

Linguistic Landscapes of Chinese communities in Australia

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Abstract

Deeper and wider processes of globalisation have contributed to increased mobility in society. As more people move across borders along with their personal histories, cultures and languages, transnational places and diaspora communities have become ideal sites of research (Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2016; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Recently, there has been unprecedented interest in sociolinguistic phenomena in superdiverse, metropolitan cities, giving rise to the emergence of linguistic landscape research. Linguistic landscape originally referred to the languages used on publicly visible street signs, such as shop signs, advertisements and road signs (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, & Trumper-Hecht, 2006). Later, the definition was expanded to account for the use of all semiotic resources, including linguistic forms, in the public arena (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Despite ongoing efforts to document and describe urban landscapes in different parts of the world (Blackwood, Lanza, & Woldemariam, 2016), little work to date has attempted to formulate a comprehensive response to recent trends in linguistic landscape research. As a fledgling field of study, linguistic landscape research has received wide criticism for employing a crude type of quantitative analysis that regards languages as clearly definable units (Blommaert, 2019). The fact that the linguistic landscape perspective can incorporate different fields of sociolinguistics, such as research on minority languages, also raises questions about its theoretical and methodological paths (Van Mensel, Vandenbrouke, & Blackwood, 2017). Drawing on frameworks grounded in geosemiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), superdiversity (Blommaert, 2013) and metrolingualism (Pennycook, 2017), this thesis aims to interrogate the theory, methodology, framing of power and relevance of linguistic landscape research. For this purpose, I employ an ethnographically oriented approach to examine three complex case studies of the linguistic landscapes of Chinese

communities in Victoria, Australia. Throughout the thesis, I gradually construct the coherent argument that linguistic landscape research benefits from a geosemiotic theory, an ethnographic methodology, a social semiotic perspective to power relations and an exploration of social media landscape. Findings of the three case studies shed light on how semiotic resources are purposefully employed to construct nostalgia, power and identity. Overall, the thesis expands the theoretical and methodological reach of linguistic landscape research by interrogating the urban-centric perspective, adopting an assemblage view of sign systems, offering a triadic framework for power relations, and pushing the boundaries of linguistic landscapes.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, semiotic resources, geosemiotic analysis, metrolingual practices, power relations, social media, Chinese

Declaration

This PhD research project has been approved by the Faculty of Arts HEAG Human Ethics Advisory Group, as a Minimal Risk Project (ethics ID: 1750047). I hereby declare that:

1. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy except where indicated in the preface;
2. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used;
3. The length of this thesis is fewer than 100,000 words, exclusive of tables, bibliographies and appendices.

Preface

This is a thesis with publication. It includes four articles, in their accepted or submitted forms where appropriate.

Paper 1 in Chapter 4:

Yao, X. (2020). Material narration of nostalgia: The linguistic landscape of a rural township in Australia. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 14(1–2), 7–31.
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Paper 3 in Chapter 6:

Yao, X. (revision submitted). Commodification or shared ownership? A case study of Chinese communities in the tourism landscape. *Applied Linguistics Review*.

Paper 4 in Chapter 7:

Yao, X. (revision submitted). Metrolingualism in online linguistic landscapes. *International Journal of Multilingualism*.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Context of the study

With a stronger wave of globalisation, there has been increased mobility and more frequent exchanges among people, languages and cultures. As a result, linguistic landscape research has attracted greater attention from a wider research community, including sociolinguistics, social semiotics, and language policy and planning (Blackwood, 2015; Blackwood et al., 2016; Shohamy, 2015). According to the often-cited definition of Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25), *linguistic landscape* refers to “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings in each territory, region, or urban agglomeration”. As linguistic landscapes often consist of public signs in urban centres where there are abundant sociolinguistic interactions, Shohamy and Gorter (2009) proposed that *multilingual cityscape* may be better suited to describe such multilingual phenomena, although this definition has not been widely applied. With the recognition that other discursive modalities besides the linguistic element, including visual images, spatial arrangements and olfactory senses, are important for the construction and interpretation of place, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010, p. 2) proposed the notion of *semiotic landscape* to mean “any public space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making”. Since then, the boundary of linguistic landscape has undergone constant re-definition.

Diverse and dynamic visual landscapes have struck researchers with their rich textual information, colourful images, artful design and, most importantly, unmatched possibilities for interpretations. Linguistic landscape researchers have drawn widely interdisciplinary approaches from multimodality, education and media studies (e.g., Kelly-Holmes & Milani, 2013; Rowland, 2013; Zabrodskaia & Milani, 2014). A range

of empirical studies employing quantitative-distributive analysis, qualitative case studies or ethnographic analysis have been carried out in many parts of the world, notably in Asian, European and African cities (e.g., Blommaert & Maly, 2014; Nikolaou, 2017; Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014). However, the basic assumption of linguistic landscape remains that semiotic resources on signs in public spaces are not arbitrary nor random but are purposefully arranged and designed based on the opportunities and constraints offered by the discourses in place (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009).

Among the various focuses and contexts, Chinese communities have attracted significant attention from linguistic landscape researchers given their increasing visibility and diverse representations in the public space. Depending on the geographical and sociocultural settings, we can distinguish two major streams of research that focus on Chinese communities in the linguistic landscape. A good number of studies have explored traditional or newly emerged Chinatowns in diasporic contexts, with an aim to problematise stereotypic interpretations of Chineseness (Amos, 2016; Leeman & Modan, 2009; Lou, 2012; Sharma, 2019; Wu, Techasan, & Huebner, 2020). Another group of researchers are more interested in categorising the uses of multilingual, multiscriptal and multimodal texts concerning Chinese languages in globalised societies and revealing the conflicting language ideologies and sociocultural beliefs implied wherein (Shang & Guo, 2017; Zhang, 2016; Zhang & Chan, 2017). Linguistic landscape studies of Chinese communities have increasingly demonstrated that the spatial boundaries of Chinese communities are blurry, as are the definitions of Chinese languages, cultures and identities.

Recent trends in linguistic landscape research

The expanded theoretical, methodological and geographical focus of linguistic

landscape research also brings about challenges. For example, how theories and analytical frameworks from different disciplines can be applied to different contexts to address local issues remains open for discussion (e.g., Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Pennycook, 2017). Although the linguistic landscape has been exploited to reveal various sociolinguistic concerns, most notably language ideology and ethnolinguistic identities, these attempts have received wide criticism as being simplistic and weakly framed (Blommaert, 2013; Manan, David, Dumanig, & Naqeebullah, 2014). Also, expanding the scope of linguistic landscape research means that the field is, to some extent, gradually losing validity as a stand-alone area (e.g., Kitis & Milani, 2015; Pappenhagen, Scarvaglieri, & Redder, 2016; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Important questions are being raised regarding the relevance of linguistic landscape for various stakeholders besides the research community. There are emerging trends in the field that seek to recognise, examine and address these issues (Barni & Bagna, 2015; Blackwood, 2015; Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Shohamy, 2012, 2015).

Theoretical orientation

Linguistic landscape researchers from language policy and planning background have been preoccupied with the binary view that categorises signs into ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ types (Demaj & Vandenbroucke, 2016; Shohamy, 2015). From their perspective, languages and language combinations can be easily enumerated to reveal public and private ideology (see Backhaus, 2006; Backhaus, 2007). Such a structuralist and fixed perspective of language is, however, being challenged by a poststructuralist perspective that recognises the fluid and mobile nature of communicative practices (García & Li, 2014; Pennycook, 2017). Indeed, the use of linguistic resources is more than a switch of language code; it is also a social phenomenon situated in a superdiverse

context, one which requires special attention to the spatial repertoire offered by the linguistic landscape (Jaworski, 2014b; Mirvahedi, 2016).

Methodological evolution

There has been ongoing discussion about the use of different methodologies in empirical linguistic landscape research (Barni & Bagna, 2015). Quantitative analysis was the major approach of most pre-2009 studies, but it was later complemented by qualitative analysis, including critical genre and narrative analysis (Huebner, 2009; Wetzel, 2010), ethnographic perspectives (Blommaert, 2013; Stroud & Jegels, 2014) and multimodal analysis (Järlehed & Jaworski, 2015). That said, Blackwood (2015) argued that most of these approaches are symbiotic, better used in coalition to offer both a panoramic and a fine-grained examination of multilingualism in urban areas (p. 50). A way forward for linguistic landscape research, as suggested by Shohamy and Waksman (2009), is to draw on diverse frameworks and approaches to address social, cultural, historical and political issues as they arise in the public spaces.

Framing of power relations

Linguistic landscape has been stretched in various ways to resolve sociolinguistic mysteries, and its focus on power entails a consideration of the unequal relationships among creators and users of signs within a social space (Barni & Bagna, 2015; Blommaert, 2013). Nevertheless, the notion of power was only weakly framed in terms of the dominance of official languages over community languages in linguistic landscape studies (see Amos, 2017; Shang & Guo, 2017). As we are aware, power as a dominant force is not the only way in which power can be excised (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). In fact, the role linguistic landscape has played in sustaining or challenging these unequal relations of power through the reproduction of public or private ideology can be understood better by drawing on critical discourse studies and

social semiotics to investigate the various forms of power relations (Berger, 2005; Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009; VeneKlasen, Miller, Budlender, & Clark, 2002).

Expanding the scenery

Numerous studies have attested to the relevance of linguistic landscape for brand marketers (Coluzzi, 2016), language policy (LP) makers (Mirvahedi, 2016), education practitioners (Rowland, 2015) and diaspora communities (Li Wei, 2016). However, there is still criticism over whether linguistic landscape is a legitimate field of study and in which direction it will be going in the future (Nash, 2016). Prominent scholars in the field have indeed mapped out different trajectories for linguistic landscape, either merging it with LP or regarding it as a miniature version of translanguaging and metrolingual phenomena (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Pennycook, 2017; Shohamy, 2015). As the scope of linguistic landscape constantly expands to incorporate smell-, sound-, body-, online- or even X-scapes, as the theme of 2018 International Workshop on Linguistic Landscape suggests, researchers have started to imagine more possibilities for linguistic landscape – for example, by extending the boundary to online media space (Blommaert, 2019).

Aim and scope

The purpose of this study is to further explore the four recent trends in current linguistic landscape research, by using the case study of Chinese communities in Australia. In the thesis, I present and examine three complex case studies of Chinese communities in the linguistic landscapes in rural, urban and online settings respectively. The first case study investigates the production and consumption of Chinese restaurant signs in the rural space and illustrates the evocative potential of the linguistic landscape. The second case study focuses on the negotiation of power relations between Chinese

and non-Chinese communities in the urban space and proposes an analytical framework for interpreting the semiotic representations of power. In the third case study, I analyse the metrolingual practices of overseas Chinese people and consider how the affordances of online space facilitate their heterogenous presentations of identities in the linguistic landscape. These case studies collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the theoretical orientation, methodological evolution, framing of power and expanded scenery of linguistic landscape research.

This study was theoretically grounded in geosemiotics, superdiversity and metrolingualism. Geosemiotics was developed by Scollon and Scollon (2003) independently of early linguistic landscape studies. The theoretical interest of geosemiotics in developing the framework for analysis of public signs is about materiality and indexicality, which aligns with the research objective of this study. Superdiversity and metrolingualism are two other important concepts for understanding the complexity and diversity of social and linguistic practices in multilingual societies. This study integrates these concepts with geosemiotics to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of linguistic landscapes. I take both a synchronic and diachronic view of signs in the Australian context, including personal histories, social transformations and physical environments (Blommaert, 2013; Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Zabrodskaia & Milani, 2014). Photographs of signs in surveyed neighbourhoods, interviews with sign makers and social media screenshots constituted the major sources of data. Collected signs were scrutinised with a layering of quantitative analysis, geosemiotic analysis and thematic analysis of interviews, where necessary (King & Mackey, 2016).

Limits to the research were considered from the start. Although I recognise multimodal meaning-making resources on public signs (van Leeuwen, 2011a), I gave priority to the analysis of languages and their font, size and colour, as well as visual

images. In the study, I excluded verbal interactions in the linguistic landscape and instead focused on the materiality and physical placement of public signage (e.g., Lou, 2017; Pappenhagen et al., 2016). This means that emphasis was placed on the role of signs in meaning making and place making rather than verbal communication among linguistic landscape participants. The study was also scoped by my identity as a Chinese-English bilingual, which explains my focus on the analysis of multilingual and multimodal Chinese signs and Chinese communities in the linguistic landscape. Due to limited time and resources, survey sites were selected within the Melbourne region, and a total of 14 participants were interviewed.

Significance of the study

This thesis will make significant contributions to the field of linguistic landscape by advancing our understanding in various aspects, including the role of affect, the framing of power, rural and online spaces, and the heterogeneity of Chinese diaspora. The first intended outcome of the thesis is to highlight the evocative potential of linguistic landscapes. Specifically, I focus on the notion of nostalgic regimes and how it can be useful for describing the set of conditions in the public space that prescribe the evocation of nostalgic feelings among participants. Nostalgia is viewed from a materialist perspective as an affect that is ordered and narrated by material resources external to people in the linguistic landscape. By shifting the analytical lens to how language and space evoke affective responses, this study aligns with emerging trend in the broader discipline of applied linguistics that aims at decentring the human and refocusing our attention on the spatial environment (Pennycook, 2019; Wee, 2015).

The second intended outcome of the thesis is to contribute an analytical framework of power to linguistic landscape research in terms of ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power through’. I focus on the various forms of power in the public space and

analyse how power is represented and constructed through semiotic resources. Drawing on ethnographic insights, the study will illustrate how power could be indexed by ethnic bodies, literacy practices and semiotic objects in the linguistic landscape. From a touristic perspective, Chinese diasporic communities claim power by asserting visibility and ownership despite consistent institutional efforts to commodify, package and market Chinese semiotic resources for tourist consumption (Heller et al., 2014a). This thesis aims to offer a reinterpretation of power with an emphasis on the vital role of linguistic and semiotic resources in the discourse construction. These insights could serve as important basis for further discussions about power and its implications in linguistic landscape studies.

The third intended outcome of the thesis is to shift our focus to less explored settings, including from urban to rural and from offline to online spaces. Rural towns and regional cities are places where affect and power are contested; these areas should also fall within the analytical scope of linguistic landscape research, if the field aims at opening its terrain for interdisciplinary approaches and different contexts. Although the linguistic landscapes of marginal and peripheral communities may not be comparable to multilingual cityscapes in terms of the abundance of public signage and the richness of semiotic activities, insights drawn on from these areas could complement our understanding of the structuration of the linguistic landscape, as demonstrated by emerging studies of rural and remote communities (Bhreithiun & Burke, 2015; Jenks, 2018; Juffermans & Coppoolse, 2012; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009).

Furthermore, in the offline world, personal trajectories, business activities and semiotic artefacts are assembled *in situ* to facilitate meaning making (Pennycook, 2017). Online spaces, however, represent a different spatial repertoire from which individuals may employ semiotic resources to negotiate their presentation of selves and

navigate the normative orders in social networks. This thesis intends to show that participants of online linguistic landscapes exhibit metrolingual practices or creative uses of semiotic materials and technological affordances. The notions of spatial repertoire and metrolingual practices could be used to understand online communication, which is characterised by collapsed social boundaries and intertextual references to offline realities. The notion of linguistic landscape needs to be reimagined to account for semiotic practices in online digital spaces.

The fourth intended outcome of the thesis is to advance our understanding of the heterogeneity of Chinese diasporic communities. This study focuses on the semiotic practices of Chinese communities in a wide range of contexts spanning rural, regional and online spaces. It is important to note that members of Chinese communities may have distinct migration trajectories, personal histories and lived experiences, which would shape their ways of creating, negotiating and interpreting meanings in the era of mobility and globalisation (Blommaert, 2013). These nuances in linguistic and semiotic practices may be underlined by different ideological structures, sociocultural beliefs and normative expectations, and revealed through a meticulous linguistic landscape analysis. Insights drawn from the linguistic landscapes of Chinese diaspora would improve our understanding of the heterogenous cultural affiliations, multilayered identities and diverse sociocultural activities of Chinese persons, which is far more than complex than simplistic ethnic and migrant categories (Ganassin, 2020).

Overview

The thesis is organised in line with the four trends in linguistic landscape research. Chapter 1 contextualises the problem, outlines key trends in the field and briefly introduces the aim, scope and significance of the thesis; Chapter 2 draws on interdisciplinary knowledge to critically review and evaluate the theoretical foundations

of linguistic landscape research; Chapter 3 justifies the choice of an adapted geosemiotic framework and explains the case study design as well as other methodological procedures; Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the rural linguistic landscape and dissects the narration of nostalgia through material resources; Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the complex case of Bendigo with a focus on power relations; Chapter 7 interrogates the boundary of the linguistic landscape by exploring the metrolingual practices in the collapsed context of the WeChat Moment. Chapter 8 reflects on the extent to which the four case study chapters further explore the recent trends in linguistic landscape research; Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by establishing its implications and proposing an agenda for further research. The appendices include a glossary and the interview protocol.

Chapter 2 Foundations of linguistic landscape research

The previous chapter outlines recent trends in linguistic landscape research and states the aim and significance of this study. In Chapter 2, I review current literature to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the theory, methodology, framing of power and relevance of linguistic landscape research.

Theoretical foundation

Linguistic landscape researchers often draw on diverse theoretical frameworks to address the relationships between language and space. The ways in which communicative practices both frame and are framed by space have been discussed in several studies. Landry and Bourhis (1997) believed that linguistic landscape geographically demarcates the boundaries of ethnolinguistic communities. In an often-cited definition, linguistic landscape refers to “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings in each territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25). However, the presence of linguistic communities may not necessarily correspond with the languages used in the public space (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). Spolsky (2009) argued instead that language choices on signage may be based on the ideology of individual sign writers, who might “write a sign in a language you know, prefer to write a sign in a language which can be read by the people you expect to read it, and prefer to write a sign in your own language or in a language you wish to be identified with” (p. 33). In this sense, linguistic landscape represents constructed reality based on ideologies and values, rather than the actual demographic composition in the public space (Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael, 2015).

To make salient the important notion of space for linguistic landscape studies, Shohamy (2015) adapted Lefebvre’s (1991) model of space to distinguish *perceived*

space (everyday social life and common-sense perception), *conceived space* (space envisioned by urban designers and the authorities) and *lived space* (space experienced by people through semiotic resources). These three dimensions explain how the ‘spaces’, once filled with sociocultural values, are symbolically constructed into ‘places’ (Hult, 2014). Simply put, physical linguistic landscapes are transformed into contested social places by languages and additional semiotic resources used for various purposes (Lou, 2017). Thus, linguistic landscape research essentially investigates the intersection of language, communication and space/place to understand communicative practices situated in context (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Maly, 2016; Zabrodska & Milani, 2014).

A situated understanding of communicative practices in the linguistic landscape requires an updated theoretical framework, one that moves away from the frequency counting of visible languages and language combinations. As a response, Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael (2015) proposed four principles to delineate the ways in which linguistic landscape is structured in the era of globalisation. Firstly, informed by Bourdieu, who viewed social reality as constructed by power relations among participants, Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael believed that the principle of *power relations* could explain why some actors in the linguistic landscape impose patterns of behaviours on others through language use. Secondly, from sociocultural perspectives, *collective identity* may be useful to describe cases in which some linguistic landscape items are designed to assert the identities of regional, ethnic and religious communities for commercial purposes. The remaining two principles are borrowed from Goffman’s (2006) subjectivist theory, including *presentation-of-self*, meaning that linguistic landscape items are used to assert individual characteristics, and *the good-reasons*, where sign owners consider consumer psychology when designing their signage.

According to Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael (2015), linguistic landscape is a confluence of individual, corporate and public actions; the four principles, at the very least, provide a thread for us to navigate the convoluted public space.

Despite the potential explanatory power of the structuration framework, the four principles have not been widely adopted by linguistic landscapers, for two reasons. First, it is difficult to determine which principles are prioritised during sign-making without ethnographic details (Shohamy, Ben-Rafael, & Barni, 2010). Multiple principles may apply at the same time, but which one is more important at a given time and space remains unknown. Second, the theory is informed by a structuralist approach, where languages, power and identities are seen as static rather than fluid constructs (Moriarty, 2014). Additionally, the theory does not consider a whole range of other meaning-making resources derived from the context, including visual images, verbal and non-verbal interactions, and spatial configurations (Jaworski, 2015). The following section introduces three lines of thinking from sociolinguistic and social semiotic theories, including geosemiotics, superdiversity and metrolingualism, with an aim to advance a theoretical understanding for linguistic landscape research.

Geosemiotics

Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotic theory is believed to be the most well-received theoretical foundation for current linguistic landscape research (Hult, 2014; Lou, 2012, 2017; Mirvahedi, 2016). From a spatial and material perspective, the Scollons applied the geosemiotic framework to studying the rules, meaning potentials and constraints of a place, and uncovering the meaning of public artefacts. Specifically, geosemiotic theory is informed by three traditions in linguistic and semiotic studies: (1) linguistic anthropology which draws on the concept of interaction order from conversation analysis to theorise social arrangements among people through

interpersonal distance; (2) social semiotics which is dedicated to the analysis of materiality and semiotic resources involved in sign-making; and (3) place semiotics which examines the signs by situating them in time and space (see also Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016 for a review of geosemiotics).

Empirically, geosemioticians collect public signs through ethnographic observation, photographs, and videos and examine the data in terms of three analytical perspectives. In line with Scollon and Scollon (2003), the first strand of analysis focuses on the interaction order, which involves linguistic landscape participants' (a) sense of time, (b) perceptual spaces, (c) interpersonal distance and (d) personal front. To illustrate, sense of time or duration is subject to the urgency of matter and the number of activities performed at a time. Perceptual spaces refer to the visual, auditory, olfactory, thermal and tactile space, although preference is given to the first two spaces in practical analysis. Interpersonal distances can be intimate, personal, social or public, depending on the number of inches between interlocutors (see also Hall, 1966). Finally, personal fronts mean the external displays of a person in the presence of others, who carefully organises involvement by evaluating social order at play (see also Goffman, 2006). Notably, the analysis emphasises the rules and norms in social interaction and how these are taken up by social actors and embodied through their relationship with the signs (Jewitt et al., 2016).

Figure 2.1 is an example to illustrate the embodiment of interaction order. According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), each human sense demarcates a perceptual space within which the signs take up their meanings. While this massage sign is most likely to be perceived as providing a visual orientation to the shop, it also invites us to make a connection between intimate touching and a soothing feeling in our tactile space. As there is a mono-focal activity that is taking place in the featured picture, that

is, the inferred slow movement of fingers and the still bodily position, the sign indicates less urgency and slowly passing time. The interpersonal distance suggested by the massage sign is certainly one of an intimate nature as it involves skin touching, although this is not intended as seeking an intimate relationship with the person outside performing the professional role of masseur. In terms of personal fronts, the masseur sets up a room that has timber floor and linen, and the customer enacts her social role through the conventionalised, downward-facing posture and half-naked clothing. These material aspects and objects of the surroundings have been brought together to present personal fronts in the service encounter.



Figure 2.1 Chinese massage shop sign

The second strand of analysis takes semiotic signs as its focus. Based on Scollon

and Scollon (2003), the analysis attends to (a) elements represented in the sign, (b) truth value of the representation, (c) compositional layout of signs and (d) interactive participants. To illustrate, elements within pictures can be represented as narrative of unfolding actions and processes if there are vectors among elements, such as eye gaze or direction of movement (e.g. Tan, O'Halloran, Wignell, Chai, & Lange, 2018).

Without vectorial relationships, elements would be represented as conceptual categories, for example, a diagram. In considering truth values or visual modality, colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation, contextualisation, representation, depth, illumination and brightness could indicate truthfulness of the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). For naturalistic representation in Western aesthetics, ideal and given information is located in the upper, left positions whereas real and new information is in the lower, right portions (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Finally, interactions between represented elements within signs and viewers are of special concern. Notably, social distance in images may be represented by the size of the image within the picture frame (see also Coupland & Garrett, 2010); a rule of thumb is that the bigger the size, the closer the social distance. Additionally, power and involvement relationships are represented by a low-angle and a high-angle shot respectively, which puts the audience either below or above the eye level of the participant within the picture.

For example, Figure 2.2 represents two notable elements, that is, two Chinese girls. Although they have no direct eye gaze, their bodily positions indicate a vector of movement towards each other. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this sign suggests a narrative relationship in which the direction of motion produces the narrative vector from one girl to another. If one accepts the assumption of Western aesthetics that naturalist representation is the most faithful of reality, this sign might be classified as of

low modality since its represented elements, colour saturation and brightness appear to be carefully planned and crafted. A caveat is, however, that Figure 2.2 is a photograph taken by me and my camera may have added another layer of modality to the sign being photographed. In terms of compositional layout, the shop name 'Asian Mix' occupies the centre whereas the mobile sim advertisement is polarised to the left, right, and bottom position. This compositional structure indicates the relative importance of information in the shopfront sign. Interestingly, the construction elements of two girls in the picture "not only exhibit a narrative or conceptual relationship among themselves, but they also establish relations with viewers of the image" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 96). The direct look into viewer's eyes represents a request for social interaction, and the half-body shot mimics the view that the interactants get when they are within the social space of these two girls. The sign is shown from a position that puts the eye level of the elements below the viewer, this low angle shot represents an involvement nature of the interactive relationship.



Figure 2.2 Asian mix shop sign

Most importantly, place semiotics examines the ways in which signs are indexical of meanings due to their placement in the material world. To understand the significance of place in signifying meanings, Scollon and Scollon (2003) delineated four analytical perspectives including (a) code preference, (b) inscription, (c) emplacement and (d) discourses in time and space. To illustrate, preferences for language codes can be analysed based on their relative position on signs; the compositional arrangement can either index the linguistic community or symbolise sign producers' ideology. The analysis of inscription, on the other hand, focuses on fonts, material, layering and state changes. Specifically, fonts refer to typefaces, Romanisation

and calligraphy. In the case of Chinese, for example, the Romanisation and character systems are associated with geopolitical ideology (Curtin, 2009; Wang & de Velde, 2015). Materials convey meanings about permanency, temporality and quality through aspects such as medium of inscription, material of the signs and freshness of installation (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009). Layering through add-on signs implies newness and temporality, while state changes of fluorescent signs or lightboxes may signal directives for action.

With regard to emplacement, Scollon and Scollon (2003) theorize three categories of signs, including decontextualised, transgressive and situated signs. Decontextualised signs are those appearing in the same form regardless of context, such as brand name or trademarks. To illustrate, icons that resemble the object, indexes that point to or are attached to the object and symbols that are conventionally associated with the object are examples of decontextualised signs (Jaworski & Yeung, 2010). Transgressive signs refer to those which were put up in the wrong place whereas situated signs are those whose meanings can be inferred based on their emplacement (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Typical examples include regulatory signs and store names. Discourses in time and space are another focus of place semiotics. As Lee and Lou (2019) noted, spaces are dissected by public signs in front stage and private signs in backstage. These signs are emplaced in spaces where the prevalent discourses are regulatory (in relation to vehicle traffic, pedestrian traffic and public notice), infrastructural (in relation to public functional notice and public label), commercial (such as advertising) and transgressive (such as graffiti) (Thurlow, 2019).



Figure 2.3 Traffic sign at crossroads

Figure 2.3 shows a traffic sign at crossroads which indicates a preference for the English language code, given that other languages are not visible here. In terms of inscription choices, handwriting in capital letters is layered upon a standard road sign made of durable materials. The almost invisible square shape in the middle suggests that the no-stop sign is recently created on top of a previous sign which was wiped out. These add-ons add to the newness of the permanent signage and are not well integrated into the original semiotic design. While the no-stop symbol is a standardised traffic sign in Australia and decontextualized, its emplacement alongside a narrow thoroughfare specify its meaning as being that no vehicles shall stop along the road, or the road will be blocked. Apart from its situatedness, scribbles on road signs represents a transgression of public order. The handwriting seems random and playful, again

indicating the unauthorized nature of this newly added element. The picture in fact features a sign aggregate consisting of not only the no-stop sign, but also a no right turn sign, and a traffic light sign for pedestrians. This traffic light pole is undoubtedly situated in the public domain and contributes to the production of regulatory discourses. The two static signs serve to regulate vehicular traffic by prohibiting certain directional movements of vehicles, whereas the traffic light, with its changing states from green walking man to red waiting man, represents a regulatory discourse of pedestrian traffic.

Table 2.1

A summary of Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotic system

No.	Interaction order	Visual semiotics	Place semiotics
1	Sense of time: urgency of matter; number of activities performed	Elements represented in the sign: vectoral relationship; conceptual categories	Code preference: language codes
2	Perceptual space: visual, auditory, olfactory, thermal and tactile	Truth value of the representation: colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation, contextualisation, representation, depth, illumination, brightness	Inscription: fonts, material, layering and state changes
3	Interpersonal distance: intimate, personal, social or public	Compositional layout of signs: ideal and given information is in the upper left; real and new information is in the lower, right positions	Emplacement: decontextualized, transgressive and situated signs

4	Personal front: external displays of a person in front of others	Interactive participants: social distance; power relations; extent of involvement	Discourses in time and space: frontstage and backstage; regulatory, infrastructural, commercial and transgressive

Table 2.1 summarises the three systems of the geosemiotical framework. The ‘geo-’ prefix of geosemiotics serves as an expedient signal of the spatial and material dimensions added to the analysis of signage in public. As such, attention was paid into how signs can be understood in the physical and social context where they situate. Specifically, the indexicality of signs means that signs can index participants’ social action; once signs are placed in the environment, there is an intertextual reference between signs, or noted as the dialogicality of signs; the selection of a subset of signs by the social actors helps distinguish the foregrounded meanings and backgrounded context (Jewitt et al., 2016). Through a description of semiotic landscapes, social change and discourses in place could be better understood. Although some semiotic systems require further development and application to various sociocultural contexts, geosemiotics helps situate public signage in time and space and brings place to the foci of analysis (Hult, 2014; Lou, 2017).

Superdiversity

Whereas geosemiotics focuses on the emplacement of signage, superdiversity theory puts more emphasis on personal histories that define the experience of sign makers. As globalisation undergoes with increased intensity, scope and scale, more people travel and settle in the other parts of the world. As such, a growing number of immigration centres are formed, hosting people with different country of origin, educational background, migration channel, social networks and ethnolinguistic identity (Blommaert, 2010). Superdiversity refers to the dynamic interplay of these variables in

public area which have created a complex and unpredictable social environment unknown to our previous experience (Arnaut et al., 2016). Superdiversity theoretically informs linguistic landscape studies since it transforms our understanding of diversity and mobility of language and space. Under the framework of superdiversity, for example, Maly (2016) was able to capture rapid social changes in the small Belgian city of Ostend and sketch the social stratification of the complex neighbourhoods.

Notably, superdiverse neighbourhoods are characterised by the wide array of linguistic and semiotic resources, either used separately or blended creatively into complex and unpredictable communicative practices (Blommaert, 2013). As Wang and de Velde (2015) illustrated in their study, the repertoire of new migrants in the linguistic landscape in Dutch and Belgian Chinatown often features a combination of fragmented and diverse language varieties. In the global flows, languages are mobilised and dislocated from fixed spatial and temporal positions to be part of the transnational contexts (Jaworski, 2014b). Therefore, real-life linguistic practices of diasporas bear traces of both their home and the host country. However, viewing language as a mobile resource does not only imply that language simply moves across regions or countries in its entirety (Palviainen, 2013). It is obvious that languages do not correlate neatly with social identities including class, gender and age (Maly, 2016). Rather, the meaning and value of mobilised language resources are reconstructed by larger social processes and historical conditions of the situated environment (Blommaert, 2010; Moriarty, 2014).

To advance the argument, superdiversity challenges the theoretical framing of space as well. Space was once seen as the geographical demarcation of a physical region (Gorter, 2006; Landry & Bourhis, 1997), or later, as a social place filled with various symbolic and material practices (Lou, 2012; Shohamy, 2015). The superdiversity paradigm, however, views the space as a multi-layered and stratified

place, characterised by mobility, unpredictability and complexity (Jaworski, 2014b; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009). In fact, the movement of people across space is also a movement of their values, norms, expectations and conceptions of social order (Stroud & Jegels, 2014). Different value systems would inevitably interact with the established stratification and constraints of the locality, resulting in new complexities of material, cultural, and linguistic landscapes in urban societies (Blommaert & Huang, 2010). Hence, superdiversity brings the critical problem of power and equality to the fore, because participants who have access to multiple linguistic and social repertoires would likely be more powerful and dominant in the linguistic landscape (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019).

Apart from the mobility perspective, linguistic landscapers can also draw on the diachronic approach of superdiversity studies. While a panoramic survey of the linguistic landscape may provide a diagnostic account of the multilingualism in an area, it simply offers a synchronic snapshot perspective nonetheless (Blommaert, 2013). Such a shortcoming can be addressed by bringing in linguistic anthropology and ethnographic perspectives from superdiversity research. It is believed that a historicised reading of linguistic landscape would add valuable insights into the transformation and organisation of diversity in globalised urban areas (Maly, 2016). A caveat, however, is that most superdiversity investigations take a pure linguistic focus, whereas other semiotic resources besides languages has become increasingly recognised by linguistic landscape researchers (Jaworski, 2015; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). An ideal theoretical framework would incorporate a diachronic focus but meanwhile share the concern of multimodality with linguistic landscape studies.

That said, the concept of superdiversity has received several criticisms from sociolinguistics researchers. Flores and Lewis (2016) note that superdiversity is no more

than a banal idea that overemphasises the newness of linguistic diversity. This argument is supported by empirical evidence from Dutch classrooms where students reported to have experienced no excitement with commonplace diversity (Siebers, 2018). The second criticism is in relation to the theoretical vacuity of superdiversity. Pavlenko (2016) argues that superdiversity, complexity and unpredictability are more of academic slogans than a solid theoretical framework. As Vertovec's (2019) study of superdiversity publications shows, there is much incongruence in the interpretation of superdiversity, including using it merely as a new setting of study or as a concept to mean more diversity and ethnicity. Finally, using superdiversity as a blanket term to characterise language practices may erase historical differences and conceal social inequalities among migrant communities (Flores & Lewis, 2016; Pavlenko, 2016). However, Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore (2019) have demonstrated otherwise, by pointing out that the concept is beneficial to avoid over-simplification of ethnic and national identities of Polish migrants.

