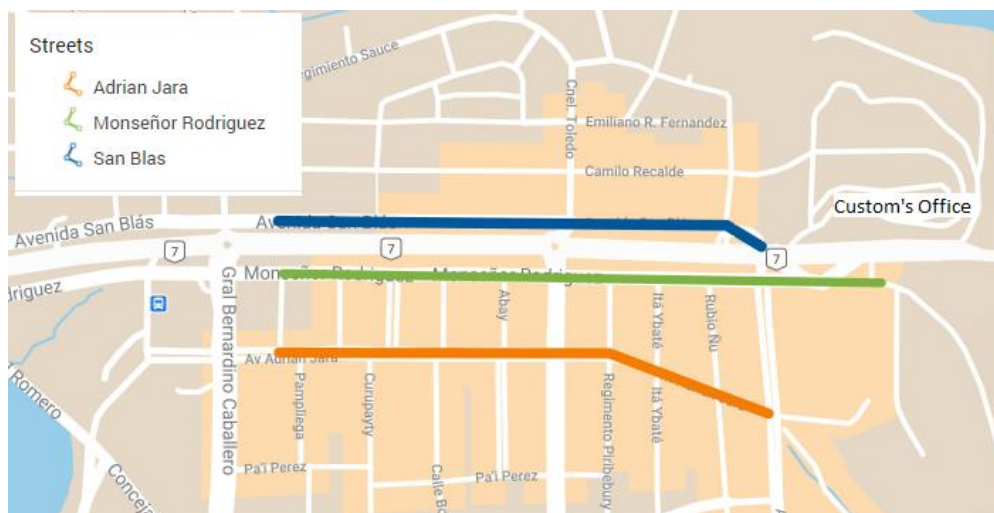
Source: Google maps screenshot, 2020

To find the frequency of the languages displayed in the LL, each sign was counted individually. The variables considered for the coding categories were based on Cenoz and Gorter (2006), Nikoulaou (2017), and Shang and Guo (2017), which included:

- Name of the shop or advertisement
- Type of sign, into advertisement or shop sign
- Commercial branch
- Number and combination of languages in the sign
- Stores' chain into independent, regional, national, or international
- Type of text into the main text, secondary text, or brand.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Languages in the LL

Graphic N° 1. Sampling of the owners´ ethnic origin.
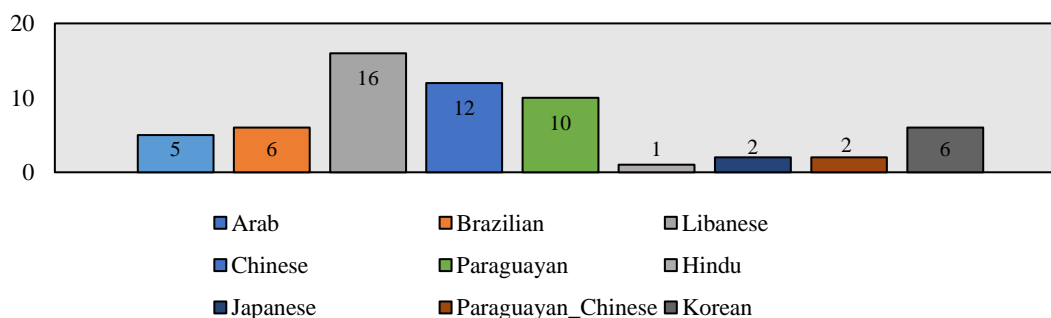
Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

An approach to the sociolinguistic landscape was to identify the ethnic origin of the owners of several stores downtown. The sample scope was of 60 items, selected by a convenience strategy according to the popularity and availability of the required information. The largest analyzed proportion corresponds to Lebanese, Chinese, Korean, and Brazilian. On the basis of the ethnic background of the immigrants, it is possible to have an idea of the languages that coexist in Ciudad del Este since the immigrants make efforts to maintain their culture and language (ABC Color 2020).