Researchers have started to address some of the critiques by arguing that superdiversity offers an accessible and open-ended framing of sociolinguistic issues pertaining to our era. While admitting the privileging of European lens, Arnaut et al. (2016) believe that superdiversity can still be useful to dissect power hierarchies if we pay more attention to the issues of social stratification and exclusion in the public discourse. In line with this view, a way forward for linguistic landscape research might be integrating Nexus Analysis with the concept of superdiversity. According to Scollon and Scollon (2007), nexus analysis accounts for the macro social organisation that is grounded in the nexus of micro interactions. Nexus analysts investigate the interface of human-sign meaning making by considering the life experiences of social actors (the historical body), the emplacement of signs in spatial environment (discourses in place),

and the order of communicative conduct by individuals in specific context (the interaction order). Nexus analysis shares the concern for emplacement and interaction order as geosemiotics does. However, the focus on people as composed of experiences, and on space as ordered by histories is made much more explicit in nexus analysis. Drawing inspirations from nexus analysis, linguistic landscape researchers may investigate ethnographically the synchronically observable sign-making practices in the public space to reveal the historical processes of development and transformation (Blommaert & Maly, 2016).

To illustrate the usefulness of nexus analysis, Blommaert (2013) presented an ethnographic study of Oud-Berchem in Antwerp where he had lived for more than twenty years. A synchronic reading of signs revealed the social stratification among the relative power of communities, whereas a historical perspective confirmed class mobility within migrant communities. Notably, Blommaert (2013) approaches superdiverse cityscapes as complex and multi-scalar sociolinguistic systems undergoing constant transformation. Sign makers, in communication, constantly draw on resources, expectations and experiences from local, national or even transnational scales (Arnaut et al., 2016). Through comprehensive observations of the multiple modalities and affordances offered by signs, the study demonstrated that power of semiotic choices is distributed to different social groups. However, as Lou (2016) succinctly pointed out, the potential of linguistic landscape can be further exploited if other methods such as interviews with residents and store owners could be used to complement her analysis from a native ethnographer's perspective.

Metrolingualism

It has been established that geosemiotics brings the notion of space/place to the fore, and that superdiversity contributes a mobile and historical perspective to current

linguistic landscape research. However, none of these two theorisations have dealt with the fluidity and fragmentation of modern communicative events (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Importantly, Pennycook and Otsuji (2016) questioned the basic assumption of multilingualism that languages are definable and enumerable by static patterns of sounds, words and grammatical categories. Such a conceptualisation challenges the multilingualism paradigm and brings in new insights for linguistic landscape research.

The theory of metrolingualism evolves from polylinguaging and most recently translanguaging. Polylinguaging accounts for the practice by which “language users use features that are associated with a range of different languages, and even in cases when they know very little about these languages” (Jørgensen & Møller, 2014, p. 190). The prefix poly- is employed to make a distinction with multilingualism which implies a discrete and complete conceptualisation of languages, intrinsic inequalities, and a synchronic and static approach to linguistic phenomena (Jaspers & Madsen, 2016). Central to the argument of polylinguaging is that language speakers may follow a polylingualism norm and consciously use linguistic features that are sensed by their interlocutors as drawn from different languages and assembled in situ (Jørgensen & Møller, 2014). Paradoxically, polylinguaging problematises conventional models of language, but meanwhile encourages the labelling of each observed transgression of established language categories, which in turn presumes separate languages (Jaspers & Madsen, 2016).

Translanguaging, on the other hand, highlights the ways that learners display linguistic hybridity by employing oral, written and gestural resources for meaning construction (García & Li, 2014). More importantly, individuals’ various personal histories and identities are made apparent from the new language practices they use in exchanges (García & Li, 2014). Gorter and Cenoz (2015), for example, made an initial

attempt to connect linguistic landscape with translanguaging. They argue that multilinguals in the neighbourhoods would draw on semiotic resources from the spatial repertoire and demonstrate distinctive translanguaging practices (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015). However, the full impact of translanguaging is intended to be achieved in educational settings, where a monolingual and native-like teaching paradigm is being replaced by the one that values language diversity and communicative competence (Moyer, 2016). That said, if translanguaging starts to look at the spatial and social context, and to question the borders between semiotic modes, it may have more explanatory power for the wider social processes of economy and policymaking in a marketplace or grocery shops (Pennycook, 2017).

In contrast to polylinguaging and translanguaging, metrolingualism is a response to the multiplicity, hybridity and diversity of modern communicative events. Recently, researchers of multilingualism have shifted their attention away from code-switching and code-mixing to how language resources are manipulated by users and reveal language ideologies (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). The prefix ‘metro-’ of metrolingualism is inspired by the notion of *metroethnicity* which refers to “a hybridised ‘street’ ethnicity deployed by a cross-section of people with ethnic or mainstream backgrounds who are oriented towards cultural hybridity, cultural/ethnic tolerance and a multicultural urban lifestyle in friendships, music, the arts, eating and dress” (Maher, 2005, p. 83). The tradition that metrolingualism comes from thus explains why it has a primary concern for language ideologies, resources and repertoires (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010).

Unlike multilingualism which assumes that language, culture, ethnicity and locality are essentially connected, metrolingualism concentrates on the production and rearrangement of such relations as emergent from language use in authentic interactions

(Pennycook, 2017). Language can thus be seen as a social practice that taps into a broad semiotic repertoire, instead of an abstract system devoid of temporal, spatial and mobile possibilities (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010). More importantly, a metrolingual view stresses the local perspectives of language users who find their hybrid practices most frequently situated in metropolitan areas, where innovative forms of language and subjectivity emerge in the times of superdiversity (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). That is the reason why studies of metrolingualism have often taken marketplaces, restaurants or urban streets as the sites of investigation.

For example, Pennycook and Otsuji (2014) made a strong case for the emergence of metrolingua francas in the marketplace. The study shows that individuals exhibit diverse semiotic practices informed by their respective personal histories, the linguistic repertoires of the business domain, as well as the material environment where interactions take place (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014). The study employs an ethnographic approach and obtains data from observations, recordings and interviews in a vast wholesale market and a smaller inner-city market. Based on a situated understanding of the interactions between market workers and customers, the study concludes that the repeated and regularised language practices can only be understood appropriately if current business activities, the backgrounds of the interlocutors, the size and location of the warehouse and even the objects on sale are considered (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014). More than a description of the semiotic landscape, the study builds up a situated understanding of how interlocutors draw on spatial repertoires to produce social relations.

Metrolingualism recognises all kinds of linguistic resources used by speakers, either fluid or fixed, to co-construct linguistic diversity (Moyer, 2016). To such end, metrolingualism avoids the problem of polylinguaging, because it does not presume

that speakers are oriented to the transgression of established language categories; it instead recognises that linguistic regularities ensue from interactions (Jaspers & Madsen, 2016). Another key contribution of the metrolingual perspective is that it focuses on the inter-relationship of linguistic repertoires and local spaces. In line with Blommaert (2013), metrolingualism also views space as historically layered and socially stratified. Hence, situated language use offers clues for the complexity and diversity in these spaces (Møller, 2016). The prefix ‘metro-’ of metrolingualism indicates a strong analytical focus on metropolitan cities, whose spatial, temporal and historical dimensions are constantly shaped and reshaped by social interactions, multimodalities, materialities and mobilities (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014).

Meanwhile, metrolingualism has encountered criticism from the academic community for being a weakly defined concept. Both Jaspers and Madsen (2016) and Schneider (2017) have questioned the primary focus of metrolingualism on the urban, stating that the argumentation regarding the role of the city is inconsistent. In fact, in the article where the notion of metrolingualism was first proposed, Otsuji and Pennycook (2010) argued for a wider application of metrolingualism which needs not to be confined to the city. Such an attempt might make the prefix redundant compared to ‘linguaging’ or ‘translinguaging’, and even irrelevant for a repeated emphasis on the metropolis. On the other hand, Jaworski (2014a) believes that the scope of metrolingualism should be extended beyond multilingual practices of speakers with multifaceted identities to consider a variety of multimodal resources. As a response, Pennycook (2017) incorporated the notion of ‘semiotic assemblages’ into the metrolingual paradigm to describe the ways in which “people, linguistic resources, products and spatial organisation come together to produce interactions” in any given time and place (p. 275).

Metrolingualism has avoided the problem of resorting back to the separate code framing of multilingualism and attends to the locality where language practices occur. It thus seems to be a more suitable underlying paradigm for future linguistic landscape research. There are two implications of a metrolingual shift for linguistic landscape research. Theoretically, metrolingualism shifts our analytical focus to the everyday language practices in urban environments (Pennycook, 2012). In this sense, signage could be seen as constructed by mini interactions occurring in the public. The semiotic features of signage can be understood in terms of their emplacement in the environment, intertextual relationships with other signs, and the ways in which linguistic landscape participants interact with the signs (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Through an examination of these discourses in spatial and temporal places and their initiators, it is possible to locate relations of power as well as to understand how the capacity to access certain spatial repertoires is informed and constrained by sociocultural, political and economic activities (Moyer, 2016).

Methodologically, metrolingualism challenges the underlying ideology of languages being separate and enumerable, thus invalidating the quantitative counting of languages and mapping of populations in a region. Instead, what the metrolingual turn advocates is ethnographic research inspired by linguistic anthropology, with observations, interviews and recordings of conversations being the primary source of data. For linguistic landscape research, however, the concern may not be so much about analysing longer excerpts of interactions as about semiotic signs and ethnographic details of sign owners as well as sign readers (Blommaert, 2013). In terms of the site of investigation, metrolingual studies are preoccupied with metropolitan areas, but are gradually recognising the city border as a potentially contested area of abundant multilingual activities (Hult, 2014). Optimistically speaking, the trend headed by

metrolingualism may encourage linguistic landscape studies to move one step further from describing languages to situating contemporary linguistic practices in ongoing processes of globalisation (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015).

Built on the crucial concepts of spatial repertoires and semiotic assemblages within the metrolingual framework, Pennycook (2018) further sought to bridge the field of Applied Linguistics with Posthumanism theory. As Ferrando (2013) sees it, posthumanism refers to “an empirical philosophy of mediation which offers a reconciliation of existence in its broadest significations” (p. 29). It challenges the centrality and exceptionalism of human agency, invites a rethinking of the relationship between humans and animals, calls for a reassessment of the impact of material objects on human behaviours, and concerns with the enhancement of human intellect and capacity through artificial intelligence (Pennycook, 2018, p. 5). The fact that linguistic landscape studies focus on the emplacement of semiotic resources in situated environment makes it the forerunner of a paradigm shift towards posthumanism within the broader field of Applied Linguistics.

In fact, an increased emphasis on space, place, objects and their relationships can be found from the research of linguistic landscapes, geosemiotics, nexus analysis, language ecology and sociocultural theory. These studies share a common ambition to expand the semiotic terrain and to decentre the human beings in the material places. For example, the nexus analysis in the work of Scollon and Scollon (2004) concerns essentially with social actions in which “historical trajectories of people, places, discourse, ideas and objects come together” (p. 159). Recent work on places of consumption and sense of place also suggest that human communication is mediated by the spatial repertoire consisting of non-human objects (Lou, 2017). Arguably, rethinking

linguistic landscape in posthumanist terms may well lend more scholastic thrust to the emerging field.

The preceding discussion has illustrated an evolving understanding of the ways in which linguistic and semiotic resources are mobilised for meaning making, echoing recent development in the theory of language from structuralism towards poststructuralism and posthumanism (Li Wei, 2018). Although these theories have their respective analytical focus, such as semiotic signs, social transformation and metropolitan interactions, they potentially serve as the theoretical underpinning for a historical, spatial and social reading of semiotic signs.

Methodological evolution

As an emerging field of study, there is an ongoing methodological evolution in linguistic landscape research. Since the traditional quantitative survey of a neighbourhood has been criticised as being overly simplistic, researchers are drawing on interdisciplinary frameworks and moving towards qualitative and symbiotic approaches.

Quantitative approach

It is digital technology that inspired the traditional method of collecting photographic data in linguistic landscape studies. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) pioneered the quantitative analysis that featured a frequency counting of languages on signs in each area, and comparison of the data with the demographic distribution of population. However, a major problem with this counting of signs is to define the unit of analysis and to categorise signs based on agreed principles. Should a linguistic landscape investigation include all visible signs present in the survey area into analysis? If a sign as obvious as a shop front constitutes a unit, then what about the individual street sign or a small poster?

This dispute over the unit of analysis was addressed by Backhaus (2007), who proposes to consider any piece of written text situated in public space as signage. Besides the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ dichotomy, Backhaus (2007) offers a more comprehensive analytical framework which classifies signs into nine categories: language contained and combinations, official and nonofficial signs, geographic distribution, code preference and visual prominence, visibility of signs, and finally layering of old and new materials. Applying the scheme to analysing a sample of 2444 signs in 28 survey areas, Backhaus (2007) illuminates urban multilingualism and languages in contact in Tokyo.

The quantitative approach is especially useful for places where no previous investigation of linguistic landscape has been conducted. In a study of Hong Kong, Lai (2013), for instance, counted the number of languages, languages visible and the prominence of languages on signs. After that, data sets from four sample areas were compared to map out the status of Chinese and English in an area undergoing rapid social and political transformation. In doing so, Lai (2013) provided baseline data for the visibility of multilingualism for future research. Adopting a similar methodology, Edelman (2014) analysed minority languages in the linguistic landscapes and revealed that the prevalence of Dutch and English was accompanied by the lack of representation of ethnic minority population.

This conventional quantitative approach was reinvigorated by Shang and Guo (2017), who investigated the presence of English, Chinese and other languages on shop names in Singapore. They suggest that the heterogeneous shop names serve two major functions, seducing potential clients and marking shop owners’ identity, echoing Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael’s (2015) ‘presentation-of-self’ and ‘collective identity’ principles regarding sign owner ideology. Unsurprisingly, the study concludes that

differences in the vitality of languages may result from language policy, demographic structure and pragmatic considerations in ethnic identity construction (Shang & Guo, 2017). Despite its success and fruitfulness in mapping out multilingual phenomena in a given area, this quantitative analysis has received wide criticism for being simplistic and deterministic (Barni & Bagna, 2015).

In a recent study, Amos (2016) argues that the quantitative approach would permit a comparative evaluation across multiple datasets and reveal the geographical boundaries of Chinatown, when combined with detailed qualitative and ethnographic approaches. He proposed several innovations to the quantitative analysis, including a comprehensive system for categorising signs, a unit of analysis that is defined by pragmatic functions of the written text, and a data-driven survey area not limited by any pre-designed sampling criteria. As the study demonstrates, these methodological decisions help us move away from impressionistic accounts of language use in the fields and contribute to a better understanding of the diversity and complexity that characterise the LL. The quantitative approach seems to be particularly helpful in demarcating the spatial positioning of ethnic communities in a diasporic context. A caveat is, however, the study did not report on the coding process, which could be potentially problematic given the large number of signs and classification systems.

From a variationist sociolinguistics perspective, Soukup (2016) reports a large-scale research project which investigates language choice on written signs in the linguistic landscape of Vienna. The project adopts a holistic approach to data collection by photographing all signs visible in the surveyed areas excluding hand-written texts, inside linguistic landscapes, non-stationary objects and non-text-based signs. In particular, Soukup (2020) employs a “hypothesis-driven stratified sampling” method informed by the variationist technique for survey area selection. This can be understood

as a two-step process in which researchers firstly propose hypotheses about which social factors are correlated with the choice of English language on public signs and secondly select pairs of streets in Vienna that reflect positively or negatively demographic variables and level of commercial activity. The benefits of this quantifying approach lies in its comprehensiveness and statistical granularity, although it is also open to the critique of validating the obvious.

These studies demonstrate that the field of linguistic landscape is witnessing a sweeping trend of methodological innovations in terms of unit of analysis and survey area selection. However, the debate is far from being settled as the field continues to head towards qualitative and symbiotic approaches.

Qualitative approach

While quantitative analysis gives a panoramic view of multilingualism in a region, qualitative analysis drawn from multiple disciplinary traditions is arguably more informative (Blackwood, 2015). Notably, Wetzel (2010) approached the linguistic landscape of urban Japan with narrative analysis. To illustrate, public signs are viewed as narrative, which can generally be classified into two genres, advertisements and informational signs. Wetzel (2010) followed a discourse analysis tradition and treated signs as abbreviated texts. Focusing on reference and indexicality, operations (shifts in point of views), focalization (ways to convey point of views) and voice (who speaks) in the “mini narratives” of signs (Wetzel, 2010, p. 326), the study argues for the acknowledgement of signs as representing narrative. It is from the narrative perspective that our understanding of culture, of linguistic repertoire, and of how to participate life in a Japanese community may be improved.

Wetzel’s (2010) attempt is innovative in linguistic landscape studies, but the problem is the purposeful choice of signs with longer pieces of text, leaving out those

signs with brief letters or words. In a similar vein, Cook (2013) proposed to classify signs based on genre and functionality. Hence, there are locating and attracting signs, informing signs, signs that control movement and behaviour, and service signs. Notably, Cook (2013) went beyond the simplistic categorisation and looked more closely at the dismissible non-linguistic elements on signs which could potentially contribute to meaning. These include materiality, case of letters, punctuation marks, and serif forms. Such an effort indicates an uptake of the semiotic view of linguistic landscape, which was further developed by Jaworski (2015), who demonstrated how punctuation, diacritics and newly created letterforms contribute to commodification of the place.

Using a grounded approach, Lamarre (2014) analysed examples of ‘bilingual winks’ or the playful switch of languages in the linguistic landscape of Montreal (p.137). The study found that commercial signs carefully bypass laws and regulations through the ludic use of French and English. Specifically, Lamarre (2014) concentrates on a fraction of public signage, identifies normativity in them and uses selected examples as illustration. The qualitative analysis has offered interesting insights into language practices that very often have been ignored by quantitatively oriented researchers. Similarly, Curtin (2014) situated the linguistic landscape of Taipei within the ethnolinguistic history as well as political and economic context. The study found examples of presumptive, distinctive, and transgressive cosmopolitanism as represented by signage, and finally arrived at a theorisation of cosmopolitanism that is multicentric, recursive and situated (Curtin, 2014).

In addition, motive analysis was employed by Rowland (2015) to understand reader’s perception of English in the linguistic landscape under the Japanese context. Motive analysis originated from rhetorical criticism and has a primary focus on

establishing a subjective and coherent understanding of people's interpretation of linguistic landscapes (Scollon & Scollon, 2007). Specifically, the analysis delineates five aspects in an individual's description of events, including the act, the scene, the agent, the agency, and the purpose. In Rowland's (2015) study, students' interpretation of multilingual signs was examined under the framework of motive analysis. Three motivations underlying the use of English language on multilingual signage were found, including commercialism, cultural essentialism and globalisation. An important take-away from the qualitative study is that folk linguistics and rhetorical analysis could be used together to reveal the values, attitudes and positions of sign readers in the public space.

In the meantime, linguistic anthropologists call for a more ethnographic approach to linguistic landscape. They argue that linguistic landscape research would benefit from a comprehensive account of the historical, political, social and economic environment where the signs situate, and the social actors with whom the signs interact (Blommaert & Huang, 2010). In this vein, Stroud and Mpendukana (2009) used a 'material ethnography' to explore the linguistic landscape in a South African township. In their view, what underlies linguistic change in the era of globalisation is (1) increased social, economic and physical mobility of people, (2) new perceptions of space as a site of abundant semiotic practices constrained by material means of production, and (3) an aspiration towards consumerism and stylistic self (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009). Based on Scollon and Scollon's (2003) concept of materiality and emplacement, the study examined 'sites of necessity' and 'sites of luxury' that were constructed through particular types of materials and technologies used for sign production.

In a later study, Stroud and Jegels (2014), took place semiotics as the starting point to explore what practices and mechanisms construct the meaning of place. For

such purpose, they employed narrated walking to understand how participants read signage. Specifically, the informants' narratives highlight the importance of locality as they move under the directions of signs. The results indicate that signs may contain macro-discourses of spatialisation which would pre-determine the way walkers interact with others and what forms of mobility are permitted by the walking lanes. To such end, the semiotic landscape may function as a materialised order which organises the locally narrated discourses (Stroud & Jegels, 2014).

In contrast to material ethnography and narrated walking, Lanza and Woldemariam (2014) investigated the linguistic landscape of Addis Ababa using ethnography, in the traditional sense. During the second author's stay in the area and the regular visits made by the first author, they conducted participant observations as well as interviews with owner/manager of certain businesses. These details not only illustrate that English has power and prestige in international branding market, but also show the mobility along a social scale manifested by an aspiration towards modernity. As the study argues, these valuable details would not have been captured by a synchronic approach otherwise.

Other types of ethnographic linguistic landscape studies include Hult (2014) who employed video ethnography and collected visual data on the drive along San Antonio highway in the United States. It is recognised that still photography is incompatible with the fast-moving nature of vehicular system. With a comprehensive record of visual data, Hult (2014) then drew on nexus analysis and geosemiotics to explore the discursive construction of multilingual settings. The study demonstrated the influence of transnational discourses on the language choices on signs, where English has become the unmarked option. More recently, Szabó and Troyer (2017) proposed the notion of 'inclusive ethnographies' and analysed data from a multimodal corpus of

semiotic practices observed from the interactions between the researcher and the participants. Their analysis importantly suggests that inclusive ethnography is transformative and contributes to our understanding of place-making in the linguistic landscape. These diverse ethnographic approaches have enriched the quantitative and qualitative strategies employed in the field and opened up new opportunities for us to scrutinise the meaning-making processes.

Symbiotic approach

Quantitative approach allows us to do a comparative evaluation of multiple surveys across years, but it remains a superficial analysis of the superdiversity and complexity of linguistic landscapes (Amos, 2016; Ferguson & Sidorova, 2018). Meanwhile, qualitative-oriented analysis can shed light on how signs are shaped by historical, social and ideological circumstances but somehow lacks comparability (Barni & Bagna, 2015). Being eclectic, some linguistic landscapers believe that a symbiotic approach that taps into the potential of both quantitative and qualitative analysis yields more insights into ‘discourses in place’, that is, the dynamic and mobile semiotic practices in public spaces (Blackwood, 2015; Pennycook, 2017).

An exemplar study using mixed methods is Manan et al. (2014) who explored the linguistic landscape of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. To begin, they counted the number of languages and prominence of languages on signs across five neighbourhoods. Interviews with business owners were also conducted to triangulate the interpretation from quantitative analysis, by adding a subjective dimension to it. Although official policy accentuates the compulsory use of Malay, it has received defiance from the grassroots; English enjoyed a prominent status for their advertising and symbolic potential. In contrast, Chinese and Indian communities sustain ethnolinguistic vitality and express identity through linguistic and semiotic representations on the signs.

Therefore, every decision made in relation to the languages used in the semiotic landscape is deeply rooted in convoluted political, economic and sociolinguistic situations (Manan et al., 2014).

Likewise, Wang and de Velde (2015) also combined quantitative analysis with interviews, since the latter approach is more suited for an improved sociological understanding of linguistic landscape phenomena. The quantitative analysis demonstrates the dominant status of Chinese on more than three quarters of all signs, whereas the official language of Dutch and the international language of English appear in almost half the signs. Also, the researchers probed shopkeepers' language and script choice through interviews. The co-occurrence of both simplified and traditional Chinese characters as well as different Romanisation systems indexes four dimensions: (1) the Chinese ethnicity; (2) the birth place of the local Chinese; (3) the business domain; (4) and the tendency of Chinese immigrants to localize (Wang & de Velde, 2015).

Another study that has a both quantitative and qualitative nature is carried out by Coluzzi (2016), who examined the use of Italian for the names of outlets in a shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur. The study first reported the percentage for the presence of Italian and the types of businesses. Unlike previous studies where interviews were conducted with shop owners, Coluzzi (2016) briefly interviewed twenty Malaysian customers about why they chose to visit the shop and whether they understand the language of the shop name. Contributing a sign reader perspective to linguistic landscape research, the study revealed that Italian is purposefully employed because of its association with style, fashion and exotic European experience (Coluzzi, 2016).

For Lam and Graddol (2017), however, taking a symbiotic approach means using a more qualitative approach to explore the core sample, supplemented by quantitative results of more clearly definable signage. The study takes a skyscraper

complex in Hong Kong as an illustrative case of vertical landscape to examine the intricate relationships among social actors, semiotic resources as well as functions and accessibility of space. The analytical lens granted by the symbiotic approach has enabled the researchers to reveal the stratified and hierarchical nature of the vertical space. As Lam and Graddol (2017) succinctly pointed out, verticality not only indexes important social meanings but also reflects and shapes social stratification under the global discourses of globalisation and consumerism.

Thus far, it has been established that various perspectives and analytical tools available for linguistic landscape research can offer different possibilities for understanding and interpreting social phenomenon in places. The key lies not in the supremacy of one approach over the other, but in which one is better suited for the aim and scope of study (Blackwood, 2015; Shohamy, 2015). Based on the above discussion and literature on research methods in sociolinguistics (Johnstone, 2000; Holmes & Hazen, 2014; Hernández-Campoy, 2014), I summarise the different approaches in linguistic landscape studies and present them as follows (see Table 2.2). It is worth noting that there are inevitable overlaps among these methods and analyses, considering that linguistic landscape research often draws on interdisciplinary frameworks.

Table 2.2

Summary of different analyses employed in linguistic landscape studies

Discipline	Methodology	Analysis	Data	Procedure
Geolinguistics	Quantitative	Quantitative distributive analysis	Photographs of signs	(a) Develop a coding scheme to categorise different types of signs; (b) Count the frequency of languages and language combinations; (c) Map the presence of languages against the demographics of ethnolinguistic communities;

				(d) Summarise findings in terms of patterns and themes.
Discourse analysis	Qualitative	Narrative/genre analysis	Text-based signs	(a) Categorise signs according to genres; (b) Analyse intertextuality and indexicality of signs as abbreviated narratives.
	Qualitative	Social semiotic /Geosemiotic analysis	Photographs of signs	(a) Select a few cases of signs; (b) Describe the meaning-making of semiotic resources besides language.
Social psychology of language	Qualitative	Motive analysis	Photographs of signs; questionnaire; interview	(a) Collect sign readers' comments on signs; (b) Apply rhetorical criticism to interpret reader perception.
Anthropological linguistics/Ethno-methodology	Qualitative	Sociohistorical analysis	Ethnographic fieldwork	(a) Collect data from one or multiple sources, including self- experience, photographs, observations, interviews, field notes and participant narrations; (b) Construct a historical, spatial and sociocultural understanding of signs with insights from different perspectives.
Sociology of language	Symbiotic (quantitative and qualitative)	Quantitative distributive analysis; discourse analysis	Photographs of signs; ethnographic fieldwork; interview	(a) Obtain frequency counts for the presence of languages with a comprehensive collection of signs; (b) Select several representative cases for in-depth sociolinguistic or social semiotic analysis; (c) Conduct thematic analysis of interviews with sign owners and/or sign writers.

Power relations among participants

Having discussed the methodological debate, I now consider power relations in public space. Power typically arises from the unequal relations among participants (Foucault, 1982; Van Dijk, 2008). One line of thought states that “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957, p. 201). The concept of ‘power over’ sees power as a negative, coercive and dominant force that leads to social inequality (Purdy, 2015). On the other hand, ‘power

to' foregrounds the positive aspect of power that emphasises individual agency in social actions (Ahearn, 2010). While these two approaches are quite different, they offer a working definition of power in terms of two dimensions: 'power over' and 'power to'.

Due to wider and deeper processes of globalisation, unbalanced power relations among social classes and ethnic groups have become more entrenched (Blommaert, 2010). Since the public space is filled with codes, expectations, norms and traditions controlled by and controlling people, critical scrutiny of power has been the fundamental concern of linguistic landscape studies (Blommaert & Maly, 2016). As Milani (2014) pointed out, linguistic landscape essentially offers innovative approaches to language-political issues, which helps us understand how languages reproduce power in public settings. Having said that, there is neither explicit framing of the very nature of power as such nor systematic approach for the analysis of power in linguistic landscape studies (Rojo & Portillo, 2015; Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014). As such, I attempt to frame previous investigations of power in the linguistic landscape within the broad themes of 'power over', 'power to' and 'power through'. This framing prompts us to reconsider the analytical lens which linguistic landscapers could use to approach the issue of power relations, and how text-based analysis, including critical discourse analysis, could be supplemented by ethnographic methods, with the linguistic landscape being the discourse.

'Power over' relations

Despite distinct semantic systems, all languages afford the same meaning-making potential and thus should be treated as equal subjects of research (Milani & Johnson, 2010). However, under specific social, political, cultural and economic conditions, people often have different beliefs and attitudes towards the meanings and values of these languages (Milani & Johnson, 2010). Repeated and reiterated in a real

sociolinguistic environment, these sets of beliefs and attitudes become language ideologies (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Diskin, 2016). From the linguistic landscape perspective, unpacking language ideologies typically starts with an evaluation of ‘power over’ relations based on the relative visibility and frequency counts of languages.

One aspect which illustrates ‘power over’ can be identified as the power of official languages over non-official ones. For example, in an investigation of multilingual signs in the Netherlands, Edelman (2014) found that Dutch as the official language is widely represented in prominent positions on official signs, expressing power and dominance over less significant minority languages on non-official signs. Perhaps more complicated, multiple official languages compete for power in contested places such as Israeli cities. To illustrate, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) noted that despite both being the official languages, Hebrew was largely absent due to overwhelming resistance of Palestinian inhabitants, whereas Arabic remains the predominant language in the areas of East Jerusalem. In addition, immigrant languages like Russian are largely ignored by both official and non-official signs. Clearly, in such cases, power over relations are initiated by political ideology.

Turning away from political ideology which regulates the linguistic landscape, another angle suggests that some minority languages may have more power over others due to sociocultural beliefs. Gill (2014) pointed out insightfully that in the Malaysian context the representation of Punjabi language is marginal across public and private spaces, because the instrumental value of Punjabi culture, including the associated educational opportunity and equality in the workplace, cannot be compared to that of Tamil. Manan et al. (2014) also confirmed that the minority languages of diaspora communities, including Burmese and Arabic, appear to exist for symbolic use within the operation of commercial discourses in the Malaysian linguistic landscape. That said,

minority languages can also gain power over the representation of material border without necessarily having a large population. In the case of Trieste city, for instance, Slovenian won power over Italian in marking places of identity and belonging although it was once excluded (Tufi, 2016).

The third perspective on ‘power over’ suggests that global languages, particularly Chinese and English, have more voice in the visual landscape thanks to their commercial value. Specifically, Nikolaou (2017) found that despite official monolingualism and ethnic homogenisation of Greek, English emerges as the strongest linguistic player on shop signs. Obviously, English as a global language holds more power and has an important influence on the linguistic landscape, because it is associated with the cosmopolitan ideology and pursuits for fashion (see also Lanza & Woldemariam, 2014; Li, 2015; Rowland, 2015). Similarly, Chinese is found to be one of the most vibrant and visible minority languages, because it not only indexes Chinese language users, but also symbolically creates and reinforces values and practices associated with the Chinese experience for tourist consumption (Amos, 2016; Lou, 2012; Yan, 2019). It is thus important to note that languages associated with cosmopolitanism may override others in the linguistic landscape.

Hence, ‘power over’ relations in the linguistic landscape may be conceptualised as the relative socio-political status or commercial value of languages; these inequalities are inaugurated by political and private ideology and evaluated by the visibility and frequency counts of language use. However, constrained by a structuralist view, the notion of power in social places is regarded as fixed and static, rather than dynamic, fluid and ever-changing (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019). Due to a predominate focus on top-down forces, the power of grassroots to employ creative and transgressive communicative practices is not being given equal attention.

‘Power to’ relations

Although ‘power over’ or power as dominance seems to be the primary form in which power relations exist, it is not the only one. It is true that power dynamics are often seen in situations where some stakeholders are powerful enough to decide what to display the signs (Blommaert, 2005). More importantly, however, individuals demonstrate agency to resist power and subordination, although such capacity or power of resistance is made possible within the permissible range of power itself (Ahearn, 2010; McNamara, 2019). As such, this section focuses on two forms of ‘power to’ relations that have been implicitly explored in linguistic landscape studies: (1) the power to create innovative and transgressive communicative practices, and (2) the power to subjectively engage with signs.

Many recent linguistic landscape studies have shown the power of social agents to creatively or transgressively use linguistic and semiotic resources. To begin, Woldemariam and Lanza (2014) noted that regional language in Ethiopia has undergone structural changes as approximate to the syntax of the national language which enjoyed exclusive visibility. Struggling to represent their languages in the linguistic landscape, shop owners draw on their multilingual resources to create hybrid languages, employ emergent grammars and engage in fluid communication (see also Pennycook, 2017). Similarly, Rojo and Portillo (2015) have indicated that transnational communities constantly claim their voice in the linguistic landscape by building linguistic and cultural heterogeneous spaces. In such cases, places and contexts become active generators of new semiotic practices, including typographic and orthographic forms related to economic activities (see also Järlehed & Jaworski, 2015).

Transgression in the linguistic landscape can also take the form of graffiti and protests. For instance, Curtin (2014) pointed out that unauthorised graffiti in Taipei

challenges the power of property ownership and the regulation of public space. Notably, the fact that writing of graffiti is intentionally made inaccessible and incomprehensible to viewers outside the subculture community is a form of the power to resist policy and meanwhile a type of power over other members of society (Curtin, 2014). If graffiti represent a silent claim over agency, protests would be more radical and contested moves (Tufi, 2016). Notably, multilingual signs carried by protestors in demonstrations are powerful means to clarify demands and express feelings in front of local, regional and foreign audiences (Borba, 2019).

Having discussed the first form of ‘power to’ relations in the linguistic landscape, I will now move on to explain the power to subjectively engage with signs, particularly, to formulate personal interpretations. As Canagarajah (2013) suggests, signs readers draw on resources from their semiotic repertoires to make sense of public signs. Those resourceful individuals thus possess more power when it comes to understand the symbolic meanings of linguistic landscapes. This argument resonates with the findings of Juffermans and Coppoolse (2012) who demonstrate that personal literacy competency has a critical influence on how people interpret the emplacement of signage. In fact, literacy level is positively correlated with the amount of information participants can decode from reading signs, namely, whether they can understand scripted symbols of written languages or simply recognising signs from the background (Juffermans & Coppoolse, 2012). Different levels of literacy resulting from unequal education opportunities again attest to the existence of power relations among people. As such, researchers have noted the pedagogical benefits of learning publicly displayed texts in improving L1 literacy (Rowland, 2013) and the tourism experience (Yan & Lee, 2014), as part of the efforts to promote equality in the linguistic landscape.

Up to now, it is necessary to summarise that linguistic landscape studies

concerning the issue of power largely fall within the ‘power over’ and ‘power to’ dichotomy. While the discussion represents merely my preliminary attempt to frame linguistic landscape studies which focus on power issues, it has been made clear that ‘power over’ puts more emphasis on the role of political, sociocultural and commercial ideology, whereas ‘power to’ stresses the voice from private sign owners and viewers (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Smeed et al., 2009). That said, power relations are far more complex, as seen from the occasional overlaps between ‘power over’ and ‘power to’ relations in the preceding discussion. As Pansardi (2012) noted, the boundaries between these two interpretations of power are far from clear.

In fact, apart from the two fundamental forms of power relations, power through and power with may also serve as potential frameworks for analysing power relations in the linguistic landscape. For example, ‘power through’ can be interpreted as the ability of sign owners to convince sign readers into accepting their ideologies and values through semiotic resources (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). ‘Power with’ may refer to the collaborative efforts of sign owners to project collective identities (Partzsch, 2017). Yet, it is not clear at this stage whether and how these different forms of power relations are manifested in the linguistic landscape and thus more empirical research is needed. Furthermore, important questions, such as who the owner of the public space is, who can write/read, and what is the legitimacy of individuals, collectives and authorities to display signs, remain open for exploration (Mirvahedi, 2016). Hence, a well-framed response is needed to address the critical agenda of linguistic landscape research, that is, making public spaces more equal, diverse, shared and democratic (Shohamy, 2015).

Social semiotic analysis of power relations

Having considered how power is understood in current linguistic landscape research, I now discuss a social semiotic understanding of power relations in the

linguistic landscape. It is useful to locate this proposed perspective alongside the widely used approach to power relations - critical discourse analysis, which is centrally concerned with power issues (Kress, 2015).

To begin, critical discourse analysis (CDA) aims to reveal how power is covertly enacted through discourse (Fairclough, 2013). Its basic assumption is that the individual text is discursively formed by social and cultural norms which serve the interests of people in power (Gravells, 2017). In terms of scope, CDA takes a top-down perspective to examine power abuse or forms of domination that result in social inequality and injustice. There are five dimensions of power in question: (1) major power institutions, such as the government, agencies, the media and educational institutions; (2) hierarchy of status within these institutions; (3) group power relations, for example, among the rich and the poor or men and women; (4) power scope and influence; and (5) types of legitimacy for social control, ranging from dictatorship to partial control by a minority (Van Dijk, 2008).

CDA distinguishes three levels of discourse through which different power relations between discourse participants are expressed and manifested: (1) texts, (2) discourse production and consumption, and (3) sociocultural contexts (Fairclough, 2013). It is recognised that more powerful speakers would take control over these levels of discourse to serve their own interests. To establish systematic links between various dimensions of power and structural dimensions of discourse, Van Dijk (2009) brings together the analysis of genre and social structures. Arguably, communicative genres offer a social context for the analysis of the micro-mechanisms of social interaction and macro-processes of the society (Durant & Lambrou, 2009). The result is a comprehensive assessment of attitudes, beliefs and ideologies in social situations.

It is necessary to point out that discourse analysts do not necessarily share the

analytical focus with linguistic landscapers, but CDA becomes a relevant approach if linguistic landscape is viewed as a form of written discourses in place (Blommaert, 2005). To illustrate, public signage can form different genres through patterned, recurrent configuration of semiotic elements; these stabilised sets of discourse practices entail shared understandings between producers and audiences, and meanwhile form the basis for change and innovation (Durant & Lambrou, 2009). Hence, the three levels of discourse analysis can also be applied to the case of public signage, where the analysis of texts, analysis of sign production and consumption and analysis of sociocultural contexts may be mapped onto each other to reveal power relations (Fairclough, 2013).

Informed by the critical discourse tradition, Huebner (2009) adopts an ethnographic genre analysis to approach signs in the linguistic landscape. Huebner (2009) draws on Hymes's (1974) SPEAKING framework to analyse: setting and scene (immediate context or placement of an artefact of linguistic landscape), participants (agents and audience), ends (functions of linguistic landscape), act sequences (spatial arrangement of linguistic and non-linguistic materials and sequence of speech acts), key or tone (in which an act is done), instrumentalities (such as register and code selection), norms and regulations (of interaction and interpretation), and genre. The study indicated how the motivations and reactions of participants are affected by the setting and context where powerful linguistic norms exist.

Despite being a systematic and coherent approach to power relations in discourse, CDA is criticised for being biased and cherry-picking examples of texts to support an emancipatory aim, notably, reducing racism (Gravells, 2017). In comparison, linguistic landscape studies are more grounded in the places with few preconceptions. In other words, it does not presuppose a political agenda but analyse the ways in which power relations are emergent from the sign making process. Furthermore, CDA is

largely based on sustained pieces of spoken and written texts whereas linguistic landscape features significantly visual components including font, design and colour (van Leeuwen, 2013). The validity of CDA rests on the premise that recognised lexicogrammatical patterns are indexical power mechanisms (Durant & Lambrou, 2009). Adding to this linguistic argument, linguistic landscape research suggests that multimodal semiotic resources also have the potential to construct power relations. With these in mind, a more flexible and unifying framework for the study of power relations in texts and other modes is necessitated.

In dealing with the distribution of power in multimodal communicative events like the linguistic landscape, social semiotics offers a promising theoretical frame and some useful analytical categories (Kress, 2015). Inspired by Halliday's (1978) idea that language is a semiotic system as well as critical discourse tradition, social semiotics focuses on the enactment of power and ideology through semiotic artefacts produced outside major power institutions (Jewitt et al., 2016). Key to social semiotics is the concept of sign maker, which refers both to the producer and to the interpreter of a sign (van Leeuwen, 2005). As sign makers are shaped by their social, cultural, political and technological environments, the signs they make are thus not arbitrary, but motivated by all social experiences that have shaped their perspectives (Jewitt et al., 2016). Hence, it is important to recognise that sign-making essentially depends on the power and agency of sign makers and their intentions.

From a social semiotic perspective, semiotic resources refer to both material resources (e.g., image, writing, gesture etc.) and conceptual resources (temporality, intimacy, etc.) for making meaning (Jewitt et al., 2016). Systematic readings of image, colour, typography, texture, as well as gesture, gaze, sound and music have been developed by researchers in terms of their metafunctions by drawing on systematic

functional theory (SFT) (van Leeuwen, 2011b). For example, visual systems for images can be analysed by their experiential meaning (visual happenings in terms of processes, participants and circumstances), interpersonal meaning (gaze, framing, light and perspective), and textual meaning (proportion and alignment) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Social semiotics of visual design have been adapted to analyse various visual texts, such as advertisements, magazines and textbooks (e.g., Carvalho, 2013).

Apart from examining each semiotic resource separately, a social semiotic analysis also considers semiotic interactions or intersemiosis (O'Halloran, Marissa, Podlasov, & Tan, 2013). Barthes (1977) distinguished three types of text-image relations, 'anchorage', 'illustration' and 'relay' (see also Martinec & Salway, 2005). Anchorage means that the text helps clarify the contextual meaning of the image. Conversely, illustration refers to the image-text relationship in which image offers explanation for the meaning of texts. Finally, relay denotes that text and image convey indispensable information which must be read together to understand the whole meaning. Later, van Leeuwen (2005) proposes an alternative taxonomy in terms of 'elaboration' and 'extension'. In the cases of anchorage and illustration, the relationship between image and text is one of elaboration, since either text or image is assuming the role of specification. In addition, relay is arguably a form of extension, considering that image and text extends each other's meaning by offering complementary information. Intersemiosis thus describes the ways in which different semiotic systems integrate to produce a complex whole that consists of our overall experience of the place (McMurtrie, 2020).

The primary aims of a social semiotic analysis are to (a) identify the semiotic resources available, (b) investigate how people use these resources in contexts, and (c) how their choices are shaped by and realise power (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3). To

achieve these purposes, social semiotic analysis often starts with a general description of the sign with reference to the wider context of communication. Semioticians would also examine each semiotic resource to reveal the underlying principles and conventions for using these resources either separately or collectively (Jewitt et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, few social semiotic studies are imbued with critical agendas, including power relations, social justice, inequality, political or commercial issues (van Leeuwen, 2013). To illustrate, Archer (2014) investigates the ways in which teachers could promote learning opportunities by employing multimodal pedagogies in the classroom. A social semiotic analysis is used to illustrate the fact that learners who are able to recognise the multiplicity of semiotic resources in the learning environment are at a more advantageous position. Semiotic resources thus have the critical implication of promoting social justice and equality among learners. That said, power relations in the educational context are distinct from those in a complex and superdiverse public space in many ways.

This section has reviewed two approaches most relevant to the inquiry of power relations in linguistic landscape research. As the preceding discussion reveals, despite the well-established frameworks for power relations, CDA is not readily applicable to analyse abbreviated and multimodal discourses such as signs in the linguistic landscape (van Leeuwen, 2013). In comparison, a social semiotic analysis has the potential to demystify social concerns, although it has been criticised for relying simply on subjective interpretations of texts (Blommaert, 2013). These shortcomings may be addressed by ensuring that the audience reception of linguistic landscape and the production processes are examined with a great deal of detailed textual, visual, ethnographic and social deconstruction (Milani & Johnson, 2010). That said, little empirical evidence has been found in both traditions to support the critical agenda of

linguistic landscape research. It is thus incumbent on linguistic landscapers to find semiotic evidence grounded in the multimodal discourse of linguistic landscape.

Scope and relevance

Turning away from a social semiotic analysis of power relations, this section discusses the relevance of linguistic landscape for various stakeholders considering its expanding scope. I first discuss the evolution of linguistic landscape, and then review interdisciplinary frameworks before considering their implications for linguistic landscape research.

Semiotic landscape

Notwithstanding the restricted focus on languages of stationary signs in earlier studies (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Gorter, 2006), remarkable efforts have been made in promoting a wider view of urban landscapes. To begin, Backhaus (2007) proposed to take a more inclusive view of the unit of analysis for linguistic landscape studies, and according to his definition, “a sign was any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (p. 66). As such, linguistic landscape researchers should analyse a broad range of signs irrespective of their size, such as handwritten stickers, outdoor commercial billboards, push and pull notices, and even informational tags of trees (Backhaus, 2007).

However, the effort to incorporate a larger corpus of signs, especially the transient and moving ones, brings about practicality issues in capturing, counting and analysing signs. Troyer and Szabó (2017), for example, used non-participatory videography to document the visual linguistic landscape; Hult (2014) similarly videotaped the linguistic landscape of South Texas while on the drive. Some forerunning researchers even begin to think beyond the visibility of languages. As Shohamy and Gorter (2009) note, the definition of linguistic landscape should

incorporate not only multilingual written texts, but also “verbal texts, images, objects, placement in time and space as well as human beings” (p. 314). The reason is that linguistic landscape is created by different modalities like images, sounds and words, the exploration of which necessitates a multimodal and multilingual analysis.

Modern society increasingly features an integrated use of different communicative resources, including languages, images and sounds (Blackwood, 2019). Even the language itself involves so many dimensions that require understanding in terms of not only linguistic clues, but also layout, typography and colour. Each of these elements is defined as a type of semiotic mode, with distinctive affordances or potentials to express certain meanings; these modes together constitute an integrated semiotic resource that is conceived socially and culturally (Kress, 2015). A multimodal perspective is particularly useful in examining how these different semiotic resources make meaning in the linguistic landscape. In recognition of these visual semiotic properties, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) insisted that ‘semiotic’ landscape be adopted in place of ‘linguistic’ landscape to denote the analytical focus of linguistic landscape research.

So far, a few linguistic landscape researchers have examined materiality and typography as meaning-making resources. For example, Jaworski and Yeung (2010) identified the economic and social benefits of linguistic landscaping in shaping urban Hong Kong. By focusing on semiotic objects on residential buildings, Jaworski and Yeung (2010) argued that the materiality and inscription of building signs helped create an aspirational identity of luxury, elitism and power. In fact, the promotion of an idealized place is invented by developers and is aimed at consumers in pursuit of ‘immediate happiness and self-fulfilment’ (p. 178). Notably, Blommaert and Maly (2016) also pointed out the importance of social or materialist semiotics and warned that

meaning of signs cannot be properly understood without considering their social and cultural situatedness.

Some seemingly dismissible non-linguistic elements on signs, including materials, case of letters, punctuation marks, and serif forms could potentially contribute to meaning. To illustrate, Cook (2015) proposed to categorise signs according to their materiality. The study suggests that (1) stone and metal signs convey permanence and quality; (2) handwritten and printed signs convey temporary status and novelty; (3) painted signs containing individual letter forms express identity; and finally (4) other materials may indicate varying degrees of permanence. A systematic investigation of the material aspect of street signs in Newcastle upon Tyne, plus typographic clues, gives valuable insights into the meaning-making mechanisms of materiality (see also Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009).

Moreover, James (2014) analysed English as a visual language. It is acknowledged that English as a global language should be interpreted both verbally and visually in late modernity. As such, James (2014) brings in systemic functional grammar to analyse the semiotics of typography, orthography and script of English as well as the relationship between linguistic text and image in multimodal communication domains. Likewise, Curtin (2015) reported scriptal and typographic choices in Taipei's linguistic landscape. The study demonstrated that polyscriptal typography practices are poetic, playful and pragmatic, entailing power relations among scripts. As Li Wei and Zhu Hua (2019) suggest, linguistic landscape provides a space for the creative, playful, and subversive language practices.

Interrogating the relationship between spatial repertoire and meaning making, Lou (2017) examined the fragmented interactions in three markets in Hong Kong. Weaving metrolingualism, semiotic landscaping and translanguaging into an integrated

geosemiotic framework, Lou (2017) found that materialist market is constructed by semiotic resources afforded by the place. Meanwhile, consumers select modes of communication from the spatial offerings to facilitate interactions. The study highlighted how the interactions between consumers and marketplaces are mediated by semiotic resources drawn from the spatial repertoire. This geosemiotic approach to linguistic landscape was adopted by Lee and Lou (2019) in another study to demonstrate the ways in which spatial and material resources help construct the spectacle of overseas Chinatown.

Expanding the scenery

As demonstrated through previous discussion, linguistic landscape research would greatly benefit from taking a multimodal perspective towards signage in public spaces. More recently, interdisciplinary perspectives add to the theoretical thrust of linguistic landscape. To illustrate, Milani and Levon (2016) draw on their background in queer theory to examine a small dataset consisting of sexed signs found across different sites and objects including the newsstand, the T-shirts and a coffee shop. The study demonstrated that gender and sexuality are two important aspects where power manifests itself. The study also questioned gender division as norm that structured the social space, and how the gendered order is performed by ideological beliefs about the roles of two genders. It is thus necessary to establish the semiotics of bodyscapes and investigate the historicity and materiality of human bodies in space.

While bodyscapes still fall within the spectrum of visual semiotics, Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) proposed to explore the relationship between linguistic landscape and smellscape. As the study suggests, smell, despite being one of the least important senses in human life, offers an important means for us to relate to the environment surrounding us (see also Weldemichael, Peck, & Williams, 2019 for a discussion of

taste). Using an innovative olfactory ethnography approach, the study investigates a multicultural suburb in Sydney, and shows that smells bring people, objects, activities in the space together. Such an insight into the role of smells also inspires us to take a different perspective towards semiotics of time and place. Pappenhagen et al. (2016) even went further to argue that verbal communication happening in the public space should also be captured by studies of linguistic landscape and used the term “linguistic soundscaping” to represent the investigation of spoken multilingualism (pp.148). Including the speech in the linguistic landscape, in Pappenhagen et al.’s (2016) view, contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic actions and practices shape the urban spaces (see also Szabó & Troyer, 2017).

More recently, there emerges a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with the sensual, affective, and evocative potential of linguistic landscape in collective memory formation and nostalgia discourse construction. For example, Moore (2019) draws our attention to material signs such as monuments and plaques that are often manipulated “as a tool of nation building and power legitimation” (p. 248). The theoretical assumption is that people understand the public environment by creating conceptual maps of streets, buildings, districts, intersections and landmarks. These material elements, including images, monuments and multilingual texts, once presented and emplaced in the urban landscape, can offer important insights into visual hierarchy, social positionings and political claims (Moore, 2019). A more specific perspective on language and collective memory has been adopted by Vigers (2013) who argues that place names are associated with memory because the names of locations are essentially a remembrance of something from the past. People who are conferred the authority to naming sites may impose officially sanctioned memories by use of specific languages. Collective memory in a sense becomes a resource at the disposal of sign makers, who

may or may not activate “a memorialisation of the language” and an element in heritage experience for consumption (Vigers, 2013, p. 175). Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for signs as monuments in urban landscapes.

Memory of imagined communities constitutes an important aspect of nostalgia, as early definition of nostalgia denotes the psychological state of constant contemplations of homeland (May, 2017). More recent formulations have acknowledged the spatial and temporal dimensions of nostalgia, suggesting that the “desire for going back to a familiar space was inextricably intertwined with extreme yearning for returning to a familiar time” (Leone, 2015, p. 9). Social semioticians are interested in the visual representations of such collective longing for an imaginary epoch based on an idealization of history of the homeland’s golden age. From the perspective of linguistic and semiotic landscape, nostalgia may be induced by a variety of material resources including tattooed symbols and linguistic names. Hiramoto (2015), for example, illustrates the ways in which Hawaiian map tattoos and names written in Japanese kanji exhibit a commitment to localness and authentic identity. Milani, Levon and Glocer (2019) similarly suggest that semiotic resources including scripts, objects and camera angles are marshalled together to activate the sense of nostalgia alongside other affective emotions such as morning, guilt and shame, which is imbricated with the territorialisation of Israel and the identification of Jewish diaspora.

Besides, it is crucial to recognise the exploitation of nostalgia as an affective resource for social, cultural and ideological agendas. Leone (2015) notes that the nostalgic purchase and consumption of lost patterns of everyday life has been a powerful motivation for cultural tourism. Tourists are persuaded to seek for a more authentic life in places where the natural landscape and human relations remain intact and uncontaminated. In many cases, such cultural consumption involves commodifying

the languages and packaging the cultures of less developed communities. A significant analysis and discussion on the commodification of indigenous culture for tourism was presented by Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen (2014). The study demonstrates that cultural tourism is an extension of commodity relations and power imbalances between the developed and undeveloped regions. Producing cultural tourism of indigenous sites and minority languages could potentially lead to the tension between tourists and hosts, as the use of different scripts in tourist encounters poses a challenge to the management of interactions in multilingual contexts. In a similar vein, Lyons and Karimzad (2019) found that the paradoxical senses of modernity and nostalgia are simultaneously activated by commercial signage in South Delhi through semiotic arrangements and practices. While the commodified linguistic landscape has the potential to elicit affective engagement from viewers, it nevertheless flattens and prices the various experiences and memory and aspiration for consumption (Lyons & Karimzad, 2019, p. 84). Overall, these studies highlight the need for exploring the affective potential of linguistic landscape, perhaps with a focus on the employment of material resources in the evocation of nostalgia.

An alternative perspective merges linguistic landscape with media studies. Public signage mediates the communication between sign owners and sign readers. Thus, linguistic landscape may be viewed as a distinctive genre of media in which all signs make up a promotion that projects a favourable image of the location, the product and the values associated with them, as well as other descriptive information (Durant & Lambrou, 2009). Like typical forms of media, linguistic landscape is made purposefully to serve two important functions, conveying information and persuading audience towards a particular viewpoint, belief or action through the use of texts and images (Shohamy, 2012). The latter function, however, is an ideological process which aims to

legitimise the power of dominant social groups, be it the government or ethnic communities (Devereux, 2005). In the media space, individuals with high social, cultural and symbolic capital usually have more access to the production of public signage and perpetuation of linguistic ideologies (Blommaert, 2005).

Web 2.0 era ushered a new public domain, within which millions of users are generating massive amounts of communication data daily, mostly multimodal in nature (Highfield & Leaver, 2015). Specifically, the emergence of interactive social media has opened a range of social spaces to modern people, especially those who used to be disadvantaged by public media, although this does not necessarily mean more equal power relations (Milani & Johnson, 2010). The new repertoire of multilingual and multimodal communicative resources creates unique opportunities for linguistic landscape studies and challenges for the traditional textual analysis. As Kallen, Dhonnacha and Wade (2020) remind us, linguistic landscape study does not have to be confined to hard-copy signs in physical space as stereotypically defined, but can consider signs online, or in the virtual public arena, because that is the place where new modes of communication happen in modern days.

For example, both Instagram (a popular photo-sharing service online) and WeChat (an instant messaging, social media and mobile payment app) reported to have over 1 billion daily active users (Clement, 2019; Thomala, 2020). As a result, digital humanities researchers have employed social media platforms as a valuable source of data to analyse general and specific sociolinguistic patterns. These include, for example, Hosseinmardi et al. (2014) who investigated cyberbullying through negativity or positivity of word usage, Ridgway and Clayton (2016) who examined the ways in which romantic relationship is represented through body image posts, as well as Han

(2020) who focuses on the translanguaging practices exhibited by Chinese scholars on short-term overseas visits in the transnational space of WeChat.

Lyons (2019) made the first attempt to frame social media research within the theoretical reach of linguistic landscape. The study employed topic modelling and sentiment analysis to analyse Instagram posts geotagged within the Mission District in San Francisco, California. Through an investigation of people's attitudes and topical interests, Lyons (2019) concluded that in the production of photographs and texts, human agents are not simply offering a truthful representation of the physical space, but creating an Instagram landscape, that is, a social reconstruction and subjective re-contextualisation of the original place (Lyons, 2019). The study sheds important light on the role of social media as a mediator for place-making and meaning-making, as well as how spatial repertoires are employed in the re-semiotisation process.

Relevance for stakeholders

Linguistic landscape research is intriguing because it offers so many possibilities and potentials for interdisciplinary insights. Meanwhile, it is also crucial to consider the relevance of an expanded linguistic landscape for major stakeholders, including language policy makers (Shohamy, 2015), education practitioners (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015), diaspora communities (Amos, 2016; Hult and Kelly-Holmes, 2019) and brand marketers (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2014; Ng, 2019).

For language policy researchers and practitioners, the primary concern is the implications of language policy on the diversity and vitality of ethnolinguistic communities (Themistocleous, 2019). A larger claim could be to promote social equality and solidarity (Lo Bianco, 2017). In immigrant societies, language policy holds high stakes as it may determine access to education and job opportunities (Gill, 2014). In such cases, linguistic landscape represents visually the social orders governing

language use in the public space. What underlines a policy view of language is the multilingualism paradigm where semiotic resources other than languages remain largely irrelevant (Pennycook, 2017). Although language mixing or metrolingualism may be of interest to some extent, mostly only structural linguistic changes are considered as evidence for policy influence (Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014). Hence, linguistic landscape shares with language policy the critical reflections on the use of languages, but its analytical focus on signs and broader concern of various semiotic resources and social problems makes it a distinct field of inquiry.

The pedagogical benefit of linguistic landscape can be seen in second language education and heritage language settings (Przymus & Kohler, 2019; Rowland, 2013). It is believed that linguistic landscape offers not only contextualised linguistic resources, but also sociocultural practices; the overall immersive experience facilitates acculturation and language awareness (Scarvaglieri & Salem, 2015). While most pedagogical activities involved in linguistic landscapes takes a linguistic focus, the importance of multimodal competencies are also recognised. Being literate in multimodal resources is key to becoming resourceful language users, and linguistic landscape provides the spatial repertoire for learners to draw on from (Pennycook, 2014). For educators, linguistic landscape is an authentic source of learning materials rather than an object of study. That said, educational landscaping pays less attention to identifying or describing the ideological rationale for the use of new and conventional semiotic resources (e.g., Archer, 2014). So far, the primary pedagogical potential of linguistic landscape lies in its multimodal affordance that could be made comprehensible to learners through teaching activities.

Diaspora communities are important social actors who create, maintain and read linguistic landscape. They follow political, social and cultural principles to select and

arrange linguistic and semiotic resources on signs (Gorter, 2013a). They own the power to claim their place in the linguistic landscape but meanwhile are subject to the dominance of policies and norms (Rojo & Portillo, 2015). The hidden hierarchies among different ethnic and linguistic communities also mean that some communities and their cultural possessions are less valuable and valued (Amos, 2017). Expanding the scenery of linguistic landscape means that we have more opportunities to reveal the social reality from all possible entries, including written texts, speech, visual images, bodies and multimodal media data, and give voice to the silenced minority (Moriarty, 2019). A comprehensive diagnosis of the transnational discourse of diaspora communities may inform policy decisions regarding diversity and integration (Li Wei, 2016). As an equality agenda, readers of the linguistic landscape would need to be multilingual and multimodal literate to get the most out of urban landscapes (Zabrodskaia & Milani, 2014).

Finally, brand marketers could also benefit from a definition of linguistic landscape that includes the social media space. Commercial signs fall under the genre of advertising, whose main function is to differentiate the brands in the marketplace and persuade customers into buying their products and services (Kelly-Holmes & Milani, 2013). To achieve such purposes, signs are designed to be catchy, for example, by using rhythm and parallelism at the linguistic level, as well as vibrant colour schemes, images and patterns at the visual level (Li, 2015). Understanding the design of signs, or the arrangement of semiotic resources, would greatly help brand managers achieve maximum marketing impact (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013). Especially in the era of cosmopolitanism where competition is rife, an analysis of linguistic landscape and its potential in creating exotic, fashionable, ethnic or vantage customer experience would be of great value for both major and minor brand owners (Coluzzi, 2016). Similarly,

social media is a place for personal branding and self-presentation. As Blackwood (2019) notes, original posters on Instagram would employ plethora of material resources drawn on from their approximate surroundings. Their semiotic repertoire is further enriched by the technologies afforded by social media platforms. To account for the exponential amount of semiotic practices in the era of globalisation and mobility, linguistic landscapers simply cannot afford to ignore the meaning making potential of digital spaces.

It is evident at this stage that the scope of linguistic landscape remains controversial. However gradually, the static and immobile perspective is being replaced by a more dynamic and ethnographic view of linguistic landscape (Moriarty, 2014). The term ‘linguistic’ is giving way to ‘semiotic’, signalling a multimodal and semiotic account of discourses in place (Thurlow, 2019). Despite the efforts to define and redefine linguistic landscape, the motivation to study linguistic landscape in the first place is to describe and identify the intentions, ideologies and decisions of public signage makers through the visibility of semiotic resources including languages in the public arena (Gorter, 2013b). Having said that, linguistic landscape holds relevance for a range of stakeholders when approached from linguistic, semiotic, media, and diaspora perspectives. Linguistic landscapers are thus advised to critically evaluate the potential implications as they push forward the boundaries of linguistic landscape.

Summary of premises and recent trends

After reviewing the foundations of linguistic landscape research, I found that linguistic landscape studies are conducted based on the following three premises:

1. linguistic landscape is not random and arbitrary, but rather systematic and consistent, indicative of public and private ideologies (Järlehed & Jaworski, 2015; Yan, 2019);

2. Besides an informational function, linguistic landscape also acts as symbolic construction of the public space (Coluzzi, 2016; Kasanga, 2014; Zhang & Chan, 2017);
3. Both written texts and multimodal resources on public signs are essential to afford valuable insights into the meanings of public spaces (Jaworski, 2015; Shohamy & Waksman, 2009; Lou, 2017).

Underlined by these assumptions, linguistic landscape researchers have made great efforts to extend and expand the analytical focus of linguistic landscape by bringing in new theories and new methodologies. At this critical juncture when linguistic landscape as a field of inquiry is heading towards its second decade, I reflect upon the current literature and identified four emerging trends:

1. It is necessary to draw on theoretical approaches from multiple disciplines to account for uses of innovative and diversified semiotic practices in the field of linguistic landscape and to address issues relevant to local contexts (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Jaworski, 2014b; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019);
2. Symbiotic approaches are increasingly needed for linguistic landscape studies to move beyond the ongoing methodological debate over qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis (Barni & Bagna, 2015; Blackwood, 2015; Szabó & Troyer, 2017);
3. Explicit framing for investigations of power relations in the linguistic landscape is necessary to respond to the critical agenda pertaining to the field (Blommaert, 2013; Shohamy, 2015; Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014);
4. While expanding the scope of linguistic landscape, it is equally important to consider its relevance for stakeholders, especially in the case of online

communication in the social media landscape (Blommaert, 2019; Lyons, 2019).

With these trends in mind, I interrogate the theory, methodology, framing of power and relevance of linguistic landscape research throughout the thesis, while gradually building up a single argument: linguistic landscape research benefits from an upgraded metrolingual paradigm, a layered methodology, a social semiotic perspective to power relations and an exploration of social media landscape. In the following section, I introduce the methodology adopted for this study.

Chapter 3 Methodology: A geosemiotic analysis of linguistic landscape

The previous chapter presented a literature review of linguistic landscape studies. This chapter builds on such understanding and introduces the analytical framework adopted for this study. Moreover, the chapter explains my justifications for the research design and considers some methodological issues.

A geosemiotic analysis of linguistic landscape

Linguistic landscape is a fledgling field, one that gives researchers flexibility in the choice of theoretical frameworks and analytical categories from different disciplines to solve sociolinguistic issues pertaining to the public space (Barni & Bagna, 2015). As the literature review shows, however, the poststructuralist paradigm has incapacitated both the quantitative counting of language combinations and the synchronic, qualitative analysis of static signs. The field increasingly values the historicised and contextualised aspects of communication (Blommaert, 2019; Pennycook, 2018). In this section, I introduce the analytical framework adopted throughout this study, which is built upon the geosemiotic analysis.

To recapitulate, geosemiotics has been widely recognised as an important theoretical foundation for linguistic landscape studies. For example, based on the geosemiotic principle which states that ideal and given information is located in the upper, left positions of signs, whereas real and new information is located in the lower, right positions, researchers may deduct the code preference and speculate the ideology of sign makers based on the compositional layout of signs (e.g., Shang & Guo, 2017). However, in the studies that adopted the geosemiotic framework, priority is often given to the system of visual semiotics, whereas the importance of ethnographic observations is largely ignored.

One exceptional example might be Lou (2017), who used a modified geosemiotic analysis to examine the construction of commercial spaces in Hong Kong markets. Lou (2017) made two important changes to the geosemiotic framework: firstly, she moved the material aspects of semiotic signs from ‘place semiotics’ to ‘visual semiotics’; secondly, she classified ‘perceptual spaces’ into ‘place semiotics’ and re-introduced the five senses of humans in contact with spaces. Based on this theoretical framing, Lou (2017) then used interviews, drawings, video walks, observations and photographs to formulate an ethnographic understanding of the use of semiotic resources in social interactions. By attending to the perceptual spaces, physical spaces and discursive spaces of ‘place semiotics’, the study was able to reveal the effects of constructed spaces for consumption on people’s experiences of space.

Lee and Lou (2019) similarly employed the geosemiotic framework to examine the material production of ‘unordinariness’ of Chinatown in South Korea. The study presented a rigid application of geosemiotic analysis; in particular, it incorporated the national history of the transnational community to illustrate the ways in which the interaction order contributes to our understanding of ordinary semiotic objects and place making. Blommaert (2013) also recognised the historical nature of place; he reminded us that linguistic landscape studies would benefit from a linguistic anthropological perspective of the interactants and the space. For such a purpose, Blommaert (2013) advocated a nexus analysis of semiotic events and argued that the framework is useful in revealing the process of social transformation.

Nexus analysis, as introduced in the previous chapter, is essentially a historical analysis of social actions that occur in material spaces (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Unlike geosemiotic analysis, which focuses on semiotic signage and its emplacement, nexus analysis takes a certain social action as the focus of study, wherein social

arrangements, life experiences and order of interaction come together (Blommaert, 2013). A key concept within the nexus analysis framework is historical bodies. Bodies bear traces of histories because whenever people partake in social actions, they bring along their real bodies, personal histories, acquired skills and normative behaviours into the production and interpretation of meaning in space (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). These historical bodies interact with a public space, which is also historical in nature, since our expectations about the physical space – that is, the order of interaction – result from social orders that have existed in society for a long time (Blommaert, 2013).

By tracing the historical trajectory of social interactants, nexus analysis aims to formulate a deeper understanding of the working interaction order (Hult, 2014). In this sense, the concept of historical bodies in nexus analysis seems to be a broader concept that could incorporate the interaction order. Blommaert and Maly (2016) have provided empirical evidence to illustrate the value of taking such a historicised perspective towards linguistic landscape analysis. Labelling their method as ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis, they scrutinised signs in terms of their past (how signs are produced), present (how signs are emplaced) and future (how signs are received). Such an analysis has two analytical targets – that is, the emplacement of signs based on the geosemiotic framework, and the infrastructure of superdiversity based on the sociolinguistics of globalisation (Blommaert, 2010). The study revealed the stratification and gentrification in a superdiverse migrant neighbourhood and arrived at conclusions about social transformation from the lens of the visible landscape (see also Maly, 2016).

Geosemiotics, in many senses, shares a concern for historical bodies and historical places with nexus analysis. In addition, it might also be worthwhile to bridge place semiotics with Pennycook's (2017) notion of semiotic assemblages, since they

both focus on situated environments. Whereas place semiotics looks at how signs make meaning through their physical emplacement, semiotic assemblages are concerned with the ways in which “people, linguistic resources, products and spatial organisation come together to produce a particular set of interactions” (Pennycook, 2017, p. 275). Both concepts draw our attention to the spatial surroundings in which human bodies and semiotic objects are situated and question the role of space in meaning making. That said, semiotic assemblages encourage us to look at semiotic systems and their interactions in their entirety, whilst place semiotics is more concerned with the relationship between a single sign and its background environment (Lou, 2017). Arguably, semiotic assemblages might be more helpful, since it points to a way out of the dilemma of the unit of analysis in linguistic landscape studies by considering an assemblage of signs or sign systems.

With the above points in mind, I propose to integrate historical bodies and semiotic assemblages into the analytical framework of geosemiotics (see Table 3.1). Here, I introduce the historical body into the interaction order of the original geosemiotic framework to acknowledge the ‘baggage’ that people bring into the production of meaning and that eventually leads to the formation of normative patterns of behaviour (Blommaert, 2013, p. 29). Also, if we were to expand the focus on individual semiotic signs to consider the semiotic assemblage, we would also have to consider the place where the signage is located as an indispensable source of meaning. Thus, I have included perceptual spaces, emplacement and semiotic assemblages, which are essentially concerned with signs and their situated environment, into the place semiotics system (see also Lou, 2017).

As King and Mackey (2016, p. 212) noted, multiple methods and interdisciplinary work have been fundamental to the broader field of applied linguistics.

As a result, the above analytical framework, despite being based on Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotic analysis, has drawn on inspirations from various sociolinguistic traditions, including linguistic anthropology (Blommaert, 2013), social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and metrolingualism (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). It is believed that a geosemiotic analysis of this sort would be theoretically informative and allow flexibility for novel data to emerge from fieldwork. That said, the three aspects of the modified geosemiotic analysis are both independent of and dependent on each other. In the following chapters, this analytical framework will be followed as a heuristic guide, and there will be inevitable overlaps across the three categories in my analysis (see also Lee & Lou, 2019).