In total, 22 languages were found in the researched location, listed in Table N° 1. In the cases where transliterated or Romanized texts appeared, they were labeled with a "T." at the beginning to identify the origin of those languages. As for the linguistic data in the signs, following Nikolaou (2017), they were divided into main text (MT), secondary text (ST), and an additional category of brands. The MT involved the store's name in shop signs, and the title or most prominent text in the advertisements. The ST consisted of the product information, slogan, contact and address, offers, and any other text. Following Schlick (2003 cited in Edelman 2009) proper and corporate names were considered as any other text on the signs, assigned to their original language.

Table N° 1. Languages present in the different texts.

| Languages	% in MT	% in ST	% in brands
Spanish	44%	58%	4%
English	35%	19%	26%
Portuguese	9%	15%	2%
T.Arabic	1%	3%	2%
T.Chinese	2%	2%	3%
French	1%	1%	7%
Guarani	1%	1%	-
Arabic	-	1%	2%
T.Japanese	1%	1%	13%
Chinese	-	1%	-
Indeterminable	3%	-	11%
Italian	2%	-	9%
German	1%	-	6%
T.Korean	-	-	7%
T.Greek	-	-	5%
T.Latin	-	-	3%
Finnish	-	-	2%
Indonesian	-	-	1%
Dutch	-	-	1%
T.Armenian	-	-	1%
T.Hindi	-	-	-
T.Hebrew	-	-	-
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Frequency of the languages represented in the LL.

1. Frequency by type of text

The most frequent type of text is the MT, followed by the ST, and brand, as Table N° 2 shows. Nevertheless, despite brands being the least frequent category, it had the broadest spectrum of languages (18), followed by MT (11) and ST (10). This reveals how brands are a significant source for linguistic diversity in this LL, perhaps because they represent mainly international companies. This matches with Piller's (2003) statement, who says that the product name is the element most frequently found in a foreign language.

Graphic N° 2. Languages and type of text.
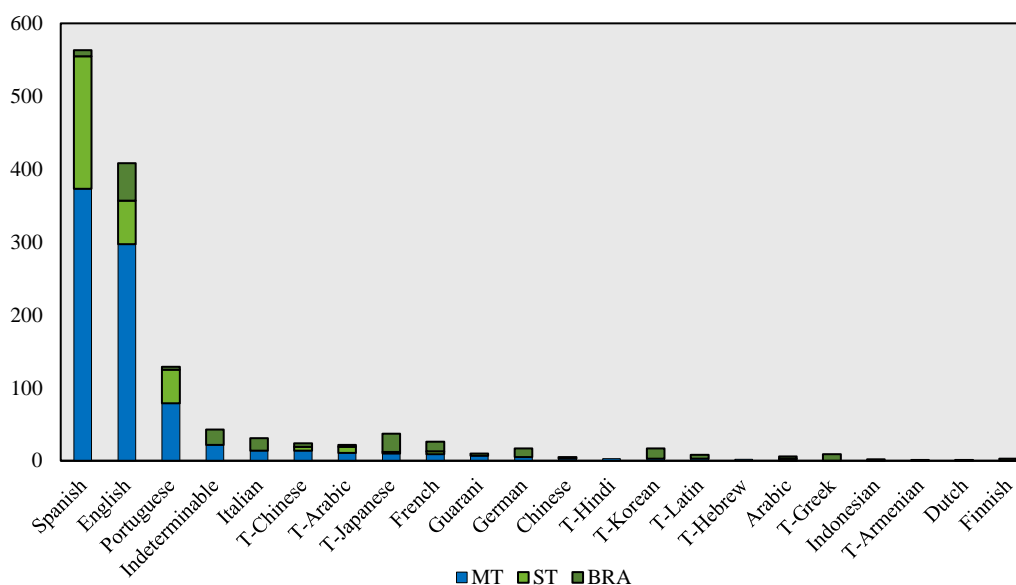
Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Except for brands, the most frequent languages are quite similar in MT and ST, though they vary in the percentage. Spanish has the highest frequency, representing 44% of total MT and 58% of total ST. As for the foreign languages, English leads with 35% in MT, 19% in ST, followed by Portuguese, representing 9% in MT, and 15% in ST. Both Spanish and Portuguese have a higher percentage in ST than in MT.

Regarding brands, English had dominance, with 26% of total brands, followed by Japanese, with 13%, then 11% of languages that could not be determined, and Italian with 9% of total brands.