Table 3.1

The geosemiotic analysis adapted from Scollon and Scollon (2003)

No.	Interaction order	Visual semiotics	Place semiotics
1	Historical body: life experiences, activities, skills and capacities	Visual signs: elements represented in the sign; truth value of the representation; compositional layout of signs	Perceptual spaces: visual, auditory, olfactory, thermal, haptic space
2	Personal front: the external displays of a person in the presence of others	Code preference: displayed language codes	Semiotic assemblages: frontstage and backstage; regulatory, infrastructural, commercial and transgressive discourses
3	Interpersonal distance: intimate, personal, social or public	Inscription: fonts, material, layering	Emplacement: decontextualized, transgressive and situated

4	Interactive elements of signs: size of image within picture frame; angle of shot; vectorial relationships

Case study design

Case study design has been demonstrated as a valid form of inquiry to explore complex issues relating to human behaviour and social interactions (see Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017 for a comprehensive review of case study research). The case study method has been adopted to understand a wide range of sociolinguistic issues, such as liminality, deterritorialization and heterotopia (Tufi, 2017), and language, identity and migration (Diskin, 2016), as well as heritage tourism, reductive translingualism and commodification (Yan, 2019). It is true that case study research was once criticised for its lack of generalisability and verifiability (Yin, 2017). However, as complex as the questions I aimed to address in this study, adopting a case study design could generate far more benefits. These include introducing contextual information into the study, allowing intensive engagement with the issues of inquiry and helping confine the recent trends within a reasonable scope.

With the analytical framework in mind, this study aimed to further explore the four recent trends in linguistic landscape research, with three case studies of Chinese communities in Victoria, Australia. There were three reasons for choosing to study the linguistic landscapes of the Chinese diaspora in Australia. Firstly, existing linguistic landscape studies have rarely examined overseas Chinese communities in the Australian context, even though the linguistic landscapes of ethnolinguistic minorities might shed light on issues of power, voice and equality in the era of globalisation (Moriarty, 2019). Secondly, situated in the multicultural context of Australia, this study aligned with Li

Wei's (2016) agenda to explore multilingualism in the Chinese diaspora worldwide and responded to Shohamy's (2015) call for more attention to the linguistic landscapes of marginal groups in peripheral areas. Thirdly, my identity as an overseas Chinese person has, to some extent, granted me legitimacy and cultural literacy to approach and interpret the cases of Chinese linguistic landscapes (see also Lou, 2016).

With an aim to further explore the four recent trends, I conducted three case studies across different sites in Victoria, Australia, representing online/offline and rural/urban linguistic landscapes (see Figure 3.1). The first study site was Euroa, which is a rural town 163 kilometres northeast of Melbourne. Euroa is famous for its picturesque scenery and liveable environment. The reason for choosing Euroa was twofold. First, it offered an illustrative case of a town in which there is much less diversity than in urban areas. Linguistic landscape studies in general have been preoccupied with urban landscapes and immigrant centres. In contrast, small city and village landscapes have been relatively unexplored, even though they may hold the same potential for illustrating the superdiversity and complexity of linguistic landscapes, especially when examined through a historical lens (Loth & Plessis, 2017; Maly, 2016).

Second, Euroa represents a typical town in rural Victoria, one which has one or two Australian Chinese restaurants with accentuated 'Chineseness' (see also Lee & Lou, 2019). The presence of Chinese signs in the rural neighbourhood raises questions with regard to the power and agency of the Chinese diaspora in relation to non-Chinese residents. Despite being a remote rural town, the Euroa case is underlined by a history of Chinese migration to Australia during the gold rush period (Bate, 2010). Hence, the Euroa case offers important insights into the four emerging trends by provoking the urban-centric paradigm, problematising the quantitative counting of signage,

foregrounding the power imbalance and expounding the historical relevance of linguistic landscapes.

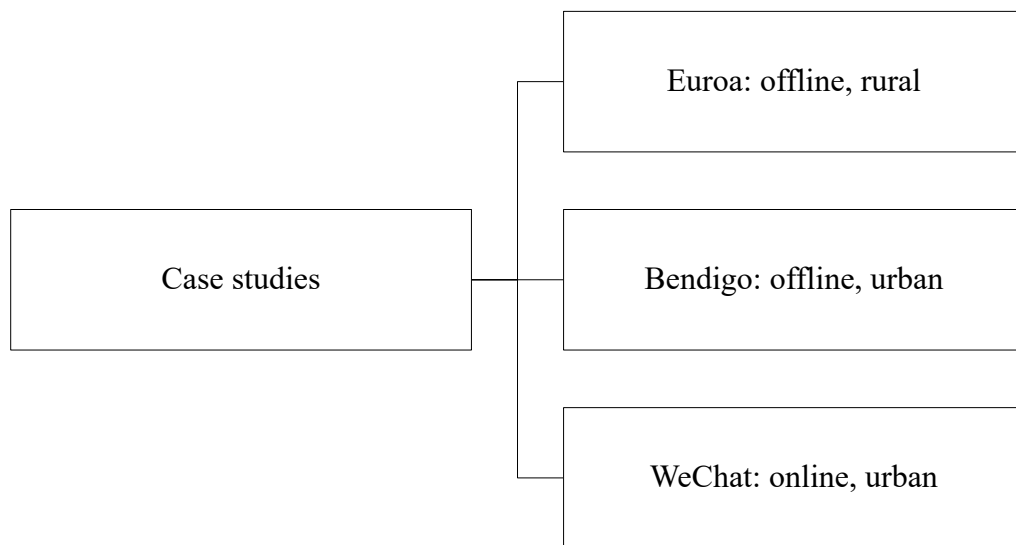


Figure 3.1 Case study design

The second case study was situated in Bendigo, a regional city which lies 150 kilometres northwest of Melbourne. This site was selected for the following reasons. Firstly, moving the analytical lens away from metropolitan centres to regional cities represents an effort to challenge the interpretivist perspective in linguistic landscape studies, which has been primarily framed by urban experiences (Coupland & Coupland, 2014). Statistically, Bendigo has an English monolingual landscape, with Mandarin being spoken by less than 0.4% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Such a low percentage of diversity in Bendigo's visual landscape renders quantitative surveys less useful and provokes a rethinking of methodology.

Moreover, the history of the nineteenth-century gold rush and the inflow of Chinese migrants have imbued the Bendigo goldfields with traces of Chinese cultural heritage. In particular, the Dai Gum San Precinct (Big Gold Mountain) and the Joss House Temple feature prominently as both historical landmarks and tourist attractions in Bendigo's visual landscape. Among other regional towns with goldfield history in

Victoria, Bendigo represents a perplexing case in which stereotypic semiotic resources of the Chinese culture are commodified for tourist consumption on the one hand, and become indexical of the power and agency of a Chinese diaspora community on the other (Heller, Pujolar, & Duchêne, 2014; Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014). Especially, the accentuated Chinese ambience is reminiscent of a nostalgic image of China, raising important questions regarding the relevance of these Chinese semiotic assemblages to a Chinese community composed of recent migrants and overseas students in the globalisation era (Ferguson & Sidorova, 2018).

The third case study examined the WeChat Moment, an innovative form of linguistic landscape. Given the large volume of communicative activities happening online, linguistic landscape researchers have been encouraged to expand the scope of analysis and pay attention to the new and creative semiotic practices on social media (Blommaert, 2019). While efforts to shift the focus away from offline and towards online spaces may seem radical to some, it indeed aligns with current trends in the field and reflects a recognition of new multimodal discursive resources afforded by social media platforms. As studies have demonstrated, seeing through the digital/virtual landscape of social media is fruitful for our understanding of identity and self-presentation (Blackwood, 2019), translanguaging and transnational spaces (Han, 2020), as well as elitism and gentrification (Lyons, 2019). Hence, this case study of a social media landscape represents a timely response to recent trends in the field, as it could potentially undermine the theoretical frames and analytical methods that were developed for offline linguistic landscapes; its focus on online communicative practices may also be more relevant for revealing the power dynamics among people living in the digital era.

Among the various social media platforms, I selected the WeChat Moment as the site of study for the following reasons. WeChat is one of the most popular networking applications, but it is also under-researched when compared to Facebook and Twitter (Lee & Chau, 2018; Zappavigna, 2015). Although social media content is commonly believed to fall within the public domain, the WeChat Moment bears characteristics of both public and private spaces and thus requires us to redefine the central concepts of space/place in linguistic landscape studies. Meanwhile, the duality of such a media space also foregrounds the ethical concerns that have been overlooked by the field and prompts us to insert virtue ethics and researcher reflexivity into the study of linguistic practices and social media in context (Georgakopoulou, 2017). However, WeChat has a relatively closed ecosystem and does not support filtering of posts by geolocation. Although it does not allow an analysis of the remediation of space online (Lyons, 2019), the WeChat Moment does afford multimodal resources, including visual images, written texts, emojis and other technological functionalities, that offer ample opportunities for us to focus on innovative semiotic practices.

These three case studies represent a comprehensive response to the current debates in linguistic landscape research. Before discussing these cases in more detail, I present a historical overview of the settlement of Chinese communities in Australia to introduce the context for this study.

Chinese Communities in Australia

Chinese communities assumed different roles in the Australian society and left unique marks on its linguistic landscape. To uncover the meanings beneath Chinese signage in Australia, it would be necessary to understand the historical trajectories of Chinese people and their relationships with the Australia.

Pre-Gold Rush Migration

As early as the 19th century, the first Chinese migrant arrived in Australia prior to the gold rush. He was an independent migrant and worked as a carpenter. Before then, there was a demand for labour in the young colony, so the colonial administration started to import labour from Asian countries including China. The earliest record shows that the first shipment of 120 Chinese indentured labourers arrived in 1848 in New South Wales and the trend continued until 1878 (Wang, 1978). However, with the increase of migrant population, there was a sense of racial superiority among the Caucasian colonists. They would think of Chinese as an inferior race that would overrun the small population of settlers. Naturally, several attempts were made to halt the import of contracted labour, mainly by imposing temporary bans and discriminatory taxes.

Apart from labourers, there were independent Chinese migrants such as traders, merchants, cultivators, shopkeepers and artisans whose trips were funded by own sources, and they were generally treated better by the employers (Wang, 1978). The general attitude towards the Chinese, nevertheless, was suspicion and discrimination, which would only become worse with the increasing tension between the two groups in the gold rush period.

The Gold Rush

Chinese migration to Australia was really fuelled by the finding of new goldfields around Victoria. Australia was known as the New Gold Mountain, in contrast to the Old Gold Mountain in the United States. Chinese gold seekers, mainly from four counties around Canton rushed into those gold mines in search of fortune. According to the first census of Victoria, there were 2,341 Chinese in 1854, but soon the number soared to 17,000 in 1855 (Symons, 2007).

Certainly, the sudden inflow of Chinese migrants shocked the white diggers, who viewed the Chinese as rivals. Symons (2007) recorded that the Chinese were assaulted, robbed and burnt out because of their alien looks. In the 1850s, China was weak and helpless in face of strong European powers. The Chinese travelled afar in search of fortune but were mocked and humiliated for their pig tails. Furthermore, linguistic and cultural differences made it difficult for local and Chinese diggers to achieve mutual understanding. In particular, the practice of washing dirt was seen as a departure from the honest working man's code of conduct (Symons, 2007); the Chinese tradition of sending gold back to China made the European diggers jealous (Yong, 1977).

The dissatisfaction accumulated and eventually led to a number of riots between the Chinese and their European counterparts in the goldfields across Australia. As a result of these conflicts, several colonies passed acts to restrict the entry of Chinese, such as imposing poll tax and limiting the number of Chinese on each gold mine. Some of the measures were proven ineffective since labour agents would not want to lose their lucrative business and still send miners to adjacent colonies. That explains why some Chinese had to walk from their drop-off place all the way to the goldfields. It was not until the colonies worked together that the migration trend was effectively restricted.

A White Australia

As the gold became exhausted and tax grew heavier, the Gold Rush gradually came to an end. However, the attitude of hostility and exclusion towards the Chinese was carried over from the 1800s into the 1900s. It was widely agreed upon by colonists that the Chinese ethnicity posed a threat to the Caucasian population. In fact, the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901 was aimed at preventing the arrival of Chinese migrants. One of the screening methods for migration was the infamous dictation test.

Prospective migrants were required to sit a dictation test in ‘a suitably unknown foreign’ language, which was designed in a way that migrants would never pass.

The White Australia Policy was driven by a number of perceptions and ideologies, with the most prominent one being fears of invasion by Asian countries (Macintyre, 2004). Colonists perceive insecurity of a sparse Caucasian population in a vast colony away from their home. They believed “we should be one people and remain one people without the admixture of other races” (Macintyre, 2004, p.141). Essentially, the fear of blood intermingling with the Chinese reflects the underlying ideology of white supremacy. Apart from the racial based motivation, there were also concerns about the Chinese as economic competitors in the labour market. It was believed that Chinese would work at low wages and pose a competitive threat to the working class. Furthermore, the White Australia Policy was also said to be beneficial for social cohesion by limiting entry to Australia to those similar to the early settlers.

These discriminatory policies and measures were effective in restricting the inflow of Chinese migrants. For those who had arrived in Australia, life was not easy either. With discrimination being a daily norm, many Chinese settlers chose to continue or start their own businesses. Even so, the Chinese mainly worked as restaurant owners, fruit merchants, storekeepers, gardeners, fishermen and chefs, the occupations where competitive labour was admissible under the White Australia Policy (Collins, 2002).

New waves of Chinese migration

With ongoing debates over Australia’s migration laws, a policy shift was observed in the late 1960s from assimilation to integration. The passing of the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975 thereafter marked the end of the White Australia era.

During this time, the second wave of Chinese migration began, with migrants mainly from Southeast Asia including Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. In 1976,

Malaysian and Singaporean Chinese, many of who were international students, accounted over a quarter of the Chinese migrant population (Crissman, Beattie, & Selby, 1998). Australia also began to take in Chinese refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar. There were also new middle-class migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Later, the Reform and Opening Up Policy drove a wave of student and middle-class migration from Mainland China to Australia. Apart from economic incentives, the early 1990s also witnessed small influxes of families from Hong Kong and students from Mainland China in search of policy stability and political freedom respectively.

As always, new Chinese migrants still faced challenges integrating into Australian society. The most pressing problem was seeking employment in Australia. Many skilled migrants had difficulty finding a job that suits their skills or professional training. Ryan (2003), for example, notes that overseas qualifications are frequently not recognised in Australia; in particular, there seems to be an ethnic intolerance of Asian credentials in Australia. In such case, educated Chinese migrants either ended up taking entry-level positions such as waiting tables and washing dishes, or starting a small business. In the latter case, opening restaurants turned out to be a favourable option.

Development of Chinese communities in Victoria

As the above discussion suggests, Australian attitudes towards Chinese migration have undergone turns and twists before heading towards a tolerant and inclusive multicultural Australia strategy. Given the scope of this thesis, in this section I introduce the historical background for the development of Chinese communities in the Victoria State, focus on a range of settings including rural town, regional city and metropolitan city. The aim is to give a glimpse of the various trajectories of Chinese immigrants after their arrival in Australia.

Gold rush was a significant part of Victoria's history, but where did Victorian towns fit into the historical picture? Regional towns located in central Victoria, such as Avenal, Euroa and Benalla, marked the trail to New South Wales. Because of their role as coach stops between the goldfields and capital cities, these towns witnessed increased traffic generated by the gold rush in the 1850s and as a result grew to become prosperous. From here, the gold rush history became inextricably linked with the legend of Ned Kelly, who was the most infamous bushranger in Australia's history. Born to a poor Irish family and exposed to state repression, Ned Kelly lived a lifetime of crime and fights for justice. Ned Kelly rose to notoriety for bushranging, theft and assault soon after the death of his father. The Kelly gang had violent confrontation with the police and later fled with the support of some Victorians, who offered sympathy for Ned Kelly in a similar way as they supported the rebellious struggle for justice and rights on the goldfields (Jones, 2010).

Among the various places raided by the gang, Euroa was the focus of their first bank robbery. They held up the National Bank in town during 1878 and robbed 2000 pounds in cash and gold. Despite the outlaws' crime, Bate (2010) believes that many of "Kelly's adventures were bloodless and good natured" while the gang roamed the ranges around Euroa (p. 11), as they distributed cash to poor farmers who were in need. Euroa has since then become famous and tied with the histories of gold rush and Ned Kelly. As well as the bank robbery, Euroa is also renowned for its collection of historic buildings which are an inheritance from the times when Victoria was a British colony (see Figure 3.2). These buildings retain the value as functional premises and display an elegant and solidity character reminiscent of the period of Queen Victoria's reign. Euroa is nestled in a rich agricultural district that is noted for wool production, horse breeding, and quality wineries. Situated in the Strathbogie Ranges on the banks of the Seven

Creeks, Euroa also boasts a natural landscape of picturesque waterfalls and mountain ranges. These historical and natural resources make Euroa and the surrounding region a heritage site for tourists who are seeking a rural experience distinct from their metropolitan life.



Figure 3.2 Euroa Post Office

There is lack of record of established Chinese communities in Euroa's local history, but anecdotal evidence suggests that Chinese people once resided in the region. According to the investigation by Morgan (2006), Tung Wah was a highly mobile Chinese immigrant and market gardener who lived in Tasmania, Euroa, and Melbourne for 4 years each after his arrival in Australia before his fourth trip back to China in 1922 (p. 279). Another example is George Kong Meng of Longwood (a town between Avenel and Euroa), who was a man of mixed Chinese and European heritage (Bagnall, 2012).

The Euroa Advertiser on February 4, 1916 described George Kong Meng as a young Chinese Australian whose application to fight for the country was rejected because his father was Chinese. Chinese people were dispersed across central Victoria during the gold rush, although few remained afterwards. Euroa thus represents one of these towns that witnessed the ebbs and flows of Chinese migration.

In contrast to the regional towns in Australia where Chinese people sporadically resided during the gold rush, the goldfields in Victoria tend to bear the mark of Chinese cultures. Gold mining towns such as Ballarat and Bendigo witnessed a significant influx of newcomers in search of fortune, and the Chinese almost made up one fifth of the population at the peak of migration in the late 1850s (Blainey, 2013). The mass migration of Chinese to Victorian goldfields was believed to have been prompted by a letter of Louis Ah Mouy, who worked as an indentured carpenter in Melbourne and coincidentally broke the news of the discovery of gold in Victoria to his brother at Canton (Yong, 1969). As a result, many of the Bendigo Chinese came from the district of Toi Shan where Ah Mouy's hometown was.

The Chinese flocked into the rich gold vein in Bendigo due to political rebellion and economic deprivation. While their presence was tolerated initially, the significant increase of Chinese migration and competition was later resented by the European settlers and created tension on the goldfields of Bendigo. The conflict of interests led to the implementation of head tax and shipping limits since 1855 (Price, 1974), which meant a more arduous trip and desperate working conditions for the Chinese. Despite that, the Chinese thrived in Bendigo and formed strong communities based on home districts after their arrival in Victoria. These newcomers were contracted by the heads of different associations to work in assigned gold mines and to live in camps of their district natives. According to Golden Dragon Museum (1991), there were seven Chinese

camps in the Bendigo region and most of the Chinese were part of these organised communities.

Although the Chinese Victorian population dwindled as alluvial goldfields declined and successful miners returned home, some stayed to establish self-sufficient Chinese communities which have continued to influence the regional towns with the Chinese culture, family values, cultural ceremonies and work ethics. Of those less than 2,000 Chinese immigrants who remained in Bendigo after 1865, many worked as peasants, artisans and merchants, supplying the miners with groceries and services (Lovejoy, 2007). It was during this period that the Chinese became involved in community affairs, most evidently through their participation of the Bendigo Easter Festival since 1871. Easter Fair is the most significant cultural festival that marked the united efforts of the Bendigo community to raise funds for the Bendigo Benevolent Asylum and Hospital (Rasmussen, 2004). The Chinese made small contributions to the festival to start with and formally appear in the procession with their embroidery costumes, colourful banners and legendary dragons in 1879. Ever since, the Chinese show and the imperial dragons have been a highlight in the cultural landscape of Bendigo.

Other Victorian goldfields including Ballarat witnessed similar inflows of Chinese migrants in the early days as those observed in Bendigo, but the “constructive and mutually rewarding relationships between Bendigo’s Chinese and non-Chinese citizens” has made the regional town stand out against the intensifying anti-Chinese momentum elsewhere in colonial Australia (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 80). Except for Roper (1986) who suggests that citizens of Bendigo used the Easter Fair as a means to reinforce power imbalances by marking themselves as the socioeconomic elites and the Chinese as social subordinate and an inferior race, the Chinese was largely believed to

have status, agency and power in their negotiation with the non-Chinese citizens, especially thanks to their continued success in attracting charity money. Meanwhile, the Chinese sought to maintain symbolic gestures from the Easter Fair Committee in recognition of their contribution and status within the Bendigo community. Such efforts were observable from a letter of appreciation made as a white silk banner (see Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 Letter of appreciation

Nowadays, the legacy of gold rush and the Chinese influence in the making of Bendigo is evident in the heritage architecture and nostalgic streets. Among these, the Bendigo Joss House, built of timber and hand-made bricks in the 1860s, is one of the few remaining places of worship around Chinese settlements in Bendigo (Laing, Wheeler, Reeves, & Frost, 2014). The Temple was constructed by Chinese immigrant workers to worship the god Kwan Gung who was seen as a spiritual guide and holy protector of the unprivileged in Chinese legends. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) enlisted the Joss House as a historic building in need of preservation and made the following evaluation based on its architectural features:

The layout of the building, traditional in Chinese buildings of this type, is clearly expressed in the symmetrical arrangement dominated by the ornamental central portico. Though small, the building contains many of the parts associated with similar though larger and more elaborate structures. (The National Trust of Australia [Victoria], 1972, p. 9).

Apart from the main altar, the building is also flanked by a caretaker's residence and an ancestral temple. As the Chinese religion is influenced by many streams of ancient philosophy including Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, the Bendigo Joss House is especially inclusive of religious traditions through the representation of various gods in addition to Kwan Gung. It has arguably provided great spiritual comfort and mental support for the Chinese sojourners (Lovejoy, 2011a), and continues to shine with its red-painted walls in Bendigo's landscape.

Dai Gum San Precinct is a Chinese complex built upon the original sites of Chinese camps on Binney Street, which was also the place that housed the Bendigo Chinese Association. The Chinese named the goldfields in central Victoria Dai Gum San (Big Gold Mountain), symbolising untold wealth and promise. The Precinct saw the collaboration of the Bendigo Council, the Bendigo Chinese Association and various external fund contributors. An ambitious project proposal was put forward as early as the mid 1970s, with a range of local newspapers circulating the details of the plan enthusiastically. The Bendigo Advertiser on 16 Oct. 1975 stated, "the most ambitious part of the Dai Gum San project is already being seen by many people as Bendigo's future cultural centre. It can contain all the facilities which have already been proposed for a cultural centre, and much more". However, the actual construction did not happen until the 1990s, with the Golden Dragon Museum built in 1991 and the Yi Garden,

Kuan Yin Temple as well as Golden Mountain Gate added to the area later in 1996 (Langan, 2010).

The Golden Dragon Museum was intended to showcase the Chinese contribution to Bendigo. It houses a superb Chinese collection of antiquities, among which the imperial dragons, including the Loong, Soon Loong, and the most recent Dai Gum Loong, are main attractions (Laing et al., 2014). The colourful banners and embroidered costumes in the exhibition contributes to a narrative of the culture and history of the Chinese immigrants since their settlement in Bendigo during the gold rush. However, Schamberger (2011) points out that these historical artefacts could be better curated and contextualised to help visitors distinguish the Chinese history from the Chinese Australian history (p. 142). In addition, the Yi Garden (Garden of Joy) offers a tranquil and serene retreat bearing the characteristics of the classic Chinese imperial garden, whereas the Golden Mountain Gate was no longer visible after demolition work in late 2014 due to safety issues. The plaza flanked to the Museum also features a Buddhist temple, which was said to be the first of its kind built to honour the Goddess of Mercy in Australia.

Probably the less often mentioned site is the White Hill Cemetery in Bendigo, which was a popular burial place of Chinese migrants in the 19th century. Social distinctions were observable from the spatial arrangement of the cemetery as non-Christian Chinese were allocated to a separate section at the rear of the cemetery where mine wastes tended to overflow (Lovejoy, 2011a). On the other hand, the Bendigo authority approved the erection of burning towers at the cemetery to accommodate the customs of the Chinese funeral after two poignant accidents caused by fire at the graveyard. Such a gesture symbolised the compromise made by the Europeans and the Chinese as well as indicated the enduring presence of the Chinese community in

Bendigo (Lovejoy, 2011b). Practices at the Cemetery were informed by two important values in the Chinese culture. Firstly, burial ceremonies and rituals such as sweeping tombs and burning offerings suggest that the Chinese value connections with their ancestors. Secondly, most Chinese people hoped that their bones could be sent back to their homeland for proper burial handled by their families. These rituals indicate Chinese people's affective relationships with their hometowns.

Having discussed the development of Chinese communities in regional Victorian towns, I now turn to Melbourne, which was acclaimed as one of the world's largest cosmopolitan cities during the gold rush era in the 1850s. Ever since the significant increase of the Chinese population in Victoria after gold discoveries, Little Bourke Street in Melbourne became a convenient location for new Chinese immigrants to rest after a long trip and replenish essential supplies before heading to the goldfields in regional Victoria. The first Chinese lodges were built in late 1854 in Celestial Avenue off Little Bourke Street (Blake, 1975). Provision stores and boarding houses were established with the support from Chinese merchants and district societies to cater to the gold miners, the Chinese enclave became notable as Melbourne's Chinatown.

As the gold rush waned, some Chinese travelled to other goldfields or returned home while those who remained started relocating from regional Victoria to urban Melbourne. Many chose to establish their life in Little Bourke Street because the area hosted a Chinese community with bourgeois business activities spanning storekeeping, import, furniture-making, herbal medicine, food wholesale and restaurant industries (Couchman, 2001a). As a focal place of Chinese business and cultural activities, Chinatown in Melbourne also provided support and services for members of the wider Victorian Chinese community by connecting them to existing or newly formed social and clan networks. It was from the 1870s into the 20th century that a range of social,

religious and political groups were formed by the Chinese, including the Chinese Mission Church, now known as 福音堂 (Uniting Church Gospel Hall), established in 1872 (see Bowen, 2011 for a discussion of Chinese social organisation in Australia). Melbourne's Chinatown is said to reach its peak in term of economic activities and Chinese population between 1900 and 1920. While the area is still confined between Bourke Street and La Trobe Street, it extends from Swanston Street to Spring Street in the north (Couchman, 2001b).

As a result of immigration restrictions in 1901 and reduced Chinese immigration nationwide, Chinatown an outflow of industry and residents since the late 1920s. With gold mining promising little returns and European employers resisted the employment of Chinese workers, many Chinese miners were encouraged to establish their own businesses, such as cafes and restaurants (Anderson, 1990). During this period, Chinese eating establishments appeared to increase in number and attracted a larger proportion of Melbournians, thus bringing Chinese cuisines into the mainstream foodscape of Australia (Couchman, 2001a). However, as the effect of immigration restrictions became more evident by the 1940s, Chinatown was no longer the vibrant and bustling hub, and many began predicting the demise of the area altogether.

The spirit of nostalgia, incentive of tourism and initiative of Chinese entrepreneur during the late 1960s, however, prompted the radical redevelopment of the Little Bourke Street. A primary objective of the Chinatown redevelopment plan was to inject Chinese characteristics into the landscape and the project arguably marked a shift in the attitudes of Australians to immigrants. The construction of Chinese archways across Little Bourke Street commenced in 1975, albeit receiving mixed responses from the Chinese community. The second phase redevelopment started some eight years later and involved the reconstruction of archways, installation of Chinese-style lantern lights

and the erection of the Chinese Museum (Anderson, 1990; 2018). The Museum in Cohen Place has since served as a non-profit institution that preserves and presents the history and culture of Chinese Australians and their descendants.

After the Second World War, discriminatory immigration regulations in Australia were relaxed and eventually eradicated in 1973. The following decade thus saw a rapid growth of Chinese immigration from China, Singapore and Malaysia, as well as an increasing interest in ethnic cuisines among the non-Chinese population of Melbourne (McConville, 1985). Since the 1990s, there has been a steady influx of overseas Chinese students studying at universities in the inner city of Melbourne, which has reinvigorated Chinatown and spawned new businesses including Chinese-run fashion and beauty salons. Despite historical changes, Melbourne's Chinatown, the heritage and tourist precinct, has survived and served as testimony to the enduring presence of Chinese in Melbourne. In terms of statistics, the Census of Australia recorded that 54,000 people living in Melbourne were born in China in 2006, accounting for 1.5% of the population (see also Dharmalingam & Wulff, 2008). The number jumped to around 155,000 and 3.5% in 2016, as recently many professionals have migrated from China and many more live temporarily as students.

Chinese migrants have contributed to the vibrancy and multiculturalism of Melbourne by bringing their cultural activities and festival traditions to the city, epitomised during the Chinese New Year Celebration and Dai Loong Dragon Parade. In the present day, Little Bourke Street is once again the hub of Chinese restaurants, gift shops and supermarkets. Some post-modern establishments stand against the backdrop of the 19th and 20th century heritage buildings, conveying the conflicting senses of modernity and nostalgia (see Figure 3.4). Apart from the original Chinatown in Little Bourke Street, several newer Chinese communities have been found in the inner

suburbs of Melbourne such as Box Hill and Glen Waverley. There seems to be some nuanced evidence of the ways in which new Chinese immigrants in Melbourne juggle through the experiences of assimilation, multiculturalism and diaspora.



Figure 3.4 Chinatown in Melbourne CBD

For example, the investigation of Levin (2012) reveals that migrants from Mainland China to Melbourne during the period from the 1990s and 2000s made their house choices based on three considerations: to avoid resembling past houses in China, to enjoy optimal services, and to assimilate into the Australian society. Another study of Han, Forbes-Mewett and Wang (2018) confirmed that the filial piety and family values of the Chinese are negotiated and appropriated in the diasporic context when it comes to the perception of death and preparation of funeral rites. As the migrants adopt a socially

and economically independent lifestyle in Melbourne, they are motivated to prepare their own burial place and to lift the burden off their children, although the grave site remains significant in their cultural values. Apart from sociocultural values, Martin (2017) demonstrates that Chinese female tertiary students are participants of both the local employment networks in Chinese restaurants and the transnational business networks in the form of buying Australian goods for consumers residing in China. These pieces of evidence from recent studies bear testimony to the lives and work practices of new Chinese migrants in Melbourne.

Methodological considerations

In this section, I consider three methodological issues pertaining to the entire research project. Firstly, I recognise that data collected for this study should align with the theoretical assumptions of the geosemiotic analysis and the case study design. In other words, the dataset should be able to provide adequate contextual information and allow an in-depth analysis of both visual signs and their situated environment (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019; Blommaert, 2019). To such end, I plan to visit each offline site multiple times during a three-month period, and collect photographs, interviews, observations, fieldnotes and archives to formulate a comprehensive dataset that contains ethnographic details about the site of study. The online site, in contrast, would not require my physical presence, although I also aim to collect WeChat posts generated within a prolonged period and supplement the visual data with interviews and ethnographic knowledge of the participants.

That said, it remains controversial in the field of linguistic landscape as to what qualifies as an ethnography of public signs. Blommaert (2018) follows Hymes (1974) to define ethnography as an approach that propagates systematic description and scientific interpretation of sociolinguistic phenomena. One important consequence of this

ethnographic paradigm is that the meanings and functions of semiotic resources must be understood within their context, which again requires historical knowledge, immersive experience and systematic observation. Blommaert (2018) thus argues that only through longitudinal fieldwork would we be able to insert a necessitated historical perspective into linguistic landscape analysis. In this sense, few linguistic landscape studies would qualify as ethnographic research, and exceptions might include Lou's (2016) sociolinguistic ethnography of Washington Chinatown and Maly's (2016) ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis (ELLA) of social transformations in the superdiverse neighbourhoods of Ostend.

On the other hand, as part of the qualitative turn in linguistic landscape (Shohamy, 2015), some studies tend to label their methodology as 'ethnographic fieldwork' (Rezaei & Tadayyon, 2018) when interviews are employed in conjunction with comprehensive photography. These 'ethnographically oriented' linguistic landscape studies (Szabó and Troyer, 2017, p. 306) often contain a description of signage and their situated environment but researchers may not necessarily reside in the study site. For example, Hult and Kelly-Holmes (2019) imply that a one-off visit at a local shop and an in-depth interview with the sign owner would satisfy the criteria of an ethnographic approach and shed light on "stories behind the signs" (p. 82). Given the unsettled debate over what counts as ethnography in linguistic landscape research, I choose to be prudent and refrain from labelling my study as being an ethnography in the strictest sense, although my dataset does offer ethnographic insights into the emplacement of signage.

Another methodological choice that needs further explication is the unit of geosemiotic analysis. Early linguistic landscape studies tend to opt for a quantitative method, such as enumerating languages on signs and categorising signs based on their

genres and functions (Cook, 2013). For this type of analysis, an individual sign within a definable frame is treated as the unit of analysis, and the underlying assumption is that texts contain clearly definable language units (Angermeyer, 2017). To map out the multilingual make-up of a neighbourhood, a comprehensive photography of all signs present in the central streets are often required. However, the geosemiotic analysis focuses on not only the visual semiotics of individual signs, but also the spatiotemporal environment where the signs situate. The unit of analysis is thus an assemblage of signs at a particular time and space that would include people, objects, semiotic resources and actions (Vandenbroucke, 2016; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019). Viewing signs as interrelated systems also avoids the problem of counting and categorising signs, leaving more room for an in-depth geosemiotic analysis of signs and their relationships with space. For the third case study of WeChat landscape in particular, such a perspective could shift our attention away from the geographical location of individual signs and to the ways in which they are interconnected in the global network (Blommaert, 2019).

The third consideration is my positionality in this research project. The geosemiotic analysis is essentially based on an interpretive framework which highlights the ways in which experience can be mediated by material signs (Tufi, 2017). Although ethnographic data will be collected to assist with the analysis, I acknowledge that the interpretations of semiotic use are subject to researcher reflexivity (Georgakopoulou, 2017). Instead of viewing my researcher identity as an incapacitating factor for rigorous research, I argue that it is the very location where researchers are based and their own identities that add value to the interpretation of linguistic and visual data in sociolinguistic ethnography (Lou, 2017). My Chinese genesis and four years of overseas experience in London and Melbourne have endowed me both heightened awareness of and deep interests in the linguistic and semiotic practices of the Chinese

diaspora. My transnational identity as a Chinese and English bilingual lends me validity and legitimacy to read and interpret signs and stories behind them.