2. Frequency by N of languages and language combinations

Regarding the number of languages used in each unit of analysis, the signs were grouped into monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, to find patterns of language used proposed by Huebner (2006). Similar to Nikolaou (2017), two analyses were made, one including brands and the other, excluding them. In both cases, the most common sign was monolingual, followed by bilingual, and in third place, multilingual.

Within the research area, 740 bottom-up signs were analyzed. When brands were included, 43% corresponded to monolingual signs, and when excluded, 52%. Bilingual signs represent 38% of the total with brands and 39% when not. Multilingual signs represent 19%

with brands, and without brands, 9%. Considering the patterns of languages used (Huebner 2006), these numbers indicate that though the LL downtown Ciudad del Este has a strong presence of monolingual signs, 57% of the signage, when including brands, contain more than one language. Brands contribute to diversifying the languages' spectrum in the LL, being a source of multilingualism.

Table N° 2. Number of languages on signs.

Languages	*N* w/brands	%	*N* w/o brands	%
Monolingual	321	43%	383	52%
Bilingual	279	38%	292	39%
Multilingual	140	19%	65	9%
Total	**740**	**100%**	**740**	**100%**

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Table N° 1. Languages on monolingual signs.

Monolingual	N w/brands	N w/o brand
Spanish	208	249
English	71	87
Portuguese	24	28
T.Arabic	3	3
T.Chinese	2	2
German	2	2
Italian	2	2
French	-	2
Unclear	5	5
Other	4	3
Total	**321**	**383**

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

In monolingual signs, twelve languages were found. Spanish, one of the official languages in Paraguay, is the most frequent with 65%. Regarding foreign languages, English prominence above all other languages found is quite noticeable, with more than 20% of total monolingual signs. This English privileged condition was also found by other researchers (Berger and Elsenbach 2017; Nikolaou 2017; Shang and Guo 2017). The second most frequent foreign language found in the LL is Portuguese, with 7%, probably motivated by economic reasons, since around 80% of the buyers and tourists are Brazilian. This exemplifies the market value of languages, stated by Edelman and Gorter (2010), who note that transactions are easier when the languages of the target population are used, which will thereby bring more profits.

Table N° 2. Languages on bilingual signs.

Bilingual	N w/brands	N w/o brands
Spa-Eng	165	173
Spa-Por	22	33
Por-Eng	17	18
Spa-T.Jap	10	9
Spa-Unclear	7	7
Eng-T.Chin	6	7
Spa-Gua	-	5
Eng-Fren	5	-
Spa-Ita	5	-
Spa-Fren	5	-
Other	37	40
Total	**279**	**292**

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Within the bilingual signs, 26 different combinations were found when brands were included, and 25 when not. The most frequent combinations are also made up of the most frequent languages in monolingual signs. Spanish-English signs represent almost 60% of the total bilingual signage. Other relevant language combinations are Spanish-Portuguese, of which 8% with brands and 11% without brands, and Portuguese-English, being 6% of the signage in both cases.

All signs that included three or more languages were considered multilingual. When including brands, 61 different combinations were found, 60% of them having only one occurrence. When excluding brands, the number of language combinations dropped to 16. These statistics once again show how brands contribute to diversifying the LL, not necessarily representing any linguistic minority, but giving a sense of international and globalized nature. The most frequent combination was Spanish-English-Portuguese, followed by Spanish-English combinations with other languages.

Table N° 5. Languages on multilingual signs.

Multilingual	N w/brands	N w/o brands
Spa-Eng-Por	28	34
Spa-Eng-Unclear	10	3
Por-Spa-Eng-T.Jap	6	-
Spa-Eng-Gre	6	-
Spa-Eng-T.Chin	5	4
Spa-Eng-T.Arab	4	4
Por-Spa-Eng-T.Chin	4	3
Por-Spa-Eng-T.Arab	3	3
Other	74	14
Total	**140**	**65**

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Relation between languages and commercial activities

To analyze the languages and their relation to commercial activity, the methodology used by Berger and Elsenbach (2017) was applied. Each language was counted separately, so in bilingual and multilingual signs, the individual languages, and not their combinations were considered. This was done to have a clearer outlook on each language's visibility in the different commercial activities represented in the LL.

Regarding a focus on commercial branches, it is notorious that Technology is the predominant category concerning the spectrum of languages present in the LL, whether the corresponding brands are considered or not. In other words, the LL is more diverse when the focus is located on the Technology category. With brands, it is followed by Various, Clothing & Accessories, and Health & Beauty. Without brands, the order slightly changes, but the leading branches are the same. These categories are the most frequently found within the area analyzed (See Graphic 3). They are also the businesses of greater significance and appeal for the customers, mainly tourists, who come to buy the imported items sold by these stores, as stated by Souchaud (2010). From the perspective of the stores' chain, these categories mentioned above largely correspond to independent businesses, which means that the owners are likely locals, either immigrants or Paraguayans.

1.   Language and commerce according to the signage

Table N° 6. N of languages used in the commercial branches

Commercial branch	*N* w/brands	*N* w/o brands
Technology (T)	17	12
Various (V)	14	9
Clothing & Accessories (C)	12	10
Health & Beauty (B)	11	10
Specialized (O)	11	6
Home (H)	9	8
Services (S)	9	9
Gastronomy & Food (G)	8	8
Leisure & Entertainment (L)	6	5
Banking & Financial (F)	3	3

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Graphic N° 3. Languages used in the different commercial branches.
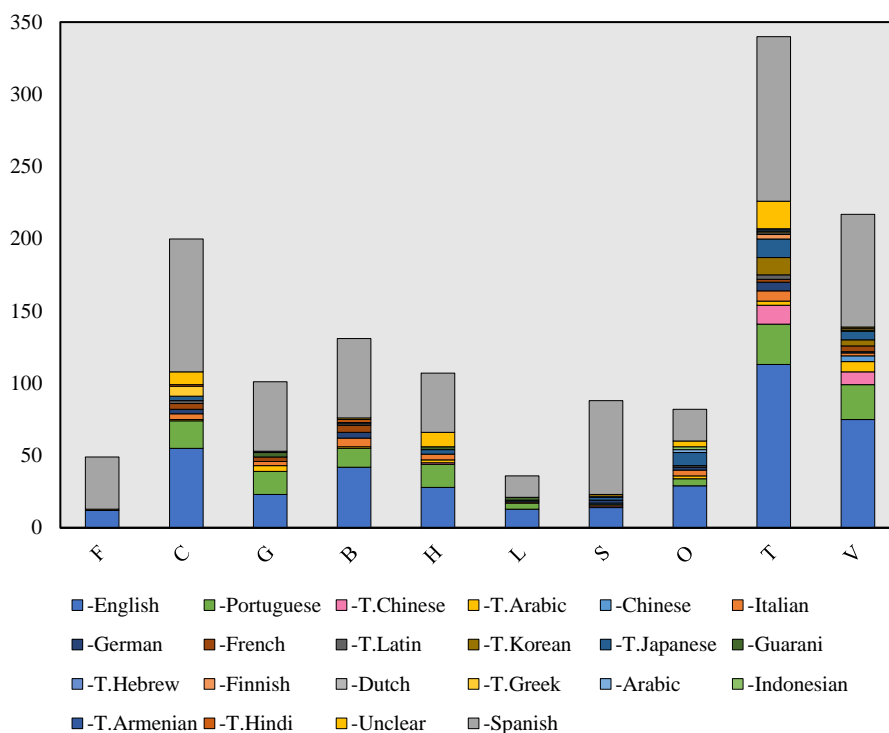
Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

As shown in Graphic 3, Technology is indeed the most widespread commercial branch, followed by Various, Clothing & Accessories, and Health & Beauty. It seems that the more extensive a commercial branch is, then it is prone to involve more languages.

Table N° 7. Languages percentage in each commercial branch.

Languages %	T	V	C	B	O	H	S	G	L	F
Spanish	34%	36%	46%	42%	27%	38%	74%	48%	42%	73%
English	33%	35%	28%	32%	35%	26%	16%	23%	36%	24%
Portuguese	8%	11%	10%	10%	6%	15%	0%	16%	11%	0%
Other languages	25%	18%	16%	16%	32%	21%	10%	13%	11%	3%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

Table N° 7 presents the languages' percentage in each commercial category. But as shown in Graphic 3, language distribution in the category of Technology is more disperse and diverse than in Banking & Financial. In other words, the Technology branch encompasses more languages than what Banking & Financial does. As a result, the Spanish percentage is higher in Banking & Financial than in Technology. However, as shown in Graphic 3, the LL in Technology is broader than in Banking & Financial. For a frequency approach, Table N° 8 shows the corresponding distribution.