Given the comprehensive coverage of semiotic systems, geosemiotics is more suited to be used a heuristic guide rather than a stringent framework for the current study. In light of this, the research project consists of three complex case studies as response to the issues of theory, methodology, power relations and relevance that are undergoing constant debate in the field of linguistic landscape. While a longitudinal ethnography of linguistic landscapes is fruitful on many levels, my proposal to collect data during multiple visits to the sites is a more realistic and achievable goal considering the time and resources available for this research project. Given that linguistic landscape is an emerging field of sociolinguistics, I take a grounded perspective for the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) which allows themes of analysis to emerge from the findings in different study sites.

In what follows, I present each case study as individual chapters. Chapter 4 is concerned with the material narration of nostalgia in the rural landscape of Euroa. Due to the complexity of the Bendigo case, both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 examine the linguistic landscape of Bendigo, with Chapter 5 focusing on power through the semiotic landscape and Chapter 6 on commodification and ownership in the tourism landscape. Chapter 7, as promised, considers metrolingual practices in the collapsed context of WeChat landscape.

Chapter 4 Material narration of nostalgia: The linguistic landscape of a rural town in Australia (accepted version)

Abstract

Despite growing efforts to extend the boundary of linguistic landscape research, the construction of nostalgia as an affect in the rural context has rarely been explored. This article thus presents an investigation of the linguistic landscape of a rural town in Victoria, Australia to reveal how nostalgia is ordered, narrated and accomplished by means of situated material semiotic artefacts. Based on insights from an ethnographic dataset of photographs, interviews and fieldnotes, the study suggests the ways in which affective regimes draw on multimodal resources to create nostalgic signage for imagination and for consumption. In this light, the study contributes a fresh perspective to the material aspects of nostalgic affect and, more generally, points to the evocative potential of linguistic landscapes.

Keywords: linguistic landscape; affect; nostalgia; rural place; semiotic resources

Introduction

Of late, an increasing number of linguistic landscape studies have employed ethnographic oriented approaches, shifting from a simplistic coding of language combinations in public signs (Backhaus, 2007; Cook, 2013) towards a greater concern with the idiosyncratic histories and experiences of participants in public places (Blommaert, 2013). Such a trend is marked by an increasing attention to the affective potential of space (Wee, 2016; Ng, 2019), although nostalgia as an important affective dimension remains an under-researched aspect of linguistic landscapes.

A survey of literature has revealed several studies in the field where nostalgia is implicated in one way or another. For example, Hutton (2011) talks of the refashioning of Hong Kong cityscapes that creates new forms of collective memory and new objects of nostalgic sensibility (p. 180). Moriarty's (2015) study of an Irish tourist town highlights the commodification and subsequent consumption of the 'myth of the other' and 'sense of nostalgia' (p. 199). Nostalgic sentiment is more explicitly addressed in Quayson and Daswani's (2013) discussion of diaspora where they point out that "homeland ties are a defining part of a transnational profile that incorporates recursive modes of nostalgia, sometimes lodged in both homelands and the nations of sojourn at once" (p. 2). This study, however, does not consider the affective engagement with situated material semiotic artefacts. Therefore, there is still a need to examine how place as an important semiotic resource assists with the expression of affect, or nostalgia more specifically (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). In this article, I aim to examine how nostalgia is ordered, narrated and accomplished by means of semiotic resources in the public place, with empirical evidence from a rural town in Victoria, Australia. In so doing, I argue for the value and significance of attending to nostalgia in linguistic landscape studies.

I begin with a review of nostalgia as an affect in linguistic landscapes, and then discuss the spatial and temporal dimensions of nostalgia to arrive at a functional definition of nostalgic regime. Next, I present an ethnographic analysis of visual semiosis in the rural town in Victoria and the participants' insights into the material narration of nostalgia. Finally, I interpret the dual functions of nostalgia, that of sentiment and consumption, in terms of the theoretical underpinnings, reflecting on the significance of attending to nostalgia in linguistic landscape studies.

Situating nostalgia in linguistic landscapes

The term nostalgia originated from Greek and means “a longing and desire for home, family and friends, or the past” (‘Nostalgia’, 2019). Nostalgia was once explored as a psychological illness in the fields of psychology. More recently, nostalgia has been praised for its capacity to generate positive feelings and help people find meaning in their lives by improving their social acceptance and self-continuity (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). From a sociological perspective, May (2017) adds that nostalgic sentiment often acts as a sanctuary for people to store their belongingness in an idealised past, especially when they find unhappiness in modernity. Notably, these studies are less about the nostalgic effects of signs (i.e. spatial narration of nostalgia) than about the psychological construct of nostalgia (i.e. exploring what nostalgia is). To situate nostalgia in linguistic landscapes, we need to move away from the emotional states of individuals to consider the space as affectively charged.

In this respect, Thrift (2007) reminds us that affect is better conceived as a set of embodied practices, emergent from the context and thus non-representational of the mind. Wetherell (2012) similarly advocates the notion of ‘affective practices’ and their relationship with the discursive constituents of the setting (p. 52). Such a view, I posit, has two analytical benefits. First, it shifts our attention from emotions to materiality and place, making it possible to explore affect with the available linguistic landscape tools. Second, it allows us to reinvigorate nostalgic signs with the capacity for change, leading to further discussion as to who orders the spatial narration of nostalgia. To this end, I speak of nostalgia as an affect since it highlights the influence and impact of semiotic interpellation.

Linguistic landscape studies of nostalgia or affect in general are rare. In one exceptional study, Wee (2016) made the first attempt to situate affect in linguistic

landscapes. The study tunes our analytical gaze from emotion to affect, arguing that emotions are cultural interpretations of affect and thus can be subsumed into the latter (see also Thrift, 2007). This distinction offers room for conceiving the notion of affective regime, which structures the material site ‘in ways that are intended to evoke particular dispositions’ (Wee, 2016, p. 109). Some affective regimes are more established with formalised regulations over acceptable affect (such as the solemnised cemetery); others may take a softer stance with a general statement of encouraged practices (as in ‘quiet study zone’ signs at university library that leave it up to the students to infer for themselves the appropriate behaviours for that specific site).

It seems logical to apply the concept of affective regimes to the investigation of political events. Borba (2019), for example, examines the affective discourses of hate and hope that are written into the semiotic landscapes of political turmoil in Brazil. Through an analysis of the embodied affective responses to injurious signs, the study found out how feelings of hate towards the leftist leadership coexist in a space with expressions of hope for a better country. In a similar vein, nostalgic regimes often exist to encourage emotions for colonial history and national homogeneity. An illustrative case would be Velikonja’s (2009) study of post-Soviet nostalgia, which explores the development of nostalgic impulses towards the past amid tremendous shifts in economic structures, national identities and political ideologies. These applications highlight the regulative and hegemonic force of affective regimes, but we cannot do justice to the agentic potential of nostalgia if we limit its usage to politics.

It is useful to stress at this point that nostalgia has both a spatial and a temporal orientation. The spatial orientation concerns two places, the old homeland and the new host society. Such an aspect of nostalgia is what Woldemariam and Lanza (2015) describes as the longing for the ‘imagined community’, in which migrant groups deploy

semiotic resources to develop ‘an imaginary ideal of the homeland’ (p. 173). Quayson and Daswani (2013) add that in the process of mobility, a more complicated form of ‘unanticipated doubled nostalgias’ may come into shape, through intensified identification with both the national homeland and the places of sojourn (p. 4). On the other hand, the temporal dimension of nostalgia is concerned with an imaginary golden age based on shared ideals of history. Following this line of thinking, Leone (2015) argues that the desire for a past time creates a market for nostalgic narratives. For example, semiotic clues such as storybook characters and utensils from a collective past can be configured into product packaging to evoke nostalgic responses (see Cui, 2015 for a review of nostalgic marketing).

Nostalgic sentiment has been recurrently employed in the designing and advertising of goods and experiences in tourist-facing discourses, but the imaginary nature of nostalgia foregrounds the problem of authenticity. Nostalgic regimes attempt to activate and organise the desires and emotions of consumers, subsequently commodifying these dispositions into goods and services (Ng, 2019). While such moves preconfigure the ways in which memories materialise at a given place, their addressees may not necessarily associate the encouraged affective orientations with positive attachments to the place. Moriarty (2015) reminds us that when consuming nostalgia, tourists are in fact buying an ‘authentic’ experience of the past. Their desire for the myth of otherness prompts consumers to tap into feelings of nostalgia that represent a more authentic and unsullied version of modern life (Moriarty, 2015). When there is a discrepancy between the affect initiated by affective regimes and that appropriated by consumers, authenticity then becomes questionable.

Drawing on Wee’s (2016) notion of affective regimes and the conceptualisation of nostalgia, this study aims to examine nostalgic regimes, namely, the set of material

affordances that facilitate the nurturing of nostalgic responses among linguistic landscape participants based on the myth of otherness and the logic of consumption. Bearing in mind the foregoing, we can now introduce the rural town to situate our analysis.

Background: A rural town in Victoria, Australia

Rural context is largely ignored in linguistic landscape studies. A few exceptions include Stroud and Mpendukana's (2009) 'material ethnography' of Khayelitsha, a marginal town built in a location distant from the city centre with restricted access to public transport. The study found that 'sites of luxury' and 'sites of necessity' are constructed by different material and physical means, showing a preference for township life at the local level and an aspiration for postmodern consumerism at the global level (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009: 371). Public signage found in smaller places such as villages can also bear traces of language change, mobility and multilingualism. For example, Pietikäinen (2014) presents the case of an indigenous Sámi village, a peripheral locality of Sámiland in northern Scandinavia. The study highlights stability and normativity in institutional signs made by the authorities on one hand, and hybridity and multiplicity in relation to tourism and cultural activities on the other (see also Moriarty, 2014).

Bhreithiun and Burke (2015) further point out that a rural site has a unique cultural and political history. A comparison of the presence of minority language signage between rural territory and urban city revealed not only the tension between the official policies of centralised state authorities and town level agencies, but also the conflicting ideology between language maintenance and economic imperative. Perhaps more importantly, rural towns are usually of a smaller size than metropolitan areas, and thus allow more in-depth ethnographic analysis. Juffermans and Coppoolse (2012), for example, have been

able to conduct photo-stimulated interviews with villagers of different literacy levels and establish that how people make sense of visual signage depends on their personal literacy. Such studies help us determine the impact of the personal trajectories of sign readers on their interpretations of the linguistic landscape.

For these reasons, we have shifted our analytical gaze from superdiverse cityscapes to the rural landscape of Euroa, which is a rural town under the governance of the Shire of Strathbogie in north-eastern Victoria, Australia. The name Euroa originated from the indigenous Australian language ‘Year-O’, which means ‘joyful’ (Deboos, 1908). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2018) reports that as of 2016, the town had a population of 3,275, among which 32.8% reported English ancestry, 29.8% Australian, 12% Irish, 9.1% Scottish and 2.7% German. Statistically, heterogeneous heritage languages including Korean, Hindi, French, Tagalog and Italian are spoken at Euroa homes, but visually, English clearly dominates the rural landscape. After a comprehensive survey of policy documents, I have found no regulations on the preferred language code on signage in the sense of language policy per se. Generally, there is an encouragement for multilingualism ‘as both social reality and part of ideology of a multicultural and outreaching Australian society’ (Clyne, 1997, p. 127), but English remains the dominant language and the priority for not only literacy education but also publicity at the national and local level (see also Lo Bianco, 2008).

The era of globalisation is characterised by mobility and complexity, and Euroa is no exception. Apart from being a rural town, Euroa is also a translocal and transnational place with observable patterns of migration. ABS (2016) reported a net inflow of 232 people from elsewhere in Victoria to the Strathbogie Shire area as well as an in-migration of 129 people from overseas. We therefore should be prepared to recognise the ‘ordinariness’ of mobility and diversity appearing in ‘unexpected places’ such as the rural

town of Euroa (Pennycook, 2012, p. 18). In this regard, our interpretations of the linguistic landscape within the rural setting at one moment in time could potentially address the material order of nostalgia in a dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing space.

Methodology: Data and analysis

The data for this study was collected during multiple visits to Euroa in March 2018. The methods employed included photography, participant observation, interviews, and the compilation of official documents and newspapers related to the community. 371 photographs of visual and textual semiosis were taken during walks in the town. Drawing upon the principle in linguistic landscape analysis (Lai, 2013), my survey scope was limited to shopping districts where dense signs and social activities were observable. In addition, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the Chinese restaurant owner and a local journalist were conducted in order to interpret the signage based on the personal trajectories and lived experiences of the sign makers (see also Hult & Kelly-Holmes, 2018).

As this study involves the in-depth analysis of signs in the sociocultural context of a rural town, a quantitative approach that requires the documentation of all multilingual signs seems to be ill-fitting. I instead align our analysis with the recent qualitative turn in the field (Blommaert, 2013) and recognise the meaning-making potential of multimodal resources besides languages such as fonts, colours and spatial arrangements (see also Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Specifically, I conduct a geosemiotics-informed multimodal analysis (see Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016 for a review of multimodal analysis) to approach our data. Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotics provides a useful lens to conceptualise the rules, meaning potentials, and constraints of a place and uncover the meaning beneath nostalgic public artefacts. From a spatial and material perspective,

geosemiotics highlights several dimensions where the place factor interacts with meaning making. Linguistic landscape participants recurrently engage with signage through their visual perceptual spaces and help construct the *interaction order*, or what is permissible and normative in the public space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). In terms of *semiotic signs*, the spatial arrangement of elements represented in the sign indexes the relative importance of information. For naturalistic representation in Western aesthetics, ideal and given information is located in the upper left positions whereas real and new information is in the bottom right portions (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Most importantly, place semiotics considers how meanings may be derived from the emplacement of signs and their relationship with other signs in the context. Such an emphasis on contextualisation thus fits in with our notion of nostalgic regimes where the material affordances of place are of central importance.

In a critique of quantitative linguistic landscape analysis, Blommaert (2013) warns us against speculative reading of signs based on simplistic counts of languages. As a response, our ethnographic data and geosemiotics-informed approach could contribute to a deeper understanding of social reality. In the next section, we turn to an analysis of three nostalgic regimes as examples to illustrate how nostalgia is ordered, narrated, and accomplished by means of semiotic resources in the public space.

A material narration of nostalgia

The Strathbogie Council makes a clear statement on how and why a nostalgic regime should be created and sustained. As shown in the Strathbogie Planning Scheme:

[the Council plans] to continue to develop Euroa as a weekend and short break destination, while maintaining its traditional roles as a rural service centre ...; to maintain and enhance the Euroa ‘Village’ character through strengthening ... the

attractive historic buildings and streetscapes; to strengthen Euroa's relationship with its rural hinterland through showcasing activities, events and local products that portray the way the town's well vegetated streets and open spaces forge links with its landscape context. (Strathbogie Shire Council, 2019, p. 161)

The plan emphasises those desirable qualities of Euroa as being 'traditional', 'rural', and 'village-like', to be materialised through situated semiotic resources including 'historic buildings' and 'vegetated streetscapes'. Thus, rather than regulating nostalgic emotions and practices, the Council aims to ensure that the material order is configured into the place to evoke an appreciation for the rural past (see also Wee, 2016). This concern for creating a nostalgic image of Euroa is clearly indicated in a series of information signs along the heritage trail (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Euroa Heritage Trail

The heritage trail signs help establish an invisible order for the spatial movement of visitors. Starting from the Farmers' Arms Hotels and ending at Burton's Bridge, tourists are guaranteed a nostalgic tour of the town's architectural legacy from the late 1880s. The walking route presupposes the set of semiotic artefacts that participants may interact with, and even the direction from which they may approach these signs (see also Stroud & Jegels, 2014). Apart from setting the interaction order (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), the nostalgic regime also dominates the design of individual semiotic signage (Figure 2). Brick-red letters and serif English fonts would possibly invoke a longing for

Victorian-style buildings in the colonial period. The coloured tourist map layers a present dimension on top of the black-and-white past (see also Backhaus, 2007). The signage was designed with consideration of the visual semiotics principle that new information is in the bottom-right corner whereas given knowledge is in the upper-left (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In so doing, the Council ensures that both individual signage and their material emplacement provide room for nostalgic responses.



Figure 2. Euroa Public Hall

As clearly stated in the Scheme, nostalgia for a rural past is designed to be a commodity for tourist consumption. As Papen (2015) reminds us, ‘urban consumption is not limited to satisfying everyday needs but is oriented towards goods and services addressing specific lifestyles and consumer identities’ (p. 11). The use of historic buildings and vegetated streets marks Euroa as a pastoral town which offers tourists a distinct experience from the hustle and bustle of urban life. The rural landscape represents a crucial set of semiotic resources in constructing the unique character of Euroa, and an indispensable part of the collective memory and identity of Victorians. Through

reiterative engagement with the nostalgic regime, such memory may be revitalised, and identity accentuated (see also Woldemariam & Lanza, 2015).

While the heritage trail signs are especially designed for tourist consumption, there are also nostalgic regimes erected by local actors for consumption by locals. Of note, the semiotic resources of shop name signs contribute to a nostalgic image of the shop's products by using words such as *Euroa*, *country* and *town*. Figure 3 shows a sign from the Euroa News Agency, where the bright golden typeface is used together with the written words so that customers can interpret the shop as being local, familiar, and well-established. As Quayson and Daswani (2013) note, 'the localization of such names guarantees their cultural aura, and thus their niche status amongst the many other products that compete for consumer attention' (p. 2). In other words, a sense of rural authenticity and nostalgia has been folded into these local products for cosmopolitan consumption. It may well be speculated that business owners see value in the semiotics of time (established versus new), interpersonal distance (close versus distant) and place (unsullied rural versus sophisticated urban). Acting in the spirit of 'good reasons' (Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael, 2015), they thus appeal to the nostalgic qualities indexing localness, trustworthiness and intimacy that are valued by local consumers.



Figure 3. Euroa News Agency

Nostalgia is nothing trivial. Through material means of production, personal nostalgic emotions can easily escalate into a public issue. As depicted in Figure 4, the caretaker of a local nursery presented a petition to the Strathbogie Shire Council appealing for the building to be preserved as a heritage site. The Council once deemed the shop as a ‘significant’ contribution to heritage. After a member of the public bumped their head on the pillar of the veranda, however, barriers were put up around the building and decisions were made to demolish the wooden structure. To protect this ‘old gem’ or ‘beautiful veranda’ that is ‘adding character’ to the neighbourhood, the sign owner thus created an ‘assemblage of linguistic, cultural and artefactual resources’ (Pennycook, 2017, p. 271) which were aimed at instigating similar nostalgic responses among the community.

The rough handwriting and materiality of paper suggest an informal and impromptu nature in the petition (see also Amos, 2016), but the thoughtful presentation of newspaper clips and council planning document add authority and trustworthiness to

the overall argument. Interestingly, the explanatory notice shown in Figure 5 was reproduced in the newspaper article to challenge the ‘unsafe’ depiction of the veranda, and the article itself was reused by the sign writers to support their conservation claim. This series of semiotic practice, I argue, facilitates the discursive construction of the shop as a time-honoured place for which nostalgic responses become justifiable. What underlies the nostalgic regime might be a strong attachment to the idealised past, so much so that any restoration and renewal are simply seen as destructive and disruptive (see also Hutton, 2011). Such politically motivated displays of nostalgia in the linguistic landscape have far-reaching impacts beyond a simple sense of reminiscence.



Figure 5. ‘Completely safe’

We can see from the above discussion that nostalgic regimes create a sense of departure from urban reality and a proximity to the rural other. The nostalgic aura also

facilitates the consumption of the rural landscape and the instigation of collegial spirit, as illustrated by the heritage trail signs and petition sign assemblage. In the following section, I shall examine another set of signs belonging to a Chinese restaurant named *Flam Shan* to show the ways in which nostalgic regimes play on the myths of homeland and ethnic authenticity.

Among the many shops lining the vegetated Binney Street, Flam Shan Chinese Restaurant stands out for its brightly-coloured décor and exotic Chinese characters (Figure 6). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that red and yellow are quintessential Chinese colours. When used together with elements of lanterns and artistic patterns, they help create an authentic experience of Chinese food and culture. Regarding the use of languages, three linguistic units – ‘長發樓’ (lit. Forever Fortune Building), ‘Flam Shan’, ‘Chinese Restaurant Ph’ – can be identified based on their spatial distribution (Sebba, 2013). The choice of serif font has been interpreted to index history and the bold/italic typography helps to convey the relative importance of information (Jarlehed & Jaworski, 2015). Yet, the visual semiotic analysis leaves a perplexing question for us: What does ‘Flam Shan’ mean? Is it a strategy of ‘overlapping multilingual writing’ where the three linguistic units represent overlapping but different semantic meanings (Reh, 2004, p. 12)?



Figure 6. Flam Shan Chinese restaurant

As Ms A, the owner, explains, ‘Flam Shan’ means ‘strong lamb leg’ in Malay and symbolises business longevity and prosperity. We thus see that its meaning overlaps with ‘forever fortune’ to some extent. Ms A recounts the history of her migration, noting that it was pure pragmatism that motivated her move from Guangzhou to Euroa. At that time, her husband, Mr B, was eager to look for a new adventure in Australia. They originally settled down in Sydney and later moved to Benalla because Mr B found a job working in a Chinese restaurant. It was not until 2001 that the couple bought the then 20-year-old Flam Shan from a Malaysian owner and began running the restaurant in Euroa. After 18 years, she has come to terms with the name ‘Flam Shan’ and would rather keep it than spending extra money on changing the business name. It turns out that the material presence of this age-old Chinese restaurant fits in well with the nostalgic aura of the town. Though inadvertently, a nostalgic regime was established based on the myth of ‘Flam

Shan', which continues to challenge the idea of her ethnic Self and provoke curiosity in customers.

Flam Shan was a nexus point that defined Euroa as a transnational place and contributed to a spatial narration of nostalgia. For this reason, an investigation of the internal linguistic landscape of the restaurant was undertaken (see also Moriarty, 2015). Stepping into the Flam Shan, it is evident that the Malaysian influence has not been wiped away. The wall is lined with ink wash paintings, projecting an ancient Chinese sensibility, and abstract watercolour paintings, bearing semiotic traces of coconut trees, tropically suited roofs and wooden boats (Figure 7). Other visual reminders of the Malaysian aesthetics include the pop-up bar/counter, dark-red bricks and timber-look furniture. This is comparable to the situation in Little Ethiopia in Washington DC, as described by Woldemariam and Lanza (2015), in which semiotic artefacts indexing a cultural identity were used to foster an imagery of ethnic space and establish indexical relationship with the homeland afar.



Figure 7. Paintings

On top of the Malaysian decorations, Ms A chose to add more flower bouquets, which were based on what she herself found aesthetically appealing as an ethnic Chinese person.

Ms A: I put the flowers there, so it does not appear so empty. As for why I put those flowers there, it is just for beauty. You know our Chinese people like bright things not dark things. Chinese [people] like red, pink and green, so I put some new flowers there.

These signs, as Papen (2015) suggests, contribute to ‘the anesthetization of urban places’ and the consumption of ‘cultural symbols’ such as food (p. 12). Ms A seemed to be aware that such an anesthetization process is culturally and ethnically organised. She also selected other semiotic artefacts including an elaborate silk fan, a gold ingot cross-stitch and short couplets, which represent good luck and prosperous business in ancient Chinese culture (Figure 8). Thus, I would argue that Ms A’s choice of semiotic artefacts is culturally motivated, and such pursuit of wealth and fame is deeply rooted in her traditional Chinese value of honouring one’s ancestors (Ching-hwang, 2016, p. 352). Ms A tells us that she did not make many changes to the original setting out of concerns for finances. Nevertheless, in the few cases where her cultural aesthetics have been materialised, we see her efforts to construct a familiar Chinese space that is ‘layered’ (see also Backhaus, 2007, p. 130) on top of the Malaysian nostalgia.



Figure 8. Chinese cultural signs

This discussion of the Flam Shan shows that nostalgic regimes may be employed to arouse memories of the homeland for affective reasons. However, it is equally important to note that the meaning of restaurant signs relies in part on the shops and streets it is surrounded by (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Its location within the shopping district means that the Flam Shan assemblage is inevitably subject to commodification and consumption. The nostalgic regimes that were designed to index ethnic authenticity and create an imagined homeland may also offer a sense of ethnic otherness for a Western clientele. For example, Mr C, a local resident, attests to our assumption by describing his experience eating at the Flam Shan.

Mr C: It felt exotic ... You walk around it's really almost monoculture. To go to eat at the Flam Shan is always, looking at paintings on the wall, the red door is different, especially for a young kid before I go to Melbourne. That was just kind of amazing.

The material affordances that were aimed at indexing an imagined community in the new homeland indeed offer an exotic Chinese experience for the customers. This is slightly

different from the observations in Lou (2012), in which the symbols connected with Chinese are employed more as a tactic to construct Chinatown as an ideal tourist site for commercial purposes. As Mr C contemplates, the appeal of visually constructed ethnic authenticity declines as he gains more exposure to Chinese restaurants, but the cultural Other – the Chinese character of being extremely hardworking – still amazes him. Overall it becomes evident that the semiotic resources connected with the Chinese take on a commercial value in relation to the mobility afforded by globalisation.

Another constituent of the nostalgic regime involves Flam Shan's menu. When Ms A showed me the seats, she drew my attention to the menu on the table. The menu was in monolingual English, with the dragon symbol on its cover indexing a reminiscence for ancient Chinese culture (see Figure 9). The choice of English was deliberate, as Ms A explains, to cater for a neighbourhood consisting of local Australians. As I browsed through the menu, 'Long Soup' and 'Short Soup' were unexpected as they rarely, if ever, appear on Chinese restaurant menus. Ms A proclaimed that 'Long Soup' is intended for noodle soup and for 'Short Soup' she served a combination of wanton, vegetables and meat. Interestingly, the restaurant owners innovated the dish names by creating a semiotic link between long/short and the shapes of ingredients. To interpret such semiotic practices would involve an understanding of recontextualisation or resemiotisation, that is, 'how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next' (Iedema, 2003, p. 41). If we consider such a historicised process of meaning, we might reasonably speculate that the Chinese owners have drawn on their linguistic memories and locally available ingredients to re-create meanings and express themselves in their new homeland (see also Pennycook, 2017).

SOUP	
Long Soup	\$5.50
Short Soup	\$4.80
Combination Soup	\$5.80
Chicken Sweet Corn Soup	\$4.50
Chicken Mushroom Soup	\$4.80
Hot Sour Soup	\$6.50
ENTREES	
Mini Spring Rolls (2)	\$2.20
Dim Sims (2)	\$2.00
Prawn Fritters	\$8.80
Prawn Toast(2)	\$3.00
Prawn Cutlets (3)	\$6.00
Spiced Pork	\$6.50
Chinese Sausage (2)	\$4.00
Prawn Crackers	\$1.50
Prawn Cocktail	\$6.50
Seafood Cocktail	\$6.50
Chicken Sate Skewer (2)	\$6.00
Beef Sate Skewer (2)	\$6.00
BEEF	
Beef Chow Mein	\$14.80
Beef Chop Suey	\$14.80
Beef & Black Bean Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Oyster Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Cashew Nuts	\$14.80
Beef & Tomato Sauce	\$14.80
Beef with Pineapple	\$14.80
Beef with Garlic Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Mushroom	\$14.80
Beef & Chilli Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Sate Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Peking Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Seafood Sauce	\$14.80
Beef & Baby Corn	\$14.80
Beef & Curried Sauce	\$14.80
Beef with Bean Shoots	\$14.80
CHICKEN	
Lemon Chicken	
Curried Chicken	
Chicken Chow Mein	
Chicken Chop Suey	
Chicken with Black Bean	
Chicken with Plum Sauce	
Chicken with Garlic Sauce	
Chicken & Cashew Nuts	
Chicken & Mushroom	
Chicken & Tomato	
Chicken with Oyster Sauce	
Chicken & Pineapple	
Chicken & Peking Sauce	
Chicken & Seafood	
Chicken & Chinese	
Chicken & Chilli Sauce	
Chicken with Sate Sauce	
Mongolian Lamb	
Lamb with Sate Sauce	
Lamb with Chilli Sauce	
PRAWNS	
Curried King Prawns	
King Prawns Chow Mein	
King Prawns Chop Suey	
King Prawns & Oyster	
King Prawns & Pineapple	
King Prawns & Cashew	
King Prawns & Black Bean	
King Prawns & Seafood	
King Prawns & Mushroom	
King Prawns & Tomato	
King Prawns & Pineapple	
King Prawns & Garlic	
King Prawns & Chilli	

Figure 9. Flam Shan menu

Marketing researchers suggest that food consumption and nostalgia are connected because the smell and taste of food imprints the consumer's mind with strong memories (Alexandra & Pau-Emmanuel, 2014). Thus, an exploration of the experience of food may also illuminate an important dimension of the nostalgic regime. In the cases I will relate, eating at the Flam Shan involved, for me, a desire for the 'authentic', the 'homey', and the 'northern Chinese' characteristics of the restaurant.

[March 13th

Stir-frying meat with thawed vegetables and a sauce of customer's own pick are not the authentic way of cooking for a Chinese person born and bred in North China. My parents have indulged me with braised chicken and mushroom, steamed noodles and various forms of pancakes, so much so that my lingering

nostalgia does not allow me to appreciate the Sweet and Sour Chicken and oily Fried Rice, a recipe improved for western flavour ...]

The consumption of the unfamiliar food product revitalised my northern Chinese taste buds. Instead of bringing about a sense of security (Alexandra & Pau-Emmanuel, 2014), the food at the Flam Shan inadvertently aroused my feeling of nostalgia for the lost flavours in Australia. Comparing my experience with the narration of Mr C, it becomes evident that the authenticity of ethnicity, culture and food is contested and negotiated (Lyons & Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2017), relating to personal trajectories and spatial affordances. Therefore, I refrain from labelling the Flam Shan as ‘inauthentic’ and instead argue that different interpretations of authenticity arise in the consumption of food.

Discussion: Nostalgic regimes in linguistic landscapes

The notion of the nostalgic regime helps to shift our analytical gaze to the material means that pre-configure the desired affective responses. Rather than seeking to measure the emotional states of individuals as psychologists do, we can follow the growing literature on affect in the linguistic landscape and examine the nostalgic potential of the semiotic space per se. Our study of the linguistic landscape in Euroa highlights several insights into the ordering, narration and accomplishment of nostalgia through situated semiotic resources.

First, we can see that signage plays an important role in organising place, giving rise to a nostalgic regime that in turn determines the affective responses to signage (see also Stroud & Jegels, 2014). This analysis shows that heritage trail signs are employed to organise the movement of people through the space. Sometimes, these semiotic objects even determine the direction in which people approach and engage with the architectural landscape. These interactions, I suggest, contribute to the discursive production of Euroa as a place of history. Such a nostalgic regime tends to utilise the myths of an unsullied

rural past that is looked forward to by postmodern urban consumers. As Moriarty (2015) describes, this quest for otherness is ‘desired by tourists which enables them to draw on feelings of romanticism and nostalgia that are opposed to their rationalized everyday modern life’ (p. 200).

This brings us to my next point, which is how the nostalgic regime can encourage emotive practices at the community level. The ‘save our heritage’ initiative, I argue, was made possible by the social semiotic context of Euroa, a place where the rural past is not only a marketable resource but also a part of the collective memory. The place itself, as Wee (2016) argues, can be purposefully designed to evoke desired dispositions without the presence of people. Our study shows that the series of petition signs aimed at fuelling public nostalgia represents a nostalgic regime by itself but meanwhile contributes to the discursive production of the nostalgic discourse at a larger scale. Both regimes are structured in ways that are intended to arouse nostalgic emotions regardless of whether people are present, although they are less formalised and legalistic compared to the ones discussed in Wee (2016)’s study.

Third, our analysis of the Flam Shan Chinese Restaurant shows that nostalgia can take an alternative orientation and utilise the myth of lost homeland. Such nostalgic regimes consist of semiotic assemblages that index ethnic authenticity. Bucholtz (2003) suggests that authenticity is a social process emergent from constant negotiations of semiotic practices. Ms A, for example, has layered her Chinese aesthetics on top of the Malaysian décor, invoking multiple ethnic authenticities to be contested and authenticated by people who engage with and consume the cultural products. In so doing, the nostalgic regime evokes sentiments of an imagined community, stores the belongings and accentuate the identity of the Chinese owners (see also Woldemariam & Lanza, 2015). On one hand, these nostalgic places, as Alexandra and Pau-Emmanuel (2014) describe,

enable members of the ethnic minority to revitalise their olfactory and gustatory memories and find comfort in food consumption. On the other, we see that the creation of an exotic aura in the Flam Shan appeals to consumers seeking ethnic otherness, which primarily reflects Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael's (2015) principle of 'good reasons' to select semiotic resources for signage based on a target section of the population.

To recapitulate, nostalgic regimes function in two dimensions (longing for past and longing for homeland) and serve two distinct purposes (sentiment and consumption). In our case study of Euroa's linguistic landscape, they are better understood as the set of material affordances that facilitate the nurturing of nostalgic responses among linguistic landscape participants based on the myth of otherness and the logic of consumption. Table 1 shows the nostalgic regimes, the assumptions they work on, and their functions as discussed in this study.

Table 1

A summary of nostalgic regimes in the linguistic landscape of Euroa

Nostalgic regime	Description	Assumption	Function
Local Council (e.g. Heritage trail)	Information signs of historic buildings along the walking track	Feelings of being part of a different temporality are desirable.	Preserve historical authenticity and facilitate tourist consumption
Nursery Shop (e.g. Save Our Heritage)	A petition consisting of handwritten signs and newspaper clips on a shop window	Time is valuable and therefore destroying the semiotics of time is intolerable.	Fuel the nostalgic sentiment to motivate public action
Shopfront	'Flam Shan' and '長發樓'	Language use is indexical of business longevity and	Signal well established presence in the locale

Flam			prosperity if interpreted from a	and reminisce a pan-
Shan			Chinese cultural perspective.	Chinese identity
Restaurant	Internal	Flowers, paper fan,	1) Decorations based on	Create an imagined
		linguistic cross-stitch and couplets	Chinese aesthetics assist with	ethnic space to 1) store
		landscape layering on top of ink	the presentation of ethnic and	belongings and 2) cater
		wash and watercolour	cultural authenticity;	for customers
		paintings, wooden bar	2) ethnic and cultural otherness	
		and timber furniture	is desirable by consumers.	
	Menu	English-written menu	Both cultural authenticity and	Cater for a local
		with the Chinese cultural	language localisation are	clientele while preserve
		symbol of dragon	preferred by consumers.	cultural identity
	Food	Stir-frying chicken, pork	1) Smell and taste could	Provide relative
		or beef with frozen	revitalise memories associated	authenticity for both
		vegetables and a sauce of	with food;	members of the ethnic
		choice	2) Food is an important	community and the
			consumer product that offers	Western consumers
			exotic experience.	