Spanish and English are ever-present languages among all the commercial branches. The ones with a higher percentage of Spanish are Services and Banking & Financial. These are also the categories where Portuguese have no incidence, which may be motivated by practical reasons. Considering the nature of these branches, the informative function of language is more important than the symbolic one, which perhaps might also explain the low frequency of other languages within these types of businesses. Most of the commercial activities involved in Services target mainly local citizens, so Portuguese as a means of communication with the Brazilian customers is not needed.

Table N° 8 shows the frequency of each language in different commercial branches. The counting was carried out considering each language individually. Spanish stands out as the most frequent language, totalizing 42% of all the signage analyzed within all the commercial branches. This is not surprising since it is one of the official languages. It is followed by English, with 30%, and Portuguese, with 9% of the total.

Other languages such as Italian and French, have a higher frequency in the categories of Health and Beauty, mainly in perfume brands. T.Greek is almost exclusively found in Clothing & Accessories, within sportswear brands. Specialized is the second category where T.Japanese is more frequently found, especially in brands, and only after Technology. There is also 3% of linguistic data whose language was invented or could not be determined. They were labeled as "Unclear" and were usually in the MT or brands.

2.   *Language and commerce according to interviews*

Five interviews were conducted to different stores to have some insight into the local traders' views and motivations regarding language use. Two reasons were exposed as the motivators for the language used on the sign: for the clientele and to match the products offered. They expressed that the most used language to communicate with the clients is Portuguese and Spanish, since most of the clients are Brazilian. As stated by Jan & Jarko Fidrmuc (2016), "countries with similar languages trade significantly more with each other" (p. 35), increasing the probability of bilateral trade by 10%. They state that if a language is widely spoken, it is unnecessary for it to have an official status to affect trade.

Table 8. Languages frequency in the different commercial branches

Commercial branch	S	E	P	TA	TC	C	It	Ge	Am	L	D	U	K	Fi	I	Fr	Gu	He	Gr	A	Hi	J	Total
Techology	114	113	28	3	13	-	7	6	1	3	1	19	12	3	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	13	340
Various	78	75	24	7	9	4	2	1	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	4	1	-	1	-	-	6	217
Clothing & Accessories	92	55	19	1	-	-	4	3	-	2	-	9	-	-	-	4	-	-	7	-	1	3	200
Health & Beauty	55	42	13	1	-	-	6	4	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	2	-	131
Specialized	22	29	5	2	-	-	4	2	-	1	-	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	9	82
Home	41	28	16	2	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	107
Services	65	14	-	1	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	88
Gastronomy & Food	48	23	16	4	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	1	-	-	101
Leisure & Entertainment	15	13	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	36
Banking & Financial	36	12	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
Total N	566	404	125	22	24	5	31	18	1	7	1	45	16	3	2	18	8	2	9	4	3	37	1351
Total %	42%	30%	9%	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	100%

S = Spanish; E = English; P = Portuguese; TA = T.Arabic; TC = T.Chinese; C = Chinese; It = Italian; Ge = German; Am = T.Armenian; L = T.Latin; D = Dutch; U = Unclear;
K = T.Korean; Fi = Finnish; In = Indonesian; Fr = French; Gu = Guarani; He = T.Hebrew; Gr = T.Greek; A = Arabic; Hi = T.Hindi; J = T.Japanese
Source: Data collected by the author, Ciudad del Este, 2020.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate the presence of different linguistic groups in the site, yet an uneven distribution of the languages in the LL in terms of their visibility, and English's privileged position among other foreign languages. As stated by Cenoz and Gorter (2006), dominant languages have stronger presence in the LL than minority languages. LLs do not reveal the diversity within the linguistic groups present but manifest underlying linguistic ideologies (Wardhaugh and Fuller 2014). The results of the LL analyzed contributes to understanding the market profile of this location. An interpretation of the data was attempted based on the theoretical frameworks of Backhaus (2007) and Ben-Rafael (2009) exposed previously to answer the research question.