Conclusion

Nostalgia remains an under-researched aspect of linguistic landscapes. Informed by the growing amount of literature on affect and the ethnographic dataset generated from fieldwork, the present case shows the ways in which nostalgia is ordered by situated semiotic artefacts based on the myth of otherness and the logic of consumption. Going beyond the signs, I was able to chart the process of visual semiosis and its authentication through the narrated experiences of linguistic landscape participants. In so doing, this study shows that there is value and significance in attending to the evocative potential of linguistic landscapes.

Furthermore, in a study of the trajectories of globalisation, the rural town might appear as an outlier (see also Hult & Kelly-Holmes, 2018) in which diversity and mobility

are not substantially represented. However, rather than seeking what we think we should find, as Pennycook (2012) notes, we should give analytical attention to underrepresented places. It is important to realise that rural places may also bear traces of the flows of semiotic resources. Our focus on ‘the unexpected’ has demonstrated how the rural site may serve as a contested place for the negotiation of nostalgic imagination. To understand the structuration of these nostalgic regimes would demand an interpretation of signage that is situated in local histories of wider global flows.

With respect to the Chinese communities, we see that the Flam Shan owners employed Chinese cultural symbols to accentuate their identities and create a nostalgic regime that in turn evokes a longing for a lost homeland. Linguistic landscape studies of Chinese communities often focus on the economic value added to the ethnic language (see Leeman & Modan, 2010 for example), whereas Chinese diaspora studies tend to find cultural interpretations of nostalgic emotions. Our study bridges the two distinct fields by demonstrating that nostalgia can be materially narrated, organised and accomplished in the linguistic landscape. What this paper shows is that there is a need for further study into the affective potential of material affordances (see also Wee, 2016) to illustrate how Chinese migrants continuously negotiate their identities, ideals and practices (Duff, 2015; Li Wei, 2016).

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Chapter 5 Power through the linguistic landscape (accepted version)

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to advance an understanding of power in linguistic landscape research. After setting out and discussing the concepts of ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power through’, we present a case study of Chinese semiotic assemblages in the Australian regional city of Bendigo. Our research includes ethnographic details of the processes of sign production and consumption, and illustrates the ways in which power relations have been experienced through semiotic objects specific to the Chinese culture. Importantly, such objects are contextualized as to provide insights into inclusion, values, ownership and literacy by those in this specific linguistic landscape. To conclude, we argue that a close examination of the linguistic landscape can inform various forms and interpretations of power relations in diasporic contexts.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, power relations, space/place, semiotic assemblage, Chinese

Although examinations of power have often been a focal area in sociolinguistic and social semiotic studies (Blommaert 2013), concerns of power and inequality have rarely been framed explicitly in linguistic landscape studies (Tufi 2016; Moriarty 2019). The aim of this paper is to examine ways in which power relations have been recontextualized through sociocultural associations across a series of emplaced uses of semiotic resources. Drawing on ethnographic observations, photographs, archived newspapers, and interviews with local participants, we use an approach grounded in

critical multimodal discourse analysis (Sliashynskaya 2019) to examine how the power of Chinese has been lived through the production and consumption of Chinese cultural establishments. The study was conducted in the regional Australian town of Bendigo, known for its prominent recognition of 19th century Chinese migration, with a focus on ‘power through’ in the semiotic landscapes. Following a review of relevant studies and methods, we analyse the production and consumption of Chinese semiotic assemblages to see how the semiotic choices are employed to facilitate contextualized interpretations of power in the diaspora space. In a final discussion, we consider the implications of investigating power through linguistic landscapes and suggest areas of further research.

Situating power in the linguistic landscape

Drawing on critical discourse analysis (van Dijk 2008), we set out three ways to consider work to do with power relations in linguistic landscape research — namely, ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power through’ as shown in Table 1 — in the view that such categorization helps to situate inquiries of power when enacted in multimodal discourses.

Table 1. ‘Power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power through’

Forms of power	Perspective on power	Focus of linguistic landscape studies	Examples from linguistic landscape studies
Power over	Power is a dominant and repressive force	a. language policy b. sociocultural and economic values	a. official languages have power over non-official languages b. languages with more instrumental values have power over other minority languages
Power to	Power is a positive and defiant force	a. innovative linguistic practices	a. sign owners have the power to create innovative linguistic forms

		b. communicative repertoires	b. resourceful sign readers have the power to interpret meanings
Power through	Power is mediated by semiotic resources	a. indexicality of semiotic resources	a. sign makers experience different types of power through semiotic assemblages

Historically, work in the area of critical studies define power as ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’ (Dahl 1957, 201). Such a conceptualization of ‘power over’ implies that power has a negative implication that can be associated with dominance and repressive forces in the context of social relation (Purdy 2015). Setting ‘power over’ in the context of linguistic landscape research, we can see evidence of this perspective in studies that depart from the fundamentals of language policy; here, for example, work comes to term with ‘power over’ issues by way of examining the coercive force of national political ideology that dictates the choice and order of languages in public. A study by Themistocleous (2019), for example, shows ways in which the political ideology of conflict leads to the spatial separation of Greek and Turkish in Nicosia’s border.

Conceptualizations of ‘power over’ can also be found where semiotic resources are enregistered with unequal social, cultural and economic values. To illustrate, it appears that the Punjabi language in Malaysia is marginalized and, as such, has gradually lost its voice in both public and private settings as it is not comparable to the status of Tamil (Gill 2014). With both the Greek and Malaysian examples in mind, linguistic landscape research such as this largely deals with two types of ‘power over’ relations: in the Nicosia setting, authorities appear to have the overarching power over what semiotic practices are permitted for display; in the case of Malaysia, for example, some ethnic groups appear to have socioeconomic power over the representativeness of

other groups.

Turning to more positive formulation of power, the general sense of the concept of ‘power to’ do something or simply to not act is not coercive (Ahearn 2010, 28). In other words, social agents are empowered to trespass the norms, to formulate subjective interpretations, or to simply ignore the message being conveyed (Ahearn 2010; Canagarajah 2013; Duranti 2004; Lukes 2002). One example of this conceptualization can be found in a study by Rojo and Portillo (2015) in which actors have the ‘power to’ make linguistic and semiotic choices that are otherwise restricted by their positioning in the business domains and the social processes of integration in the linguistic landscape. In another example, regional language speakers have the ‘power to’ use innovative language forms and to develop new literacy practices in the face of dominant national language (Woldemariam and Lanza 2014). Of note, such linguistic landscape studies put an emphasis on the agency of sign owners; they fail, however, to state explicitly that sign-reading is intrinsically a power issue since resourceful readers are more empowered to interpret the meanings (Blommaert 2005). Personal metrolingual repertoire as a form of power has a significant effect on the extent to which people participate and make sense of the linguistic landscape (Järlehed 2019). Indeed, we would argue here, for example, that greater degrees of literacy provide more ‘power to’ decode the reading of signs. To sum, linguistic landscape research to date appears to portray views of ‘power to’ either, on the one hand, by examining defiant communicative practices of sign owners in public space or, on the other hand, by investigating the multimodal repertoires and competence of sign readers.

Thus far, we have framed current linguistic landscape scholarship in terms of ‘power over’ and ‘power to’. Importantly, such framings assume an ‘indirect’ indexical relationship (Vandenbroucke 2017, 425) between concepts of power and their semiotic

representations much in the same way that we may presume that public signs bear symbolic connotations and recontextualized meanings. To illustrate, linguistic landscape studies on ‘power over’ rest on the premise that the relative visibility of languages takes on ideological loads and commodified values, which indexes either political power or socioeconomic power (Angermeyer 2017). Similarly, ‘power to’ assumes a connection between the adequacy of semiotic repertoires and the ability of self-presentation, empowerment and voice (Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael 2015; Blommaert 2013; Pennycook 2017); with such points in mind, it would appear that we can agree that semiotic resources do indeed index and construct power relations in linguistic landscapes.

With an aim of encouraging the field to engage more critically with the issues of power and inequality, we can perhaps begin to borrow the notion of ‘power through’ from critical discourse studies to acknowledge the capacity of sign owners to persuade sign readers to adopt a particular view through the arrangement of semiotic resources (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016; Zhang 2016). Power structures and social differences are lived and embodied through different semiotic materials in the linguistic marketplace; these languages and resources are hierarchically ordered and inscribed with symbolic values (Bourdieu 1991; Pennycook and Otsuji 2019; Vandenbroucke 2016). Here, power is mediated through multimodal discourses and spatial emplacements. Such representation of semiotic resources in the linguistic landscape construct discourse and are indicative of social power (Zhang 2016, 590). Can we begin to foster a stream of linguistic landscape studies that examine the ways in which semiotic resources are employed by sign makers, owners and readers included, to materialize power? Importantly, the clarification of such a stream would note ways in which ‘power through’ perspective underlines views of ‘power over’ and ‘power to’

because it points to the indexical relationship between any claims of power and the actual use of semiotic resources.

Despite this, studies of ‘power through’ are rare in the fields of linguistic landscape and critical multimodal discourse analysis in general (Machin 2013). Seldomly does linguistic landscape research scrutinize the indexical relationship among linguistic/semiotic uses, their sociocultural signification, and power. One exception may lie in the work of Archer (2014) who employed a social semiotic approach to explore the relationship between multimodal pedagogies and social justice, and concluded that various semiotic resources in teaching and learning hold the key to changing power relations and promoting equality for disadvantaged learners. More than seeing the importance of raising the multimodal analytical abilities of students, we need to investigate the signification of such multimodal resources. For example, Correa and Shohamy (2018) draw on critical feminist theories to problematize the commodification of women’s breasts. They importantly argue that cosmetic surgery essentially promotes a discourse of empowerment through ‘text and images that medicalized normal women’s bodies’ (Moran and Lee 2013, 373 as cited in Correa and Shohamy 2018). By focusing on the ‘power through’ the objectification and the consumption of women’s breasts on websites, the study raises critical questions about the semiotic representation of bodies, its socioeconomic implications and power.

As Machin (2013) reminds us, to be critical at the multimodal level we need to examine how different kinds of semiotic resources are deployed in the abstraction and recontextualization of participants, actions, practices, values and circumstances before reaching any conclusion on the ideological and political consequences of such processes. With the reminder at the forefront of our thinking, we set out to the field to investigate the concept of ‘power through’ in an actual linguistic landscape; in

particular, we sought to focus on the ways in which the power of sign makers has been recontextualized in light of sociocultural associations that may occur through the use of emplaced semiotic resources.

The use of Chinese semiotic resources in Bendigo, Australia

In linguistic landscape research, most scholarship has been situated within metropolitan areas that may offer exponential possibilities to examine the use of semiotic resources and their sociocultural significations (Stroud and Mpendukana 2009; Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). A number of studies, for example, have explored the Chinese diaspora in cityscapes and have found that Chinese semiotic resources, including red colours and ancient patterns, may be deployed to create an Oriental ambience for potential customers (Amos 2016). Such staged authenticity in the Chinatown district of one city was found to be even ‘more Chinese than China’ in some cases (Lou 2016, vii).

As Pennycook (2017, 278) notes, a ‘range of linguistic, artefactual, historical and spatial resources [that] are brought together in particular moments of time and space’ can be understood as ‘semiotic assemblages’ in the linguistic landscape. Such assemblages help to characterize the ways in which languages, semiotic resources, material artefacts and spatial configurations work together to facilitate the meaning-making process. With our focus on Chinese semiotic assemblages, we believe they may highlight the demarcated spaces of Chinese establishments in the linguistic landscape or help to indicate the spatial resources and life trajectories that are assembled within Chinese communities (Canagarajah 2017). Hence, we would argue that Chinese signs are fixed in terms of their emplacement in the landscape but are also subject to the interpretations and appropriations by participants of different histories and identities in the lived space. Such fluidity in meaning-making means that the assemblages of people,

objects and resources specific to the Chinese culture are valorised for different purposes and ascribed various forms of power through the semiotic landscape (Pennycook 2015).

For this study, we investigate Chinese semiotic assemblages in Bendigo, a regional city in the state of Victoria in Australia. In the 1850s, Bendigo was known as the ‘Big Gold Mountain’ or ‘Dai Gum San’ [大金山]. Word spread of the riches of the gold fields, and it attracted many Chinese from the ‘Four Cities’ (Toi Shan [台山], Sun Wy [新会], Hoy Ping [开平] and Yun Ping [恩平]) of Canton. Initially, nearly 4,000 Chinese migrants arrived in the area; even as gold yields declined in the next decade, nearly half remained and became actively involved in community affairs (Lovejoy, 2007). One key event that marked the social acceptance of the Chinese into the wider Bendigo community was the presence of the Chinese imperial dragon *Loong* (a five-clawed imperial dragon in ancient Chinese history) in the Easter Procession of 1892. European and Chinese Australians have worked together to maintain the dragon ever since this time, and this reciprocal relationship is now seen to set Bendigo apart from other goldfields where Chinese culture was not sustained (Tsai 2016). Despite the fact that Chinese now makes up just 0.5% of all languages spoken at home in Bendigo (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016), the regional city places a great prominence on Chinese migration. A parade that features the dance of the imperial dragon is an annual highlight.

For the researcher, Bendigo provides an opportunity to study how Chinese semiotic resources have taken on complex meanings in relation to power. In recent decades the Bendigo Trust and Bendigo Chinese Association have promoted Chinese culture. Despite its small size, for example, the town features a relatively large ‘Dai Gum San Precinct’ that includes the Golden Dragon Museum, the Guan Yin Temple, the Pleasure Garden and the Gateway. The precinct is to be ‘a Chinese cultural complex

which depicts the historical involvement of Chinese people in the social, commercial and community life of Bendigo's early history, and exhibit the very best aspects of the Chinese customs and lifestyles in history and leading up to the present day' (Bendigo Trust 1974, 3). In addition to the Precinct, generations of Chinese migrants have established a range of Chinese infrastructure including restaurants, grocery stores and a Joss House Temple (see also Maly [2016]).

During four visits to Bendigo over a three-month period from August to November 2019, the author collected 157 photographs, accessed archived newspapers at Golden Dragon Museum from 1973 to 1996, and generated nearly 6000 words of field notes based on ethnographic observations. Following the methodological shift in the field to go behind the signs of linguistic landscapes (Ferguson and Sidorova 2018; Hult and Kelly-Holmes 2019), the author also interviewed five focal participants to investigate how these Chinese semiotic assemblages may register different meanings and how power relations surface through contextualized interpretations (see Table 2). The names of the respondents have been modified.

Table 2. Five focal participants interviewed for this study

No.	Participant name	Occupation	Relationship with Chinese
1	Annie	Community worker	Migrated from Mainland China to Bendigo 2 years ago
2	Daniel	Senior staff at Joss House Temple	Born and raised in Bendigo; worked at the Temple for over 9 years
3	Jason	Museum tour guide	Chinese Malaysian student
4	Leo	Staff at Golden Dragon Museum	Born and raised in Bendigo; research on Chinese history and literate in written Chinese

5	Robert	Former president of Bendigo Chinese Association; one of the founders of Golden Dragon Museum	Descendent of Chinese goldmine workers

Power through Chinese semiotic assemblages

Based on interviews and fieldwork in Bendigo, the author identified four contextualized interpretations of ‘power through’ a range of semiotic resources (see Table 3).

Table 3. ‘Power through’ semiotic resources

Themes of ‘power through’	Definition of themes	Semiotic resources
Inclusive semiotic practices	Semiotic practices that include ethnic communities in sociocultural participation	Imperial dragons, silk costumes, Caucasian bodies in Chinese cultural events
Perceived value of bodies	Normative perceptions about the values of bodies which are enregistered with the experiences, skills and conducts specific to a cultural community	Chinese bodies in Caucasian place
Chinese semiotic literacy	Multimodal repertoires of people which is an aggregate of life trajectories, sociocultural practices and spatial affordances	Culturally specific multimodal repertoires
Ownership of semiotic resources	Authority over semiotic resources and a sense of moral entitlement to exploit and control, and to deny others access to culture-specific resources	Physical access to imperial dragons, Chinese cultural classes, appropriation of dragons

Power through inclusive semiotic practices

It is common to understand power simply as a coercive force. Such an understanding can be developed with reference, for example, to quotes such as those from Robert who recalls that ‘when they [the Chinese] came to Australia they got treated badly, really badly ... and when I came to Bendigo, there was no different, I got treated badly.’ As Ip (2013) suggests, antagonistic attitudes towards the Chinese flourished in an era of widespread discrimination. Linguistic landscapes, however, consist of a variety of semiotic resources that often incorporate a range of language ideologies that may be seen to foster dichotomous power relations such as inclusion and exclusion, hegemony and counter-hegemony, equality and discrimination (Kasanga 2015). Drawing on the perspective of Otsuji and Pennycook (2011), we see how such concepts may help to understand the sociocultural participation of ethnic communities. How do current semiotic practices of both the ethnic Chinese Australians and the Bendigo locals index forms of inclusion and acceptance of their racial and cultural counterpart?

Even given his awareness of the coercive power of the colonial Victorian government, Robert also touches on concepts of ‘power through’ as he tells how a sense of inclusion was fostered in the original Bendigo community:

... when the calls went out to raise money for charity, the Chinese first put their hands up. They raised one hundred pounds to help build the first hospital ... The Chinese decided if they're going to raise money for charity, they should do it on a grand scale. ... they sent to China and they imported over one hundred bullion crates, full of Chinese costumes, the costumes of silk, gold bullion thread ...

From this point on, according to Robert, the Chinese were recognized, welcomed and even valued by the wider Bendigo community who later raised money to assist the Chinese community with replacing worn-out imperial dragons. As Schamberger (2011,

140) argues, Chinese museums in Australia essentially serve as a long-standing semiotic marker that reminds its audience of the Chinese contribution to Bendigo and celebrates the ways in which ‘the Chinese and other communities came together to be Australian’. Mutual recognition is an important semiotic practice; in his interview, Daniel proudly explains a key moment of acceptance:

... for somebody who is not Chinese, um, I had an honor bestowed on me Chinese New Year before yeah, two years ago. A local Chinese association were blessing three new lions, the Hui Gong ceremony, the eye-opening ceremony. I was one of the three Chinese elders for the blessing ceremony. So that honor’s being bestowed upon somebody who is not Chinese.

In this case, we can see how ‘power through’ recognising Daniel as one of the ‘Chinese’ elders elevates his ability to enter Chinese discourses and semiotic practices. In contrast to studies of communities in which the Chinese struggled to gain entry beyond the business domain (Lou 2012; Wang and de Velde 2015), the Bendigo Chinese seems to have not only been accepted but also exhibited power through acceptance of foreign members. Nonetheless, the local Bendigo community have gained additional power through these inclusive semiotic resources because they now carved out their own spaces in the Chinese community as well. As a founder of the Golden Dragon Museum and the former President of the Bendigo Chinese Association, Robert suggests how ‘power through’ may be enacted through mutual recognition:

If you see that procession, we have over one thousand people in that procession. Seven hundred little white faces on that day only want to be Chinese. And and yes, and you know, we give them that honour. The same as they class us as Aussies.

As shown in his position of status, Robert has been a beneficiary of an inclusive

Bendigo community and would equally embrace the Caucasians into his Chinese community. It is important to note that Robert shares his power through inclusion of Caucasians into the dragon procession, a semiotic event exclusive to the Chinese culture, whereas he believes the Bendigo community only delegates power through classification of ethnicity. Based on this observation, we would argue that while the Chinese has gained power through forms of inclusion and recognition, indexed by the imperial dragons, silk costumes and the presence of Caucasian people, these inclusive semiotic practices attest nonetheless to the unequal power relations between the Chinese and the Bendigo locals.

Power through perceived values of bodies

As shown in the work of Correa and Shohamy (2018), the human body can be seen as an ideologically charged semiotic resource that indicates ‘the life experiences of the individual social actors’ (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 46). Through a process of ‘enregisterment’ (Johnstone 2016, 633), bodily movements and gestures of individuals create normative patterns of conduct that can be used to signal belonging. Humans, of course, occupy places that consist of particular social arrangements that in turn inscribe the spatial arena with expectations about the relationships between signs and their emplacement; over the years, historical processes impose their ‘own rules, possibilities and restrictions on communication’ (Blommaert 2018, 70) that cause the actions of human bodies can be perceived to either possess or be deprived of particular values.

During our work in Bendigo, we also saw how bodies can be enregistered with a range of sociocultural values and thus become representative of power relations. As the history of goldfield districts in Australia was characterised by European racism, prejudice and violence toward Chinese gold-seekers (Ngai, 2011), Robert recalls that even Chinese who had ‘blonde hair, blue eyes and a real Chinese name’ would feel

ashamed about their ethnic heritage to the point that ‘when they're growing up, their mother [would] never ever tell them they had Chinese in -- that's cruel.’ This and similar observations echo Oostendorp (2018), who views ethnic bodies as a transgression against the discourses of white supremacy.

Perhaps as a result of contemporary geopolitical alignments, negative perceptions of the Chinese people have been replaced by more positive associations; the indexical meanings of Chinese bodies in the diasporic environment of Bendigo have also changed. In her interview, Annie tells us that part of her power in being a Chinese person in Bendigo is rooted in desirable cultural values such as ‘热情’ (hospitality), ‘勤奋’ (diligence) and ‘包容消化和接受’ (inclusiveness), that now can be used to characterize overseas Chinese people. Even back in the gold rush days, Chinese immigrants to Australia were empowered by their resourcefulness, resilience and wistfulness (Lovejoy, 2011).

Born and raised in Malaysia, Jason reminds us that power is often tied to economic value:

...一看我是华人嘛对不对？然后就他们就认为，噢，你一定是中国来的...
我们在马来西亚可能，因为是三大种族，或者还有当然还有其他的少数民族，我们就告诉我们是华人，我们是华裔。但是我们来到这边，我会说我是马来西亚人，我就不会用，我说华人，因为你说华人，人家就可能认为你是中国来的...

[Translation: When they look at us, they recognize that I am Chinese. Then they would assume that I must come from China. So, when I am in Malaysia, because we are one of the three largest ethnic groups, there are other minority groups also, I would tell people I am Chinese, I am ethnically Chinese. But when I

came here, I would say I am Malaysian. I would not say ‘Chinese’, because when you say ‘Chinese’, people think you come from China.]

As Jason has personally experienced, there is a normative indexical relationship between ‘Chinese’ and ‘China’ in many diasporic contexts. Blommaert (2018) suggests that location itself is not neutral but is able to impose its own rules, possibilities and constraints on the making of meaning. In line with Shang and Guo (2017), we see that the present economic power of mainland China fosters a change in the indexical meanings of Chinese bodies in the regional city of Bendigo.

Through this historical lens of bodies in place, we are also able to see the ways in which bodies as a semiotic resource have been enregistered with specific sociocultural and economic values that in turn mediates the perceptions and interpretations of power. As Kitis and Milani (2015, 269) note, ‘power is negotiated and contested by the interplay of bodies, linguistic signs and the materiality of the built environment’. The moment that historical bodies encounter the historical place, issues of power relations arise in regards to who owns the place, who are the legitimate users of the place and whether or not the presence of unexpected groups of users in a particular place should be allowed (Blommaert 2018).

Power through Chinese semiotic literacy

Demonstrating a fluent understanding, or a literacy, of Chinese semiotic assemblages may also help inform concepts of ‘power through’. Here, we view literacy in terms of multimodal repertoires consisting of the trajectories of people, sociocultural practices, and spatial affordances (Blommaert 2018; Pennycook 2018) in contrast to linguistic literacy that refers to the languages known to sign-writers (Spolsky 2009). Excerpts from our interviews with four participants provide insights into the ways power through such literacy may occur. Jason offers an insight when he describes his

conduct of guided museum tours:

...如果真的是中国人来，我们带队的方式完全就不一样。因为你给他们看像绣花鞋，布娃娃，这个旗袍，要么就是好普通的东西，就随便在哪里都看得见。但是如果去本地的学生也好，那旗袍唉，那个缠脚的那个小鞋，没看过...所以如果他们真的过来的话，我们带团的时候就会主要是跟他们说，华人在澳洲那里去发展是什么，就不会完全给他们看那些东西，那些对他们来说完全没有太多的意义吧。

[Translation: ... when tourists come from China, we have a different style of guiding tours. We understand that embroidery shoes, rag dolls and Qi Pao (a type of feminine tight-fitting dress worn by Chinese women) are ordinary objects they can see everywhere. But when local students come to visit, they wonder what Qi Pao is because they have never seen the small shoes for foot-binding...So if they [Mainland China tourists] really come, we tell them more about the development of Chinese people in Australia; we don't show them those things that are not meaningful for them.]

For many Western visitors, embroidery shoes, rag dolls and Qi Pao are semiotic objects that may well index an exotic culture (see also Moriarty 2015) in ways that account for the 'tourist gaze' on such artefacts (Urry and Larsen 2011). Tourists from China, however, have undergone the process of enregisterment such that the sociocultural meanings of Chinese artefacts are readily available through common discursive practices. As illustrated in this analysis of Bendigo tourists, we can see how an understanding of Chinese cultural symbols may well vary in accordance with differing life trajectories. Chinese people themselves, it bears reminding, also have varying degrees of literacy levels. As a newcomer to the community, Annie tells us that she does not recognize the gods inscribed in the Joss House Temple of Bendigo nor does she

identify with the religious traditions that were historically practiced in the goldfields. In this respect, Annie does not necessarily project a ‘tourist gaze’ onto her understanding of the Chinese history in Australia. To explain Annie’s reaction, we could argue that a narrative of historically disempowered Chinese people has failed to gain traction in contemporary views of mainstream Chinese history that align with an economically empowered China of the present day (see also Schamberger, 2011). Leo, however, offers another possible explanation as he points out that in the genre of overseas Chinese museums that ‘sometimes, it can be the same story, again and again, and again.’ As the semiotic production of overseas Chinese history increasingly demystifies the hardships of the Chinese themselves, it would appear that any power gained through exotic associations leaves an even smaller scope for tourist fantasies and ponderings (Urry and Larsen 2011; Heller, Jaworski, and Thurlow 2014).

To counter views of illiteracy and repetition as factors that diminish power through understanding, Robert explains that Chinese semiotic assemblages in Bendigo create opportunities for growth as he remarks that ‘the quality of our artefacts, what we have here is as good as you will see anywhere in the world... We’ve found a lot of Chinese say we had to come to Bendigo to find out what life is all about.’ The Museum houses a range of artefacts and maintains a repository of personal stories in relation to Bendigo Chinese Australians, but it nonetheless privileges an essentialised image of the Chinese, indexed by ethnic origin, cultural knowledge and linguistic literacy (Schamberger, 2011). In our view Robert’s optimistic view of such power of ‘Chineseness’ is an aspiration to reclaim and preserve a Chinese heritage that is itself fading. To illustrate, tickets for the museum bear several instances of inaccuracy and suggest a lack of Chinese proficiency. For the author as a contemporary Mandarin speaker, tickets make use of ‘小孩票’ (lit. children’s ticket [alternative trans. 儿童票])

in a way that is neither colloquial nor standard; additionally, the presence of ‘元’ (yuan) instead of ‘刀’ (dao, phonetically resembles the first syllable of ‘dollars’) confuses that status of accepted currency, and the perplexing syntactical structure of ‘最底一个票价’(lit. a lowest price [trans. 最低价]) suggests the inappropriate choices of several Chinese characters including ‘怡圆’ and ‘最底’ (which should be written as ‘怡园’ and ‘最低’ respectively in simplified Chinese). When asked, a contemporary Cantonese speaker confirmed our reading that ‘最底一个票价参观’ [Cantonese: 最平/最抵參觀既票價系] is itself not standard Cantonese. When drawn to his attention, Leo suggested that such ticketing represents a claim for symbolic power within the confines of Bendigo, and well not be seen as a demonstration of Chinese literacy when viewed from those further afar.

Power through ownership of semiotic resources

What sets Bendigo apart from other goldfields tourist towns across Victoria is arguably the ownership of Chinese semiotic assemblages by Bendigo residents. Following McLaughlin (2016), we understand ownership as associated with authority over semiotic resources and ‘a sense of moral entitlement to exploit and control, and to deny others access to’ those culture-specific resources (Hutton 2010, 538). In the linguistic landscape, tensions often arise when various social actors seek to retain or claim their ownership and legitimacy (Heller, Jaworski, and Thurlow 2014). For example, Annie reported her experience of being granted physical access to the imperial dragons:

...然后他们有那个就是那个大的 Soon Loong 拿出来，就是展览。然后我记得很清楚，那个馆长就说，从来都没有人靠近过那个龙，但是你是中国人，你可以。真的，我和我妹妹很荣幸，就是第一个就是走上那个台子，

然后去看那个大龙。

[Translation: They take that big Soon Loong (the new imperial dragon as opposed to Loong) out for exhibition. I remembered clearly, the museum curator said: ‘nobody had come near to that dragon, but you are Chinese, so you can.’ Really, my sister and I felt privileged to step on that stage and see that big dragon.]

Because Annie was a new migrant, it was at the discretion of the Bendigo Chinese to decide whether she could be accepted to the community as a legitimate member. We thus see here that the otherwise invisible ‘order of interaction’ (Scollon and Scollon 2003) in the Bendigo Chinese community was visually represented through her physical distance to the imperial dragons. Annie has claimed ‘spatial ownership’ (Peck and Banda 2014, 13) because of her privileged access to the sacred symbol in Chinese culture. As she reflects, such an empowerment experience has reinforced her identity as a Chinese person in the diasporic context. We can also speculate, however, that bringing a person who indexes contemporary China into the Bendigo Chinese community is a semiotic gesture that would attach more currency, relevance and thus power to the Bendigo Chinese community itself.

Significantly, Annie’s ownership is not confined to the gold mine Chinese history in Bendigo but involves her being an ambassador of Chinese culture in its entirety. She actually runs ‘Chinese Cultural Class’ in Bendigo with an aim to communicate Chinese culture to a wider audience. As Scollon and Scollon (2004, 46) note, human actions and practices are ethnographically situated in their ‘life experiences, their goals and purposes, and their unconscious ways of behaving and thinking’. Participants in social actions are thus ‘historical bodies’ because they carry a baggage of personal histories, skills and competencies. Annie had acquired the routine

skills as a Chinese person throughout her life in Mainland China. In the context of Bendigo where very few Chinese speakers are present (people like Robert have Chinese heritage but cannot speak the language), Annie would have been regarded as embodied Chinese culture through the movements and positions of her body which are organized around normative patterns of conduct as a Chinese person. Hence, it is not surprising that she assumed the role as the Chinese ambassador as she very much has exclusive ownership to this part of the Chinese culture (Chinese cooking, calligraphy, tea ceremony and paper cutting as opposed to the lion dancing and dragon parade owned by the Bendigo Chinese).

While the Chinese community has employed various semiotic resources to create a particular Chinese place within the linguistic landscape of Bendigo, such ownership has not led to a cultural segregation as observed in the case of other Chinatowns (see also Amos 2016). Importantly, the Bendigo locals have equally projected claims and appropriations of the Chinese history and culture through the semiotic landscape, promoting assimilation and integration. As Leo explains:

... there is something that about that aspect of our heritage that is felt to be something that all Bendigo people have some pride in, like the pop-up tents here, the mines, it's all part of the the Bendigo story. Certainly, for most people, both the Joss House and the museum are things they felt to be valuable parts of Bendigo's tourism scene, cultural scene and heritage.

As Leo has observed, Chinese assemblages appear throughout Bendigo. In the central shopping district, for example, a children's playground has been built to mimic the most sacred and mythical creature in ancient Chinese history as a dragon (see Figure 1). The dragon playground is then 'resemiotized' (Iedema 2003, 52) into a silhouette symbol for use throughout children's programs in the City of Greater Bendigo (see Figure 2).



Figure 1. Dragon-themed playground for children



Figure 2. Dragon symbol on tent

Arguably, the semiotic resource of the Chinese imperial dragon has been

mobilized for its associate value and history of Chinese migration. The resemiotization practice indicates that the Chinese cultural symbol has been woven into the sociocultural fabric of the community and has become a powerful semiotic resource for Bendigo locals. The use of Chinese symbols as prominent semiotic resources for Bendigo's diasporic context is rare in that they are neither confined into specific tourist-facing frames nor serve as markers to designate particular areas as Chinese (see also Lou 2016). Rather, they are now integral to the mainstream discourse and the identity of this regional city.

Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we have argued for the significance of attending to power relations in linguistic landscapes. Through a review of linguistic landscape literature, we have made explicit three streams of linguistic landscape studies that share a critical concern for power relations in public places. These include studies focusing on 'power over' (which attends to the unequal relationships among social actors), 'power to' (which has an emphasis on the agency of linguistic landscape participants), and 'power through' (which highlights the semiotic medium and the interpretations of sign readers). Situating our study in the 'power through' stream, we have focused on the different types of 'power through' the emplaced use of semiotic resources. By way of examining the case of Chinese in Bendigo's linguistic landscape, we have established that power manifests through inclusion, perceived values, literacy and ownership. These various representations of power in the lived spaces have been mediated through different semiotic resources including, most importantly, Chinese semiotic artefacts and historical bodies.

Individual engagement in multilingual interactions involves the use of all available semiotic resources. These semiotic practices are situated within sociocultural

communities, who might be economically, culturally or politically invested to provide or restrict individual access to agency and power (see also Themistocleous [2019]). As our case study shows, members of Chinese communities are empowered, both as an individual and as a collective, through recognition and enactment of semiotic resources. Meanwhile, it is important to recognize that these micro-level semiotic events are constantly shaped and organized by 'large-scale, society-wide' ideological structures, sociocultural beliefs and economic values (The Douglas Fir Group 2016, 24). In the Australian context, discourses of multilingualism and multiculturalism are macro-level orders that add value to the semiotic acts of inclusion and recognition. Built on this understanding, future studies could possibly explore how power is materialized through micro-, meso- and macro-level semiotic landscapes, by way of examining semiotic actions, collective assemblages and pervasive discourses.

While recognising the Chinese power through linguistic landscape, we are also reminded of the challenges faced by the Bendigo community to renegotiate with the increasing presence of Chinese or multilingual signage in general. With a growing number of inter-state migrant inflow to regional Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016), power dynamics in the material and semiotic landscape is susceptible to change over time with processes of urban development and gentrification. Both Papen (2012) and Vandenbroucke (2015) have noted the impact of social change on the outlook of multilingual discourses and language hierarchies in semiotic landscapes. For Bendigo, a more historicized and longitudinal analysis might help reveal whether the Chinese could sustain their power through semiotic resources amid the multiplicity of multilingualism as well as to what extent the Bendigo community would equally embrace various claims for visibility through mobilization, resemiotization and appropriation of semiotic resources.

Despite our focus on the indexicality of Chinese semiotic resources in the Australian context, our framework of power through semiotic aggregates is applicable to other contexts as well. For example, studies of the indigenous Sámi community (Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014), the Irish tourist town (Moriarty 2015) and beach resorts in Spain (Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan-Garau 2015) have dealt with the commodification of minority linguistic resources. These studies could have moved one step further to question the implications of semiotic commodification and evaluate the claims for power through inclusion and ownership, by way of examining a different set of semiotic resources. Further studies could also apply the framework of power through to explore other diasporic contexts and perhaps shed light on the extent to which power and agency of ethnic diasporas are related to their historical association with local communities.

To do justice to the narrative of Bendigo Chinese, it is important to also recognize the contested discourses of ownership and commodification in the semiotic landscape. As our study shows, successful accommodation has been reached between the Chinese community and the wider population of Bendigo, helped by the positive stereotypes of overseas Chinese as well as the cultural rituals employed by Bendigo Chinese. However, this accommodation also reflects the historically unequal status of the Chinese and the compromise made by the less powerful party. On the other hand, as China rises and gains economic and political power, there comes a new normative perception of Chinese language and identity that both empowers and revitalizes the Chinese culture in Bendigo and threatens to overwhelm it. The economic value attached to Chinese semiotic resources gives rise to linguistic commodification and cultural tourism (Heller, Jaworski, and Thurlow 2014), which further adds complexity to the power dynamics in the landscape and demands further attention.

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Chapter 6 Commodification or shared ownership? A case study of Chinese communities in the linguistic landscape of Bendigo (submitted version - revised)

Abstract

Current linguistic landscape studies of tourism are primarily concerned with the commodification of languages, and less attention is focused on ownership discourses that are constructed in tourist spaces through varied semiotic resources. This study employs a spatial perspective to analyse commodification and ownership in the linguistic landscape of Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, focusing on how these discourses materialise in the conceived, perceived, and lived spaces through the semiotic resources of Chinese communities. Built on a comprehensive dataset of photographs, field notes, interviews, and archived materials, this study reveals the agency of Bendigo's Chinese community members, who claim ownership of semiotic resources despite the institutional forces seeking to commodify Chinese cultural heritage for tourist consumption. Examination of Chinese heritage sites demonstrates the possibility of shared ownership of Chinese semiotic resources among Chinese and non-Chinese residents in an Australian cultural tourism context. This balancing act of commodification and ownership constitutes a critical part of the lived experiences of Chinese communities in today's era of mobility and globalisation.

Keywords: commodification, ownership, linguistic landscape, tourism, Chinese communities

1 Introduction

Linguistic landscape research investigates how public spaces are imbued with social meanings through the use of languages and semiotic materials. Early studies in the field predominately focused on written texts and the multimodal resources inscribed on publicly visible signs (Leeman and Modan, 2009; Moriarty 2014). Recent literature, however, has expanded this approach to consider the construction of linguistic landscapes through

collections of linguistic and non-linguistic materials (Pennycook 2017; Sharma 2019), including perspectives of urban planners and sign owners (Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau 2015; Lou 2016; Hult and Kelly-Holmes, 2019). Central to such linguistic landscape approaches is the “spatialised perspective” (Malinowski 2015: 95) that recognises the role of semiotic resources in demarcating geographical boundaries of ethnolinguistic communities (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Amos 2016) and constructing conflicting discourses and social relations (Järlehed 2015; Yan 2019).

Tourism commodification is one of the major factors structuring the linguistic landscape. Commodification refers to the process in which language, culture and identity are objectified and marketed as commodities for consumption (Lou 2012; Coupland and Coupland 2014; Moriarty 2014). Across various social contexts, studies have shown how the linguistic and cultural artefacts of ethnic minorities are packaged into products and marketed as distinctive experiences for spectators (Leeman and Modan 2009; Heller et al. 2014; Lamb and Sharma 2019). However, despite the prolific literature on the role of languages and other discursive materials in the production of commodification discourses, less attention is focused on the implications of tourism commodification for members of minority communities. Questions persist regarding the extent to which minority communities show authority over or ownership of their semiotic resources, and their interrelationships with other social actors in the linguistic landscape who may have the legitimacy to exploit and appropriate these materials.

To address this issue, I use Chinese communities in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia as a case study for evaluating the contestations between commodification and ownership discourses in the touristic spaces. Drawing on Lefebvre’s (1991) spatialised perspective and its recent interpretations by Trumper-Hecht (2010) and Malinowski (2015), this study investigates how contested discourses of commodification and ownership are constructed by

various semiotic resources that inhabit the linguistic landscape. Based on a comprehensive data set of photographs, field notes, interviews, and archived materials, the study analyses Chinese tourism within the linguistic landscape through the lens of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces. Importantly, the study considers how Chinese communities in Bendigo juggled institutional ideologies of tourism and represented their claims for ownership of Chinese semiotic resources in the diasporic context. The case study of Bendigo also illustrates the possibility of shared ownership between Chinese and non-Chinese communities which overthrows stereotypic conceptualisations of diasporic communities as ethnic enclaves.

To illuminate the issues of commodification and ownership within the linguistic landscape of Chinese touristic spaces, the following two sections discuss the spatialised perspective and commodification discourses in tourism. Subsequently, I briefly sketch the history of Chinese communities in Bendigo and introduce the dataset used in this study. I then present an analysis of Chinese tourist sites in Bendigo's linguistic landscape to show the ways in which commodification and ownership discourses are materialised through nuanced uses of semiotic resources. I conclude this paper with a discussion of the implications of the findings and an agenda for further research.

2 Linguistic landscape research and the spatialised perspective

Linguistic landscape research investigates the intersection of language and space to understand the materialisation of discourse (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010; Lamb and Sharma 2019). While acknowledging the significant role of language in the production and consumption of signs, linguistic landscape researchers also adopt an expansive view that encompasses other meaning-making practices embedded in the material environment, such as images, sounds, and architectural designs (Shohamy and Waksman 2009; Lou 2017). A key to linguistic landscape analysis is understanding how *spaces* are filled with sociocultural values and thus symbolically constructed into *places* through varied semiotic materials (Hult

2014). This innovative lens for the interactions between linguistic/semiotic resources and the spatial environment, therefore, distinguishes linguistic landscape research from sociolinguistic and discourse analyses.

Lefebvre's (1991) *Production of Space* provides a useful framework for conceptualising these interactions in terms of three dimensions: conceived space, perceived space, and lived space. This "spatialised perspective" is primarily concerned with the "contentious processes by which sign mediated, social meanings are produced in place" (Malinowski 2015: 103). Based on the reinterpretations of Trumper-Hecht (2010) and Shohamy (2015), conceived space can be understood as a political dimension, as the imagery of urban areas is envisioned by policymakers and is ideologically charged. Perceived space is what can be observed, felt, or perceived by people in everyday social life; it represents the material dimension of the linguistic landscape where semiotic practises may be documented photographically. Lived space serves as the experiential dimension that accounts for residents' experience of public space.

The three dimensions constantly shape and are shaped by one another in the production of space. As institutional powers inscribe their conceived imagery onto the physical environment, they construct a material order through the placement of signs. This material order is subsequently perceived, experienced, and negotiated by other social actors (Stroud and Mpendukana 2009). Meanwhile, people who experience the space also actively seek to appropriate and change their lived environments by way of deploying and presenting selective sets of semiotic resources to the public (Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014). As a result of this iterative process, public spaces are filled with semiotic objects, social values, and political ideologies brought about by different social agents. These include people who observe, create, and consume the linguistic landscapes in various encounters (Shohamy 2015). Lefebvre's spatialised perspective thus provides an analytical framework for

understanding the social construction of space and the materialisation of discourse.

As conceived space, the linguistic landscape is structured by policy documents of the authorities and institutions that dictate legitimate forms of linguistic and semiotic representation (Ferguson and Sidorova 2018). Institutional powers, however, may not readily reveal themselves in political or coercive forms such as language policy. They can be underlined by a neoliberal ideology of tourism that seeks to commodify the sociocultural possessions of minority communities (see Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014). As perceived space, the linguistic landscape serves as a repertoire of linguistic and semiotic resources, including the presence of languages, objects, activities, and architectural features belonging to particular ethnolinguistic communities, and these collectively contribute to people's sense of place (Lou, 2017). The perceived linguistic landscape has often been documented by photographs and observations of emplaced signage (Lai 2013; Shang and Guo 2019). As lived space, the linguistic landscape is experienced by people through the mediation of cultural symbols and semiotic materials. This experiential dimension, as argued by Wu et al. (2020), is subject to individualistic interpretations and constructions and may be better captured by examining the narratives of neighbourhood residents. Viewing the linguistic landscape of Bendigo as conceived, perceived and lived spaces can highlight the important roles that various social actors play in commodification and Chinese tourism and illuminate the contestations among discourses in Chinese touristic spaces.

3 Commodification of semiotic resources for tourism

Empirical sociolinguistic studies of tourism have focused on several overlapping areas: the commodification of linguistic forms, cultural practises, and aesthetic ideals for tourist consumption (Papen 2015; Amos 2016; Yan 2019); the role of discursive resources in the circulation and construction of authenticity discourses forming the basis of cultural tourism (Coupland and Coupland 2014; Moriarty 2015; Ferguson and Sidorova 2018; Wu et

al. 2020); tourist and host interactions in the negotiation of English imperialism and the legitimacy of the host (Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014; Yan and Lee 2014); and the mobilisation of histories, artefacts, and bodily senses in the formulation of semiotic assemblages where language practices become entangled in places with material objects (Pennycook 2017; Lamb and Sharma 2019). This last research stream is informed by the spatialised perspective of linguistic landscape research and aims to encapsulate the production of tourist spaces in the context of the globalised economy.

The materialisation of tourism discourse is not a neutral process but one that involves the contestation of differing values and ideologies. As Heller et al. (2014: 426) indicate, “the desire to capitalise on and mass produce languages, cultures and identities for their purportedly unique or exotic character” is often, in the context of linguistic commodification for tourism, at odds with “the need to retain or claim their authenticity, ownership, and legitimacy”. Institutional forces in the conceived space may seek to control and commodify the semiotic constructions of perceived spaces by withdrawing linguistic and semiotic resources from their original contexts and enregistering them with new symbolic meanings. Meanwhile, minority communities in the lived space are often caught in the dilemma of “pride and profit” as they balance representations of ethnic identities and national pride with the promotion of packaged cultural experiences for profit (Duchêne and Heller 2012; Lamb and Sharma 2019).

The agenda conflicts among various tourism stakeholders raise important questions regarding local access to languages, cultures, and materials and determining legitimacy in the exploitation of the semiotic resources of minority communities. In their study of indigenous tourism, Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen (2014) observe that tensions emerge in the following conditions: when the host’s expertise is challenged; when the tourist and host struggle to cooperate; and “when the need to manage multilingual groups, mainly through the lingua

franca of English, conflicts with the local language resources” (521). Mirvahedi (2018) further suggests that, among the various efforts that shape tourism spaces, the commodification of languages and semiotic resources creates new opportunities for members of minority groups to construct a sense of localness for tourists of co-ethnic background. Thus, it allows them to challenge the semiotic hegemony of the official language and eventually “achieve self-empowerment” (134). These studies have highlighted the negotiations of legitimacy in accessing and appropriating certain semiotic resources within the linguistic landscape.

Owing to their seemingly exotic affordances, Chinese languages, cultures, and identities are often packaged for tourism and marketed for a profit globally. The processes of converting Chinese semiotic resources into commodities largely develop from the dominant institutions’ ideologies, and this relationship has contributed to the marginalised role of Chinese communities in public affairs (Leeman and Modan 2009; Lou 2012). The nuances of Chinese scripts are often overlooked in the process of commodification. For example, traditional and simplified Chinese scripts are associated with different political ideologies and economic values: traditional characters are indexical of Taiwan or Hong Kong, and simplified characters are primarily used in mainland China (Curtin 2015; Wang and de Velde 2015). When these semiotic materials are repurposed and turned into tourist sites for cultural experiences, Chinese community members may face critical problems concerning their agency. In the case of Bendigo where Chinese communities have an enduring presence, it is important to ask: to what extent do the Chinese have ownership of their semiotic resources when their languages and cultures are consumed as commodities?

4 Background: History of Chinese communities in Bendigo

By the 1850s, the invasion of European powers had shattered life in Canton Province in southeast China. News of gold in Victoria reached Canton through the shipping

companies. Bendigo was then known in China as *Dai Gum San* [Big Gold Mountain] and drew many Chinese gold seekers, primarily from Toi Shan and other Cantonese cities (Langan 2010). At the height of the gold rush, Bendigo had approximately 4,000 Chinese migrants. Over time, as gold mining declined due to unprofitability, many Chinese people returned to the homeland or found work abroad in other fields. Of the fewer than 2,000 Chinese who remained in Bendigo, the majority were peasants and artisans, while some established gardens and opened shops (Lovejoy 2007). The introduction of the White Australia Policy in 1901 resulted in a significant decrease in the inflow of Chinese migrants. Meanwhile, Chinese employment was confined primarily to food production, commercial garden cultivation, and independent laundry businesses. However, after World War II, Chinese restaurants began to prosper in Bendigo. With the easing of laws regulating migration and inter-racial marriage in the 1950s, Chinese people increasingly assimilated, integrating into Bendigo society.

From the 1870s, Chinese migrants deepened their involvement in Bendigo's civic affairs, beginning with fundraising projects for local charities. In 1892, *Loong*, the Chinese imperial dragon, first joined the Easter Procession and has since become the symbol not only for the Chinese but for the wider Bendigo community. Later, *Sun Loong*, the world's longest imperial dragon, was brought from Hong Kong to replace *Loong*, with the majority of the funds raised by the rest of the Bendigo community. The wider Bendigo community has since acknowledged the status of Chinese people, who, in return, hold cultural celebrations throughout the year, attracting millions of tourists to Bendigo (Tsai 2016). Furthermore, many non-Chinese residents are welcome to participate in Chinese cultural events. Through this reciprocal relationship, Bendigo's Chinese and non-Chinese residents have formed a special bond that is different from most communities worldwide (Rasmussen 2004).

Although Bendigo hosted a multicultural community in the gold rush days, its ethnic composition has changed over several generations. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), the languages spoken by Bendigo's families today include Karen (0.6%), Mandarin (0.4%), Italian (0.2%), German (0.2%), Punjabi (0.2%), and Cantonese (0.1%), with less than 70 people reporting Chinese ancestry. Chinese populations in the city today comprise primarily fourth-generation Chinese descendants, and as part of the immigrant inflow in wider Victoria, recent Chinese migrants from China and Southeast Asia (Loh 2012; Ip 2013). In a snapshot of the main streets, Bendigo has a nearly monolingual English landscape, and only a small collection of Chinese signs bears the traces of a sustained Chinese-speaking community. This study explores the concepts of commodification and ownership specifically through an analysis of two key Bendigo tourist sites. The first is the Dai Gum San Precinct, a purported Chinese tourism centre jointly founded by the Bendigo Chinese Association and the Bendigo Trust. The second is the Chinese Joss House Temple, a cultural and religious heritage site catering to members of the broader population who are affiliated with Chinese religions or philosophical traditions.

5 Methodology

This study investigates the construction of commodification and ownership discourses through semiotic resources that inhabit tourist spaces by examining Chinese communities in Bendigo as a case study. Between August and November 2018, I conducted data collection on multiple field trips to Bendigo, photographing Chinese language signage and semiotic resources in the linguistic landscape of Bendigo CBD between Mitchell and Chapel Streets to the intersection with Bendigo Creek in the north. I photographed signs of two prominent Chinese establishments outside the survey area: the Dai Gum San Precinct on Bridge Street, which consists of the Golden Dragon Museum; the Gold Mountain Gate; the Yi Yuan Garden (or Pleasure Garden); the Guan Yin Temple; and the Joss House Temple on Finn St. In total,

there are 152 photographs.

Supplementing the photographic data are 5874 words of field notes, as well as 12 archival photos of Chinese history in Bendigo and an archival newspaper collection from 1973 to 1996 on the Dai Gum San project, accessed from the Research Room of the Golden Dragon Museum. Council plans of the City of Greater Bendigo and four publications during the period from 1972 to 2015 in the Goldfields Library Collection accessed at Bendigo Library were also analysed. In addition, four semi-structured interviews (approximately 45 minutes each) were conducted with each of the following individuals: the founder of the Golden Chinese Museum and former president of the Bendigo Chinese Association (Robert), the Research Officer of the Golden Chinese Museum (Leo), a senior staff member of Bendigo Joss House Temple (Daniel), and a volunteer from Bendigo Joss House Temple (Annie). The interviewees were identified through a snowballing method. The Research Officer at the Golden Chinese Museum oversaw my request for archival materials and subsequently consented to an interview. Interviewees then referred me to other potential participants in the community. All participant names in this paper are pseudonyms.

The data collection process involved two methodological considerations. The first concerns researcher positionality. I identify as a Mandarin speaker, born and raised in Mainland China, and I positioned myself as a researcher in relation to the interviewees. I was perceived by both the Chinese and non-Chinese participants as a Chinese person (1) who relates closely to China and (2) who is literate in one of the Chinese languages and cultures yet (3) who is not necessarily a member of the Chinese communities of Bendigo. The second issue is the heterogeneous nature of the notion of “Chinese communities” (Ganassin 2020). In the following analysis I use “Chinese communities in Bendigo” to refer to ethnically Chinese people and people with Chinese heritage living in Bendigo. I use “non-Chinese communities” and “wider Bendigo community” to refer to Bendigo residents who are not ethnically Chinese.

I recognise the great diversity in terms of the languages, cultures, identities and national affiliations of individual members in diasporic Chinese communities. My analysis pertains to the lived experiences of ethnically Chinese people who are descendants of early Chinese migrants in the 1850s, although the voice of a new Chinese migrant from China (Annie) is also included.

6 Commodifying Chinese heritage sites for tourism

In this section, I present an analysis of how the Dai Gum San Precinct and the Bendigo Joss House Temple have been constructed as commodities and how these idealised conceptions contrast with the declining tourist appeal of these sites as perceived space. Commodification describes the process of objectifying language, culture, and identity to address market demand (Heller, Pujolar, et al. 2014; Papen 2015). As Leeman and Modan (2009) suggest, urban designers and city councils tend to commodify the urban landscape to produce distinctive experiences for spectators; in many cases, these development strategies have capitalised on the cultural artefacts of ethnic minorities. Similar institutional efforts can be seen in the case of Bendigo, where Chinese semiotic resources are turned into marketable commodities for tourist consumption. In creating tourism objects, the languages, cultures, and identities of Chinese communities are objectified and packaged, transforming those communities into subjects within the discourses of the tourism economy.

The ideology supporting commodifying Chinese heritage for profit is inscribed not only in the public discourse but also in the materiality of Chinese architecture. As part of its efforts to “support collaborative partnerships for tourism growth”, the City of Greater Bendigo (2019) planned steps for “supporting the initiative to restore Sun Loong and commission a new Chinese dragon Dai Gum Loong” and “advocating for funding for improvements at the Chinese Precinct” (54–55). Such an official agenda aims to “gain a slice of [the] growing Chinese tourist market” by developing Chinese cultural tours (City of

Greater Bendigo 2016). Nonetheless, this agenda perceived the Chinese heritage sites as spatially confined ethnic enclaves of Bendigo that could be easily repurposed for cultural tourism. In particular, in the process of rebuilding the Joss House Temple (see Figure 1), the National Trust of Australia, the City of Greater Bendigo, and Bendigo Heritage Attractions employed a variety of semiotic resources for the embodiment of Chinese cultures and values.



Figure 1. Joss House (Ji Gong Tong)

As conceived space, the compact Joss House Temple was based in its design on institutional conceptualisations of Chinese symbolism. The current Joss House Temple was restored by the National Trust of Australia between 1959 and 1972. It was subsequently renovated and owned by the City of Greater Bendigo and Bendigo Heritage Attractions in 2007. These restoration projects defined a conceivably representative selection of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian deities from southern China, consciously resembling folk rituals in presentations of vessels, flags, food offerings, and zodiac animals. While the Chinese objects have been imbued with sociocultural value throughout their histories, the sign makers here

have inscribed a “second order of signification”, whereby Chinese semiotics is connected to ethnic exoticism and projected onto the external and internal semiotic landscape of the Joss House Temple (Vandenbroucke 2017: 425). Thus, these semiotic choices were grounded in an imposed understanding and problematic simplification of Chinese philosophies, faiths, and legends.

Adopting a similar formula, the Bendigo Trust heralded the development of Dai Gum San Village as “a Chinese cultural complex which depicts the historical involvement of Chinese people in the social, commercial and community life of Bendigo’s early history ... leading to the present day” (Bendigo Trust 1974: 3). The depiction of Chinese characteristic lifestyles and traditional customs in this conceived space, however, was based upon an arbitrary selection of Chinese philosophical values and architectural styles, represented by a museum, an ornamental gateway, an oriental garden, and a pagoda. For example, the precinct square was designed to reflect the tenets of Chinese mythology, with a variety of religious symbols in bright colours and eccentric shapes. Conspicuous red and yellow lotus flowers were intended to represent the Buddhist sense of unfolding wisdom and life (see Figure 2); the green and pink garlic flowers symbolise Taoism, and the purple chrysanthemum signals Confucianism. These semiotic representations have arguably simplified the indexical relations between Chinese signs and their meanings, neglecting the diversified and nuanced interpretations of symbolism within heterogenous Chinese communities.



Figure 2. Dai Gum San Precinct

In designing Chinese cultural establishments, Bendigo's decision-makers in 1974 aimed to capitalise on the symbolic references of a complex array of multimodal resources exclusive to ancient Chinese culture. Alarming, they were entitled to select snippets of Chinese semiotic resources from an arguably stereotypical repertoire of spatial affordances and appropriate these resources to provide visitors with a bona fide experience and ethnic appeal (Pennycook 2017). The proposed application of Chinese philosophical beliefs, the employment of artisans from China, and Bendigo's Chinese history together may present semiotic potential to form a perception of a genuine Chinese cultural centre. Such authentication efforts can be situated in the broader discourses of neoliberal commodification,

in which ethnic exoticism has become a commodified object (Pennycook 2018). Indeed, this concept, with almost a tokenistic focus on cultural differences and celebration of superficial multiculturalism, is based on institutional ideology.

In accordance with the findings of Laing et al. (2014), evaluation of the experiential value of these Chinese sites in Bendigo suggests that their tourist potential could be enhanced with an increased thematic interpretation of Chinese culture and history. In fact, contrary to the conceived image of a vibrant Chinese cultural centre, the Dai Gum San as perceived space is rich in semiotic artefacts indexing its declining appeal among tourists. In particular, the Gold Mountain Gate, once a testimony of the collaborative effort between Bendigo City and Baoding City in China's Hebei Province, was taken down in December 2014 due to physical deterioration, with no clear timeframe for reconstruction (see Figure 3). The gate is no longer visible in the linguistic landscape and has become a mythical place that only exists in the promotional discourse of tourism brochures. However, the spatial arrangement of the stone bases, including the sloping pathway and the two stone lions on the sides, continue to index the quality of the site as a gateway or an entrance (see also Wee 2016). The spatial arrangement has configured the locale's function, despite the absence of an actual gate, suggesting the role of material space in generating meaning.



Figure 3. Stone bases for the Gold Mountain Gate

Yi Yuan Garden today appears dilapidated and unattended, with the ticket office dusty and abandoned. Interestingly, a fish food sign outside the garden still indexes the “front entrance”, a place that is physically present yet no longer practicable in the perceived space (see Figure 4). Lou (2017) suggests that as signs are embedded in the linguistic landscape, the meaning of signs derives from not only their immediate, material environments but also from their relationships with other signs. In this case, another fish food sign was found on the Golden Dragon Museum’s front window (see Figure 5), which remotely references the “front garden desk” and echoes the first sign in completing the promotional narrative. While it is often believed that the “presence” of languages and semiotic resources in the linguistic landscape is informative of values and ideologies, these examples demonstrate that the “absence” of semiotic artefacts offers insights into how material places are imbued with social meanings.



Figure 4. Fish food sign outside Yi Yuan Garden

Chinese:

餵魚招福氣

千萬別錯過

每包五毛錢

大門口有售

English (as printed in the sign):

Feed fish brings good luck

Don't miss rare opportunity

Bag of fish food 50 cents

Available front of entrance



Figure 5. Fish food sign outside the Golden Dragon Museum

English:

50 cents

Feed the goldfish

FISH FOOD CAN BE PURCHASED AT THE FRONT GARDEN DESK

The gap between the conceived imagery and perceived appeal of Chinese tourism sites suggests that the veritable cultural values of Chinese communities have not been preserved by the staged performances that evoke them (Coupland and Coupland 2014). Under the tourism discourses of communities of the Chinese diaspora, consistent efforts have been made to promote Chinese heritage sites as forms of departure, allowing tourists to break from established routines and mundane practises of life and engage with a distinct set of ethnic stimuli (Lou 2012; Wang and de Velde 2015; Amos 2016). Tourism essentially rests on the ceaseless quest for distinctive stimuli—such as cultural and ethnic otherness—that are expected to offer different experiences from those customarily encountered (Moriarty 2015; Zhang 2016). As tourist experiences are socially ordered and structured through signs and semiotic resources, Dai Gum San may have lost its appeal because the emplacement of symbolic Chinese resources in this locale failed to fulfil the anticipated levels of tourists' pleasures and fantasies. In fact, these resources need to be renewed and reproduced according to a complex, changing hierarchy to sustain their cultural appeal to an increasingly culturally experienced population (Urry and Larsen 2011; Duchêne and Heller 2012).

7 Contesting ownership of Chinese semiotic resources

Apart from being tourist commodities, Bendigo's Chinese heritage sites also function simultaneously as places of worship and guardians of Chinese history in the

goldfields. The semiotic resources in Bendigo's linguistic landscape have been arranged in ways that are exotic for non-Chinese tourists and socio-culturally relevant for Chinese residents. As people seek to contest the conventional control and appropriate these tourism spaces, they exhibit a form of ownership that is "associated with authority over things, and also a sense of moral entitlement to exploit and control, and to deny others access to those same things" (Hutton 2010: 538, as cited in McLaughlin 2016). The lived experiences of inhabitants interact with both the visibility of semiotic resources in the perceived space and the commodification practices in the conceived space. This results in a complex situation in which the Chinese communities are deprived of ownership, only to reclaim it and eventually share this ownership of Chinese semiotic resources with the wider Bendigo community.



Figure 6. Hat with queue

Advocating for the tourism function of Chinese facilities helps to limit ownership for participants in the lived space, as it inevitably reproduces discriminatory discourses related to Australia's notorious immigration policy against ethnic minorities (see also Kasanga 2015). In the process of commodifying the Chinese history in Bendigo, a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic resources are mobilised. Figure 6 shows a hat with a queue sold in the souvenir shop of the Golden Dragon Museum. This Manchu male hairstyle, particularly prevalent in the Qing Dynasty, is indexical of backwardness and the semi-colonial period of Chinese history. As a tourist commodity, the hat suggests a settler-centric ideology, and it unnecessarily evokes among Chinese descendants the poignant memories of how restrictive national policies shaped their trajectories. For example, in Excerpt 1, Robert reflects on his lived experiences as a Chinese descendant in Bendigo.

Excerpt 1: Robert

Robert: Years ago, a lot of people wouldn't talk about their Chinese background. I don't know whether they are shamed of it or embarrassed about it or what, but they wouldn't. ... My mother was born here. During the last war, my mother was fingerprinted, never allowed to vote. My younger sister, also born in Bendigo, had to become naturalised. They classified her as an alien and just born in Bendigo. ... When I got married, on my wife's side, one of her uncles wouldn't come because I'm Chinese.

To commodify and preserve Bendigo's Chinese history, participants of the tourist space were compelled to recognise, memorise, and retell these traumatic experiences. Thus, the presence of Chinese artefacts in the perceived space, including

the hat with a queue, has assisted with the recirculation of histories of discrimination and prejudice (May 2017). Under the prevailing tourism discourses, the Chinese communities have been, in a sense, deprived of ownership. Therefore, they have lost authority over the ways in which Bendigo Chinese history is reconstructed and reinterpreted by local authorities and tourists (Hutton, 2010). The Chinese communities might also have unknowingly colluded with institutional forces in making linguistic and semiotic choices that have projected a weak, vulnerable image of early Chinese migrants who were discriminated against by the Europeans. These semiotic practices are likely to reinforce stereotypical concepts of Chinese identity, misaligning the wider multicultural discourses in Victoria and resulting in the sense of dispossession of the narrative of Bendigo's Chinese history (see also Samuelson and Freedman 2010).

Ownership of Chinese semiotic affordances could activate the collective imagination and endow individuals with an agentive voice of Chinese ethnicity (Screti 2018; Song 2018). Significantly, the Chinese communities in Bendigo have employed Chinese languages to reclaim ownership, although only a few people in the lived space are literate in the neighbourhood's written Chinese texts. Figure 7 illustrated the symbolic use of Chinese scripts. The sign assumes an English-speaking audience and reserves the use of Chinese characters to four proper names. Apart from the inconsistent spatial arrangements and typographical choices of the Chinese texts in relation to the English words, the sign bears both traditional (南陽玉, 咸豐帝) and simplified (万圣龙车, 蛇纹岩玉) scripts, a semiotic practice of scriptal mixing that is unlikely to be found among individuals educated in Mainland China (Curtin, 2014). By adopting and displaying this sign, the Museum, more importantly, recognises the indexical value of the Chinese characters, without a nuanced understanding of their meanings.

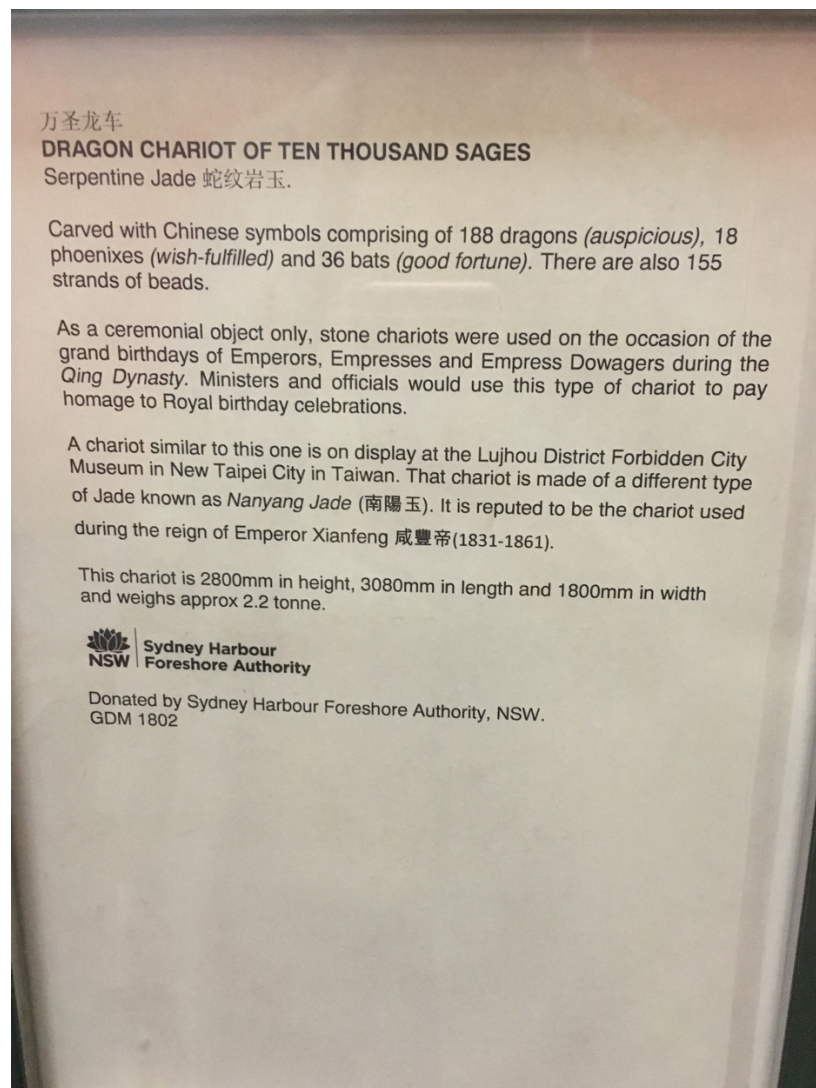


Figure 7. Dragon Chariot sign

The small Chinese space carved out by and for Chinese interlocutors through the use of Chinese languages arguably “adds one more claim to ownership and legitimate presence and belonging” to the linguistic landscape of Bendigo (Blommaert 2018: 84). In Excerpt 2, Robert expressed his regret at being unable to speak a Chinese language. Further, in Excerpt 3, Leo suggested the following: in cases where most of Bendigo’s Chinese residents have lost their linguistic literacy, Chinese characters, imperial dragons, parade costumes, and other artefacts in Dai Gum San could represent key semiotic resources that help sustain and reinforce their ownership of Chinese identities. The abundance of semiotic materials in the perceived space contributes to the

reclamation of both ownership and a sense of authority over Chinese languages, cultures, and histories for those who live in and experience the Chinese places.

Excerpt 2: Robert

Robert: One of my biggest regrets in life is that I can't speak Chinese, and I blame our education system because I think it was foolish. When we were younger, we were never ever ever encouraged to speak another language. You had to speak English.

Excerpt 3: Leo

Leo: [using Chinese on signs] is culturally appropriate, perhaps even something to aspire to, to reclaim that as well. That's something that they [the Chinese community] lost ...that bilingual capacity for many of them. I think there is a desire to reclaim that linguistic heritage as well.

In contrast to a struggle for lost linguistic heritage, Annie seeks to assert her ownership by promoting Chinese traditions and cultural customs that were conceived based on her personal histories and semiotic repertoires. As an immigrant who recently joined Bendigo's Chinese community, Annie takes advantage of her literacy in written Chinese and her understanding of the nuances of Chinese cultures and societies to reclaim her Chinese ethnic identity in the diasporic context. In Excerpt 4, Annie mentions the Chinese Cultural Class she offered to non-Chinese Bendigo residents.