The first question suggested by Backhaus (2007) concerns the authorship of the sign, which in this research corresponds to the bottom-up. According to the sociolinguistic survey shown in Graphic 1, the Lebanese and the Chinese represent the largest immigrant group, which coincides with Rabossi (2013), who said that the Lebanese, the Brazilian, and Paraguayan built the economic identity of Ciudad del Este.

With respect to the languages in the LL and their frequency, 22 were found. However, the visibility of the immigrant minority languages does not correspond to the linguistic groups present. Not everyone is visible, and the frequency is certainly low. The LL is extensively dominated by Spanish (42%), one of the official languages, followed by a substantial presence of English (30%), which is neither an official nor an immigrant language, and Portuguese (9%) in third place. Other languages, such as Korean and Japanese, are given some visibility through transliterated writing, mainly within the brands and seldomly in the MT as proper names. Despite brands do not represent a linguistic community, they manifest an economic value by being displayed. These results coincide with the findings exposed by Berger and Elsenbach (2017) on their LL study in Foz do Iguaçu. The researchers concluded that the languages found are displayed asymmetrically within the LL, being English by far the preferred minority language, showing its power relation over the other languages.

This dominance of English may be explained through the principles of good-reasons and the presentation of self, stated by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006). According to these principles, the actors use language to stick out and to seem appealing to the customers, for which they adapt to their tastes and tendencies. On the other hand, the low frequency of the minority languages shows that the visibility of the collective identity through the signage is not a priority among the actors of the LL.

Regarding the patterns of languages (Huebner 2006), when brands were excluded from the analysis, more than half the total signs were monolingual (52%). When they were included, it dropped to 43%. Within monolingual signs, Spanish had 65%, followed by 22% of English and 7% of Portuguese. Despite Spanish's strong presence in monolingual signage, 35% of signs contain only a foreign language (See Table N°3). This percentage is considerably high if one considers the city's linguistic policies regarding the use of foreign languages in the visual space where it is declared that they must not stand alone nor be the most prominent language in the sign (ABC Color 2011; Ferreira 2011; Junta Municipal de Ciudad del Este 2011).

In contrast, Guarani, despite being an official and a national language, has nearly no representation in the LL, with just 1% of the total signage. As recognized by Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014), LLs are not an accurate reflection of the official status of languages. However, they do manifest the *de facto* status assigned. This situation may be a result of the traditionally spoken nature of the indigenous languages (Engelbrecht and Ortiz 2009) and to the highly

economical identity of the site, likely to adapt itself to be more suitable for the target clientele, represented around 80% by Brazilians, 15% by Argentinians, and only 5% by Paraguayans. This statistic may also explain the low frequency of the other minority languages spoken by the immigrant communities.

The second question suggested by Backhaus (2007) concerns the reader of the sign. For discussing this question, brands were excluded. According to the author, it is assumed that the readers are capable of understanding what is written but acknowledges also that this relationship may not be straightforward. This ambiguous relation is proven by the extensive presence of English within the researched LL. Regarding the type of text, it represents 35% of the MT, and 19% in the ST, despite not being an English-speaking environment. English is positioned just after Spanish, which has 44% in the MT and 58% in the ST, and before Portuguese, with 9% of the MT and 15% of the ST.

When looking at Spanish and Portuguese, both languages have a higher percentage in the ST than in the MT. Conversely, in English and other foreign languages such as Italian and German, the MT percentages are higher than the ST. This shows that languages have a role in the LL and are purposively chosen because of it. This may be motivated because the ST mostly conveys information about the store or product being offered, whereas the MT may also serve a symbolic function to attract the attention of potential customers. In that sense, it is not surprising to have more linguistic diversity in MT than in ST. As declared by several authors (Backhaus 2007; Berger and Elsenbach 2017; Shang and Guo 2017; Spolsky and Cooper 1991), language use in the visual space reflects the perceived cultural and economic values of languages and the dominance of some above the others. The use of English in a non-English speaking environment would not be motivated by the informational but rather the symbolic function (Landry and Bourhis 1997), perhaps due to its association with modernity, technology, and globalization.

On the other hand, the presence of Portuguese in the LL could be motivated by several factors. The vivid economic dynamic between both sides of the border (DGEEC 2012; Rabossi 2013; Souchaud 2010), the majority of the customers in Ciudad del Este being Brazilians (Griebeler 2020; Thomé Arruda 2007), and the extensive use of spoken Portuguese (Ferreira 2011; Galeano 2011). As Jan and Jarko Fidrmuc (2016) stated, when a language is widely spoken, it affects trade, despite not being an official language. Therefore, one could assume that Portuguese has an informative function, while also enjoying a symbolic value used to connect with and attract the Brazilian clientele. However, it is possible that after the foreign language law enforcement applied in the city in 2011 (ABC Color 2011), the extent of Portuguese in the LL had decreased.

Regarding the relation between commercial branches and languages used, the data analysis results suggest that the language spectrum varies among the different commercial branches. The categories that sell products such as technology, clothing & accessories, and health & beauty present a more comprehensive range of languages than the categories that offer services, such as banking & financial, and other services. Moreover, services and banking & financial branches have higher percentages of Spanish. As a result, the language dispersion in those categories is narrower. On the other hand, the categories mentioned above that sell products have a higher percentage dispersion among the languages' spectrum, represented by a landscape dominated by Spanish, English, and a considerable Portuguese percentage. These results coincide with the interviewees' answers regarding language choice, who declared that it is mainly motivated by the clientele and the type of product offered.

Looking at the brands' language in commercial activities, once again, it was dominated by English (26%). This agrees with Gorter and Cenoz (2017), who said that English use in brands and slogans impacted the LL tremendously. The second was T.Japanese (13%), followed by undetermined languages (11%) and Italian (9%). This result might be associated with the popular commercial branches and the opinions on those languages, T.Japanese is related to technology, and Italian to sophistication an class, within clothing & accessories and health & beauty. Other languages such as T.Greek was almost exclusively found within sportswear brands. It may be due to the strong sports culture in ancient Greece and its connection to the Olympic Games.

As stated before, brands do not convey specific product information as the ST does, but they are the product themselves. Therefore, when an advertisement or a store includes in the sign the brands they sell, it might be argued that they make use of both the informative and the symbolic language function. Informative, since they do it to communicate the product availability to specific customers that might be interested in purchasing those brands and that would recognize the brand through its logo; and symbolic since languages in product's name are purposively chosen to be associated to the stereotypes of the commercial branch they are involved into, despite the language choice in these situations is not defined by the stores' owner, but by the brands' corporation (Edelman and Gorter 2010).

The relation between both variables (commercial branch and language) can be described through the symbolic and the informational function of language exposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997). The categories offering services tend to use language mainly for pragmatic reasons, to make their services known and be understood. Therefore, the informative function prevails, for which Spanish is mostly chosen. On the other hand, the categories selling products tend to choose language not only to convey information but, to a great extent, to communicate positive stereotypes associated with the language. Despite English being present in all the commercial branches, it is more prominent in the technology category. Therefore, both informative and symbolic functions are used, for which there is a more extensive diversity of languages found.

CONCLUSION

Concerning the relation of the commercial activities and language use, variations among the branches selling products and those offering services were noticed. The stores offering services used mostly Spanish, while the stores selling products used, in addition to Spanish, a broader spectrum of languages of which English stood out as the preferred foreign code in every commercial category. The motivation behind it was that the product-related stores are more likely to target foreign customers, whereas services-related stores target mainly local citizens.

This research provides a remarkable insight into the linguistic factors that influenced the market dynamics of Ciudad del Este. On the one hand, these factors are the symbolic value of foreign languages, primarily English, and, on the other hand, the native language of the clients, which are mostly Brazilians, and hence, Portuguese. Consequently, the market's power compelled the immigrant and national groups to adapt themselves to satisfy the linguistic needs of the market, which was fostered by the border location of Ciudad del Este. This adaptation of the immigrant and national actors produced a unique and commercially driven LL in Ciudad del Este, where the "for whom" is more important than the "by whom"..

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