Excerpt 4: Annie

Annie: ...然后我自己做了那个中 Chinese Cultural Class。我觉得很好，我就是做一个文化的传播。写写毛笔字...然后做菜。大家很喜欢吃中国的菜，然后他们跟我讲豆腐好难吃，我说豆腐可好吃了...那你来上我的课，我来告诉你豆腐怎么做，我们做了个麻婆豆腐...嗯他们尝了以后，说豆腐真的很好吃。然后还有茶，中国的茶道。”

[Annie: ...I started a Chinese Cultural Class. I think it's good and I'm promoting the culture. Writing with pen brush ... then cooking. People like Chinese food, but they told me Tofu does not taste good. I said Tofu is very delicious ... come to my class and I'll teach you how to cook Tofu. We made Ma Po Tofu together ... after they tasted it, they found Tofu very delicious. Then there is tea, China's tea ceremony.]

The rarity of Chinese people in the lived space enables Annie to represent, interpret, and disseminate Chinese culture in a way that is relatively free of peer constraints (Ahearn 2001). Being a member of the linguistic and cultural minority in the diasporic context of Bendigo has, in fact, increased her sense of ownership and belonging and motivated her to enhance community-building (Leeman and Modan 2009). In addition, Annie's physical presence in the linguistic landscape embodies the meanings of Chinese identity and represents a semiotic resource for the Bendigo Chinese community to gain ethnic legitimacy (see also Vandenbroucke 2018). However, such constructions of Chinese culture may be tokenistic as they reiterate stereotypical representations of Chinese languages, cultures, and identities for the non-Chinese communities.

Through the process of transforming semiotic artefacts and heritage spaces into tourism commodities, both the Chinese and non-Chinese communities in Bendigo have exerted mastery and ownership over Chinese histories and cultural values. These

semiotic resources have been an important source of the sense of ownership for Bendigo's Chinese-descended residents to materialise their imagined ideas about Chinese ethnicity in the diasporic context. Instead of claiming exclusive ownership, the Chinese communities have shared their cultural heritage with the rest of the Bendigo community. They have accepted non-Chinese individuals into dragon processions, recognised them as guardians of Chinese heritage sites, and even welcomed them as members of Chinese families. In Excerpt 5, Daniel spoke about being recognised as a representative of the Bendigo Joss House Temple by Chinese families.

Excerpt 5: Daniel

Daniel: I am actually regarded as a caretaker. I am also a family member to a couple of our worshipping families here, because they've come here and ask for things and they have resulted in good fortune in those things, so I was acknowledged to be a member of their family. ... The first day of Chinese New Year this year, they brought twenty members of their own family up here. Everything got blessed, including me, because I was a member of the family.

Despite the histories of discrimination and the discourses of tourism, Chinese communities in Bendigo have granted access to Chinese cultural activities to non-Chinese residents as a way of both asserting and sharing ownership. Such gestures also help to disrupt sociohistorical hierarchies in which the European settlers had authority over the presence of Chinese inhabitants in the linguistic landscape (Coupland and Coupland 2014; Thurlow 2019).

The rest of the Bendigo community, on the other hand, expresses genuine gratitude for and feels pride in their relationships with Chinese people, unrelated to

profits reaped from Chinese tourism spaces (Duchêne and Heller 2012; Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014). In Excerpt 6, Leo explained how he felt a sense of ownership and moral obligation to maintain the city's Chinese heritage.

Excerpt 6: Leo

Leo: As a Bendigo local what I feel is an obligation to tell the stories of the past. Then of course I have the equal obligation to tell the stories of the Chinese people here and to tell it properly. So that, well, as properly as I can. And that also so some of it is also a feeling of obligation as well.

Leo's response represents the ideology that claims the Chinese history as shared memory and as a possession of Bendigo society, notwithstanding his admission of the central role of Chinese communities in validating the narratives of Chinese ethnicity. The affective relationships between Chinese and non-Chinese communities have led to situations in which local authorities are entitled to appropriate and commodify Chinese semiotic resources and recognise Chinese sites as valuable aspects of Bendigo's tourism and cultural scene (see also Lovejoy 2011). In the convoluted process of negotiating meanings, goals, and interests among social actors, shared rights have emerged around ownership of symbolic resources, and this tends to overturn conventional ideas about agency, language, and ethnicity as exclusive (Thurlow and Jaworski 2014). In such cases, it seems necessary to embrace the idea of shared ownership and acknowledge the complex interweaving of languages, other semiotic resources, and identities.

8 Discussion and conclusion

Interactions among the conceived, perceived, and lived spaces have imbued the physical space with sociocultural values and transformed Chinese sites into tourist

places. Mirvahedi (2018) suggests that tension often arises in ethnic tourism, where the capitalisation of ethnic identity must be balanced with beliefs about profit and pride. Chinese communities and their landscapes have offered prime semiotic resources for tourist consumption (Leeman and Modan 2009; Lou 2012). Hence, institutional powers in the conceived space frequently aim to commodify the history of Chinese people and culture overseas through staged authenticity, by way of employing semiotic objects and principles of cultural identity. Efforts to maintain the original Chinese culture in Bendigo are essentially built on the promise of heritage (the nostalgic pursuit of an idealised past) and exoticism (a fleeting encounter with cultural differences), dressed up as a commodity for tourists (Coupland and Coupland 2014).

However, as major producers of Bendigo's cultural, historical, and tourism scenes, the Chinese communities have equally participated in and contributed to the discursive management of cultural tourism discourses. More than tourist attractions, Dai Gum San and the Joss House Temple have served both as safe sanctuaries to store memories and as semiotic markers of community visibility (Woldemariam and Lanza 2015; Moriarty 2019). In the lived space, communities of the Chinese diaspora have made compromises to sustain their ethnolinguistic vitality through commodification while holding on to traditional practises such as imperial dragons and lion dance rituals. This balancing act of commodification and ownership constitutes a critical part of their lived experiences in today's era of mobility and globalisation.

The conceived imagery of Chinese cultural tourism contrasts with the perceived declining appeal of Chinese sites for tourism, suggesting that the staged Chinese culture intended for commercial gains has essentially failed. The Chinese communities' increased exposure to semiotic resources may have helped to demystify ethnic cultures and identities so that fewer tourists find it appealing to continue to gaze upon these sites

(Urry and Larsen 2011). Ethnic exoticism as an object of commodification is rooted in the neoliberal ideals of otherness and cultural fantasy, which require the tourism industry to update its semiotic offerings regularly (Moriarty 2015). However, Bendigo's Chinese history, which was recast as a stereotypical imagination of the past and seemingly exists within a spatiotemporal vacuum with little connection to contemporary globalised China, might not be able to offer the excitement and pleasure that tourists usually anticipate.

Having said that, Bendigo's Chinese and European descendant communities share ownership of Chinese goldfield history in the lived space. Non-Chinese residents acknowledge and accept the presence of the Chinese communities by appearing in Chinese cultural events such as the Dragon Procession and appropriating the mythical dragon figure to expand their community discourses. While the Chinese tourist sites are losing their appeal as perceived spaces, such shared ownership will likely ensure that the sociocultural values underlying these establishments outlive their staged performances (Coupland and Coupland 2014). It is thus not only the Chinese, whose semiotic resources have been transformed into commodities, who are faced with the struggle between pride and profit, for the rest of the Bendigo community share memories of Chinese heritage and find themselves in a similar dilemma.

Based on the above observations, this study has two particularly important implications. First, it approaches the sociolinguistic issue of tourism from a spatialised perspective that is grounded in linguistic landscape research. The spatial triad of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces directs our attention to the production and consumption of semiotic resources by various social actors. This anatomy of space clarifies that we will not be able to fully grasp and examine the lived experiences of inhabitants without considering the emplaced use of signs and symbols (Lou 2017).

This study thus offers an analytical perspective that comprehends the social practices of linguistic landscape participants in terms of situated semiotic means, which complements current inquiries into the interactions among hosts and diasporas in the management of tourism discourses.

Second, this study sheds light on the contested claims of ownership and their semiotic representations in the linguistic landscape. Focusing on the Chinese communities in a regional Australian city, this study demonstrates that the host community has acquired local access to the minority language, culture, and materials. It has been granted legitimate access to the bona fide semiotic resources otherwise exclusive to the minority community. As Mirvahedi (2018) observes, the exploitation of semiotic possessions ultimately results in a tourist locale that is ideologically charged and symbolically constructed, “both reflecting and reproducing power, status and the economic importance of languages” (147). Notwithstanding dilemmas of pride and profit, participants in the linguistic landscape have invented new approaches to negotiation with and appropriation of the facets of ethnic identity, underscoring the fact that semiotic processes are indicative of visibility, commodification, and shared ownership.

Situated in the field of linguistic landscape research, this study employed Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial perspective of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces as a heuristic to analyse the ways in which contested discourses of commodification and ownership have been materialised through various semiotic resources. Using Bendigo as a case study, this study has revealed the agency of the Chinese communities, as they have claimed ownership of its cultural heritage despite the institutional forces that have sought to commodify Chinese cultures and semiotic practises for tourist consumption. Moreover, this examination of Chinese heritage sites has identified the possibility of

shared ownership in the tourism landscape in the context of linguistic and cultural tourism in Australia. As Robert summarises conveniently, “we have the best story, never told”. Further research in this area may develop a more nuanced understanding of the interactions among various social actors in tourist spaces. By increasing engagement with the historicised, contextualised perspective, future studies can open a new window into the materialisation of contested discourses and can empower silenced and marginalised communities in the new global economy.

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Chapter 7 Metrolingualism in online linguistic landscapes (submitted version)

Abstract

The field of linguistic landscape has rarely engaged with the growing number of metrolingual practices (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019) brought about by online digital spaces. This paper examines the online linguistic landscape of the social media platform of WeChat Moment, which presents a spatial repertoire consisting of innovative semiotic affordances. Adopting an online ethnographic approach consisting of screenshots of WeChat Moment posts, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic knowledge, the study examines the ways in which overseas Chinese in this online space draw upon a complex array of semiotic resources from spatial repertoires to constantly negotiate their self-presentation and manage the effects of context collapse. The analysis shows that metrolingual practices have contributed to self-policing of content, manipulation of accessibility and compensation for literacy in the online linguistic landscape. By tuning the analytical focus from offline to online spaces, the study unsettles linguistic landscapes and invites further examination of the relationship between language and space.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, metrolingualism, context collapse, online space, spatial repertoire

Introduction

Linguistic landscape studies are primarily focused on the material emplacement of signage in public places (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). However, such a definition should not limit the field from embracing the exponential communication in online digital spaces. Importantly, social media sites are generally seen as public places where users constantly represent themselves and negotiate identities through interactions with

other people in their network (Blackwood, 2019; Han, 2020). Such a new and complex context offers a lens through which we can scrutinize innovative forms and meanings of ‘metrolingual practices’ that describe and capture how people employ semiotic resources from their spatial repertoires to engage in social actions (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

Despite growing exchanges online, linguistic landscape research has rarely taken the productive social media space as its focus. Exceptions might include the study by Hiippala et al. (2019), which explores the linguistic landscape of geotagged Instagram posts using digital humanities methods, including automatic language identification and topic modelling. In comparison, Maly and Blommaert (2019) advocate a digital ethnographic landscape analysis that traces the indexical links between offline signage and online profiles and reveals how local places are emplaced in global interconnectivity. In response to this online-offline agenda, Lyons (2019) employed topic modelling and sentiment analysis to examine the geographical distribution of Instagram posts and its relationship with gentrification in the Mission District of San Francisco. However, the study focused more on the issue of a conceptual linguistic landscape, which refers to the re-production of physical landscape on Instagram by means of the ‘interpretant’, that is, the something as represented to somebody, or the something that is created in the mind of the somebody (Peirce, 1955, as cited in Lyons, 2019). Lyons (2019) then argues that such a literal and figurative filtering of the physical landscape can be attributed to the elitist stance-taking of social media users who participated in the reproduction of elitism and privilege discourses.

Blackwood (2019) similarly directs our attention to the construction of elite identities by focusing on geotagged Instagram posts. The study presents an analysis of self-representation along two axes: 1) the patterns in language practices of Instagram

users who travel through Paris Orly airport and how these reflect their preferred readings of the images; and 2) how branded objects are used in posts in ludic ways that serve to convey a sense of the identity of those users. Such a focus on how social media users employ visual resources to create individual and collective identity is shared by Han (2020), who investigates the patterns of translanguaging practices among Chinese visiting scholars on WeChat. The study distinguishes three functions of translanguaging including ‘intertextualising the local voice, constructing identities as language learners and global citizens, and enacting the roles of ethnic messengers and cultural brokers’ (Han, 2020, p. 180). These two studies, nonetheless, are more concerned about the construction of identities through linguistic practices on social media rather than taking a linguistic landscape perspective and questioning the social media place itself as a crucial affordance of meaning, which, according to Kallen et al. (2020), should be the focus of online linguistic landscape studies.

Bearing in mind the ongoing debate, this study investigates the linguistic landscape of online digital spaces, with a focus on the metrolingual practices and self-presentations of overseas Chinese people. Employing Pennycook and Otsuji’s (2015) conceptualisation of metrolingualism, this paper investigates how WeChat Moment represents an online linguistic landscape offering innovative semiotic affordances. In particular, the study focuses on the ways in which overseas Chinese in this online space draw upon a complex array of semiotic resources from their spatial repertoires to constantly negotiate their self-presentation and manage the effects of context collapse. The following section presents the theoretical framework of metrolingualism and examines the relationship among metrolingual practices, self-presentation and spatial repertoire. I then introduce the social networking platform—WeChat—examined in this study and explain how it can be viewed as an online linguistic landscape. After a brief

discussion of the online ethnographic approach, I present the analysis of metrolingual practices and how these contribute to the presentation of self in the collapsed context.

The paper then concludes with a discussion of the explanatory power of metrolingualism and its implications for linguistic landscape studies.

Metrolingual practices, self-presentation and spatial repertoires

To understand the complex and fluid spatial repertoires of online linguistic landscapes and how they contribute to the presentation of self, I employ the conceptual framework of metrolingualism. Moving beyond the structuralist perspective of code-switching, Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) propose that the theory of metrolingualism can be used to capture the multiplicity, hybridity and diversity that characterise urban environments. Metrolingualism refers to ‘the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language’ (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 246). The prefix ‘metro-’ is inspired by the notion of metroethnicity, which refers to ‘a hybridised ethnicity deployed by people who are oriented towards cultural hybridity, ethnic tolerance and a multicultural urban lifestyle’ (Maher, 2005, p. 83). Metrolingualism focuses on the production of relations across language, culture, ethnicity and geography that are emergent in certain places and moments as people draw on available semiotic resources to engage in local activities.

Central to the idea of metrolingualism are the notions of metrolingual practices, self-presentation and spatial repertoires. Metrolingual practices examine ‘linguaging as activity’ in everyday multilingualism (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014, p. 164). While sharing a similar understanding with polylinguaging (Jørgensen & Møller, 2014) and translanguaging (Li Wei, 2018) on linguistic hybridity, metrolingual practices centrally focus on how the multiplicity and diversity of language practices shape, and are shaped by, urban space. Besides linguistic features, the metrolingual perspective also considers

the ‘semiotic assemblage’ of multimodal resources, objects and activities in the environment as crucial for meaning making (Pennycook, 2017). The description of translingual practices that have emerged in the space is further complemented by the historical trajectories of people, who experience linguistic diversity and social differences as part of their lived experiences (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019). As such, a grounded perspective is needed to examine not only borderless language crossing, conceived as semiotic practices, but also the local histories of everyday diversity.

Another key concern of metrolingualism is to account for the ways in which self-presentation is enabled, defied and negotiated through metrolingual practices. Self-presentation constitutes part of the identity work that linguistic landscape participants engage in when they create images, assert individuality and invite interaction (Androutsopoulos, 2014). It has been used interchangeably with identity in some linguistic landscape studies (e.g. Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael, 2015; Blackwood, 2019), although the former is preferred in the online context. Metrolingualism assumes that subjects are performatively realized, and prior identities are constantly negotiated, in ongoing social and cultural practices. As the study of Pennycook and Otsuji (2016) demonstrates, ethnic identifications of restaurant workers in Sydney ‘are being constantly reworked through their life trajectories and their everyday exposure to various linguistic resources’ in the workplace (p. 264). Meanwhile, sexual, ethnic and elitist identities continue to characterise the metrolingual practices in communication within highly fluid contexts such as Facebook (Dovchin & Pennycook, 2017). The fluid play across languages and modalities contributes to the presentation of self, and meanwhile mobilize or dismantle those fixed expressions of the predeterminate identity.

While social actors are motivated to curate their idiosyncratic identity vis-à-vis the audience, such intentions may also be constrained or even constructed by prevailing

discourses in the society. As Kramsch (2020) suggests, we are entering a spectacle or even expository society where people not only identify with material goods but also willingly expose and exhibit their selves to win ‘likes’ from others. Meanwhile, their self-presentation is subject to the disciplinary power that regulates individual behaviours in a seemingly neoliberal context. Although individuals flout normative expectations to pursue distinction, their public personae have to conform with existing norms to be recognised and understood (McNamara, 2019). The result is a need for the performance of identities that often involves self- and peer-policing as required by an essentially disciplinary society.

The third element of metrolingualism is spatial repertoire. The linguistic landscape perspective recognises spaces as agents of social meanings; as Hult (2014) suggests, public spaces, once filled with mundane activities, sociocultural values and ideological structures, are symbolically constructed into places. Pennycook and Otsuji (2014) further point out that ‘places are where language practices occur as people bring their own trajectories into relation with the people and objects around them’ (p. 165). In line with this understanding of space/place, spatial repertoires can be seen as referring to those semiotic resources available in a particular place ‘that derive from the repeated language practices of the people involved in the sets of activities’ (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014, p. 166). The notion of spatial repertoires focuses not so much on the resources that enter into the linguistic repertoires of individuals through mobility across different places but on the resources that are at personal disposal in particular places. In other words, spatial resources may not be part of individuals’ existing repertoires but are embedded in the material affordances and emergent from negotiations with others in the social network.

This broadly conceived definition of space and spatial repertoires, as we can see, does not preclude a reading of the online space of social media from a linguistic landscape perspective. Both Blommaert (2019) and Dovchin and Pennycook (2017) have noted the creative metrolingual realities that have occurred in the context of online space, by viewing the social media platforms as offering important spatial repertoires in which an assemblage of languages, artefacts and other semiotic affordances are brought together to facilitate the communicative success of users and situated performance of identities. Echoing their views, Kallen et al. (2020) suggest that the analysis of online linguistic landscapes ‘resides not in the content of websites, comments and messages, but in the linguistic features and affordances of these online spaces that can be harnessed by both users and web developers for the purpose of language display and enregisterment’ (p. 99). The key of online linguistic landscaping is, therefore, to understand the need for presentation and display of identities through marked choices of linguistic and visual elements that are often based on indexicality and intertextuality.

What metrolingualism and current theorisations of online linguistic landscapes do not capture, however, is the effect of context collapse in online spaces. Marwick and Boyd (2011) use context collapse to refer to how audience and social orders that were once in separated contexts seep into the bounds of another in a networked era. The advent of social networking platforms has greatly facilitated individual or collaborative creation, curation and consumption of user-generated content, to the extent that the contextual boundaries become increasingly blurred and personal lives become more available for public interaction (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). In other words, offline social networks that are maintained as separate by individuals converge into a single mass on social media, requiring the user to simultaneously engage with family, colleagues and friends, each of whom harbours different performative expectations

(Androutsopoulos, 2014). Context collapse thus leads to the situation where social media users tend to present a singular identity for the broadest audience who would find such a self-presentation non-offensive and appealing.

While it is frequently argued that the default settings of social media sites facilitate context collapse, social media users are also given the option to reproduce the contextual boundaries that exist in their offline social networks. Zhu (2017) proposes the notion of ‘selective avoidance’ to describe a situation where Facebook users may intentionally remove dissonant views and shield themselves from the social network that disseminates dissents during political protests (p. 112). Instead of collapsing context, users are actively re-establishing social boundaries and relapsing contexts by leveraging on ‘a broad repertoire of affordances offering disconnection, filtering, privacy, and ephemerality’ (Skoric, 2019).

Taking into account of the implications of context collapse, spatial repertoires thus consist of semiotic resources both in the physical, terrestrial environment and in the online digital space. These resources in the collapsed context of online linguistic landscape may be wielded by individuals to negotiate self-presentation for different audiences by way of employing language stylization and metaphorical code-switching to navigate a path between converging into audience expectations and diverging from communication norms (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Georgakopoulou, 2017). The issue of self-presentation in the collapsed online context is thus ‘a matter of fundamental and unsolvable uncertainty’ that may be tentatively gleaned from metrolingual practices (Blommaert, 2019, p. 491). Based on this theoretical framework of metrolingualism and its three key elements—metrolingual practices, self-presentation and spatial repertoire—I examine the case of the online linguistic landscape of WeChat Moment. In

what follows, I introduce the context of the study and explicate some methodological considerations.

WeChat Moment as an online linguistic landscape

This study aims to investigate metrolingual practices and self-presentations in the online linguistic landscape that is characterised by abundant semiotic affordances and porous contextual boundaries, by way of examining the case of overseas Chinese people. The implications of context collapse on metrolingual practices has been rarely addressed, and, as Georgakopoulou (2017) notes, this is better done ethically by reflecting on researchers' own social media practices and by using an online ethnography. To this end, I use my personal WeChat account as the site of investigation. As the most popular mobile-based social media application in China, WeChat has with a reported monthly active user base of 1.15 billion during the third quarter of 2019 (Statista, 2019). One of the most important features of WeChat is add-on functionality known as Moment (or 朋友圈 in Chinese, lit. Friends' Circle). Users can post text and images on their timeline or share articles and videos to be viewed by their WeChat contacts. Users may also control access to their moments so only certain groups of contacts can see, comment or like their posts. WeChat Moment represents a place where individual users can present their online identity and invite interaction from the audience. It thus falls within the boundary of online linguistic landscape as defined by Kallen et al. (2020).

I chronologically retrospect the Moment (prior to May 2019) of six friends who currently live overseas (see Table 1) and collect 180 posts in total with 30 posts gathered from each participant. The dataset of screenshots was then analysed using NVivo. It remains controversial in WeChat studies as to whether posts on Moment should be considered private or public (see Han, 2020). Out of prudence, I obtained

consent before screenshotting participants' posts on Moment. After viewing their posts, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with them through voice messages, video chats or face-to-face conversations, where possible, to understand their motivations and interests for metrolingual practices. I focused especially on how they drew on resources from the spatial repertoire of online and offline linguistic landscape for the performance of self in the collapsed context.

The selection of these six Chinese friends from over 200 contacts on my WeChat account is based on the following considerations. First, my friends' circle consists mostly of Chinese individuals who study, work and live overseas. Second, the WeChat Moment of these six participants is set to allow users to view posts from at least in the past six months, indicating their willingness to display themselves in a semi-public space. Third, I have ethnographic knowledge of them in the offline environment and they accepted my requests for interviews and use of their posts. My dataset consists of 180 posts and six interviews, the latter of which are 30 minutes long on average. All participant names are pseudonyms.

Table 1

Demographic information of participants

Name	Age	Assumed Gender	Area of study	Residence	Years of overseas residence
Wushan	28	M	Linguistics	Australia	6
Meiying	27	M	Architecture	United States	10
Dulin	23	F	Accounting	Australia	6.5
Qin	25	F	Teaching	Australia	3.5
Tusu	27	F	Education	Australia	3
Jichun	28	F	Literature	Australia	2

In this paper, I use ‘overseas Chinese’ to refer to my participants, who are ethnic Chinese people living outside China, regardless of their citizenship. It is recognised that there are different perspectives on the identity of the Chinese people, the issue of national and cultural affiliation, and the relationship between Chinese communities and the countries they live in, resulting in a number of loosely defined terms to describe Chinese in the diaspora (Li Wei, 2016). While overseas Chinese people are often seen as part of a diaspora that shares transnational experiences and connectivity with home countries, the focus of this paper is on the individuality of overseas Chinese of different backgrounds, statuses, languages, migration backgrounds and identity aspirations, and the ways in which self-presentations of Chinese individuals in online spaces are seen as part of the fluid and hybrid identity work from a metrolingualism perspective.

Moments of metrolingual practices

This section focuses on the ways in which participants exhibit metrolingual practices by drawing on semiotic resources from spatial repertoires to facilitate their self-presentation in the online linguistic landscape of WeChat Moment. The processes through which presentation of self is negotiated and contested can be understood in relation to three themes: self-policing of content, manipulation of accessibility, and compensation for literacy.

Self-policing of content

To begin, participants were found to consciously self-police their WeChat posts through metrolingual practices as a way to govern their self-presentation online. For example, Figure 1 shows how Jichun chose to supplement information in another language that serves to clarify her identity and appease the audience. Specifically, the use of ‘办公室 (study space)’ seems to be redundant, assuming that WeChat users are mostly Chinese who can easily understand the meaning of ‘办公室’ (lit. office) without

the English explanation. Jichun nevertheless chose to add more specificity to the phrase by using bracketed English terminology, ‘study space’, which differs from ‘office’ in semantic meaning. In other posts which are not shown here, Jichun was also found using ‘study space’ and ‘办公室 (a desk)’ to refer to the same place where she studies.



Figure 1. Post by Jichun showing ‘study space’ (Moving back to the old place. Found this armchair among a cluster of desks and chairs labelled as rubbish, and hurriedly took it to office [study space]. Perhaps will love this small corner even more.)

While labelling the study space as office is probably customary and appropriate in her context, Jichun reported that her presentation of self was fact-checked by a WeChat acquaintance, who did not share a similar spatial repertoire and asked her to dispel the myth of office as indexical of a working professional identity. As a response to such disciplinary power in the online space (Kramsch, 2020), Jichun employs metrolingual strategies that help supply nuanced meanings, clarify her student identity and maintain consistency in her use of ‘办公室’ in Chinese. The textual information, together with semiotic artefacts, including a bookshelf, an armchair and plants in the images, shall provide unambiguous clues about the study environment. Prompted by the

need to conform with normative expectations, Jichun further reported using English as a way to minimise attention to ‘sensitive’ information.

Excerpt 1 – Jichun – Self-policing of content

Jichun: 那个人理解错了，以为我一直是在说中国到现在还是很脏很差，说外国就很好...然后他就一直问我，说你导师有没有教你正确的研究方法，你为什么不放弃中国国籍？...后来我就会有意识的，就是涉及到这样一些稍微比较敏感的话题的时候，我就会选择是英语，就让他是英语，不要翻译成中文，惹得别人不快。

(That person understood me wrong. He thought I was talking about how the environment of China was dirty and messy until the present day, and how foreign countries were much better...He kept asking me whether my supervisor taught me correct research methods and why I did not renounce Chinese nationality...Thereafter I have become more careful. When talking about these sensitive topics, I choose to leave the English as it is and do not translate into Chinese, in case I piss off others.)

Her use of English to bypass sensitive topics assumes an English-incompetent audience in her circle of friends. This crowd almost acted like the police of content, leading to the situation where the participant had to self-monitor the topic and manoeuvre between languages to present an uncontroversial self. In other cases, Jichun reportedly opted for an avoidance strategy so as not to attract similar sarcasm or personal attacks.

Excerpt 2 – Jichun – Self-policing of content

Jichun: 很多时候我发出来之后，我会立即把它 set as private。然后过了几个小时了，我的 post 不会再显示在他们的 timeline 里面，然后我就把它 set as public。

(Very often when I post something, I'll set it as private immediately. Then after several hours, when my post would not appear in their [my friends'] timeline, I will set it as public).

Here, she tapped into the technological affordance of WeChat, which allowed her to restrict the visibility of posts. This represents another extreme of her self-policing strategies, which seeks to use 'absence' to address the issue of 'presence' in an online space that is both disciplinary and expository (Kramsch, 2020; Zhu, 2017). It seems that although individuals have the agency to draw on multilingual and multimodal resources for self-presentation, they are inevitably constrained by the social orders inscribed in the online linguistic landscape, and their metrolingual practices may as well serve as eclectic means to assert their agency over personal images.

Manipulation of accessibility

As a result of context collapse, people and linguistic norms from separate networks converge into a single mass on social media platforms. As we have seen, Jichun is often required to 'present a verifiable and singular identity' in the online space, which she believes is non-offensive for the broadest audience (Blackwood, 2019, p. 10). That said, other participants were found to have developed alternative ways of 'harnessing and counteracting the indeterminacy of context' by manipulating the accessibility of their posts to viewers (Georgakopoulou, 2017, p. 170). My focus here is on how participants employed certain sets of semiotic resources to render the meanings of their posts inaccessible for the audience, not insomuch on the functionality of grouping and blocking friends.



Figure 2. Post by Wushan showing manipulation of accessibility (An unconscious saying in the seaside has made everything perplexing.)

For example, Figure 2 shows that Wushan skilfully employed ambiguity to obscure his presentation of self. The semiotic assemblage of people, objects, activities and spaces (Pennycook, 2017) presented in the three photographs help frame the offline places as being the seaside, a restaurant and a theatre. Although from a multimodal perspective one might argue that the angle of the shot and vector of action indicate the presence of Wushan himself and potentially his companion(s), their identities and activities remain mythical. The text, on the other hand, adds a sentimental touch to the images without clarifying the context. Such intended obscurity stimulated the

negotiation of implied meanings between the poster and the audience. A series of comments under the post sought to ask ‘那是谁的手???’ [Whose hand is that?], ‘???’ [three questions marks], and ‘图三是啥’ [What is the third photograph about?].

Except 3 – Wushan – Manipulation of accessibility

Wushan: 我尽量是让图片跟文字关联度要降低一点, 或者说图片表达的是一个故事, 那么文字表达的是内心的一些想法, 而且这个想法之后还要再隐晦一点。尽量选择隐晦的、闷骚的那种语言, 尽量以让别人不理解, 但是又觉得好高端, 好神奇的感觉。(I intended to make the image less relevant to the text. Or if the image tells a story, then the text expresses some of my inner thoughts, and these thoughts will be more obscure in the future. I tend to choose ambiguous and immanent language so as to make it almost incomprehensible for others, but they can feel that it's something advanced and mystical.)

Wushan offered very limited semiotic resources for meaning making, thus making the post almost inaccessible and incomprehensible for the spectators. He has demonstrated metapragmatic awareness in manipulating the relationship between image and text to arouse the interests of the audience while presenting a distanced image of himself. Different from Jichun, who struggled to self-police her content, Wushan employed ambiguity to construct a self that is more idiosyncratic and spontaneous, though not necessarily reflective of offline reality. Such a metrolingual practice both counteracts and is subject to the effects of context collapse; it projects a paradoxical form of engagement that is distancing and appealing, performative and authentic, affective and playful (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

Another metrolingual strategy for manipulating accessibility is by drawing on semiotic resources from a repertoire that is unfamiliar to the audience. This is most evident in Meiying's posts, which are mostly about stylistic buildings and designs. Figure 3, for example, offers scant textual and visual information for non-specialists to comprehend their indexical meanings. As Meiying reported, the post serves as an intertextual reference to Coop Himmelblau, the famous architectural studio founded in Vienna, and the image shows an accomplished building in Los Angeles designed by the company. Meiying employed specific semiotic resources from the architectural repertoire to signal the inclusion of an audience potentially consisting of his colleagues in the architecture industry, and the exclusion of others who are unfamiliar with such vocabulary (see also Androutsopoulos, 2014).



Figure 3. Post of Meiying showing manipulation of accessibility

Furthermore, Meiying's use of hashtag suggests a metrolingual practice that draws on semiotic resources from other social media platforms, with similar uses found in the posts of Tusu and Wushan as well. David and Jurgenson (2014) suggest that the semiotic affordances of social media sites and the dynamics of networked publics have

exacerbated contextual porousness. As the online context becomes more porous, mobile and fluid, hashtags, functioning as the marker of the experiential topic of architecture in this example, have seeped into the online linguistic landscape (Zappavigna, 2015). In the post, Meiyong arguably counteracted context collapse through context relapse since he was able to solidify contextual boundaries and present himself as a person with invested interests in architecture. This fixed category of architect identity that Meiyong sought to maintain for a small section of his audience is, however, subject to change.

Excerpt 5 – Meiyong – Manipulating accessibility

Meiyong: 我不否认图片能够部分的定义我在别人心里的形象。(I can't deny that [these] images will partly define how others see me.)

Researcher: 能定义你在自己心里的形象么? (Can they [images] define how you see yourself?)

Meiyong: 一部分, 也是有时候会删东西的原因, 有些东西不想留着让别人用来定义我。(Partially, that's why I sometimes delete things [posts]. I don't want to leave those things for other people to define who I am.)

As his response suggests, Meiyong recognises the fluidity in the construction of his identities and would curate such online presentation retrospectively to guarantee its currency. WeChat posts may have helped construct Meiyong's architect identity, and others have labelled him as such. However, this fixed category is constantly negotiated, mobilised or even dismantled in ongoing metrolingual practices, not necessarily through dialogic interactions with the audience, as suggested by Dovchin and Pennycook (2017), but through participants' reflexivity as they juggle through past and present presentations of selves.

Compensating for literacy

Apart from self-policing of content and manipulation of accessibility, participants display metrolingual practices that serve to compensate for literacy on the part of their audience and themselves. Figure 4 is an example in which Qin used both Chinese and English to provide linguistic scaffolding for a non-literate audience. The faded colour, or the modality of the image in semiotic terms, evokes a memory of the past, whereas the text serves as an anchor and helps clarify the contextual meanings of the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The way in which Chinese and English texts were juxtaposed does not align with the typical pattern of parallelism in multilingual writing (Sebba, 2012), as their meanings can be interpreted as complementary rather than duplicate.



Figure 4. Post by Qin showing compensating for literacy (Sharing a feeling of happiness. What keeps me going for a long long way.)

Excerpt 6 – Qin – Compensating for literacy

Qin: 就是考虑到微信里面有加一些可能不太会读中文的人，比如说有可能是 ABC 或者说甚至是本身是澳洲人之类的，所以才发英文，再写中文在上面的。但是因为主要朋友圈里面人都是中国人，所以肯定会发中文多。(Considering that some of my WeChat contacts may not be able to read Chinese, for example, some Australian-Born Chinese or Australians, I then used English in my post and added Chinese. However, because most of friends on Moment are Chinese, so I more often post in Chinese.)

As Qin reported, such a bilingual strategy was intended to offer the necessary linguistic resources for the broadest audience to engage with the post. Despite doing so, Qin did not intend for Chinese nor English monolinguals to understand the textual meaning in its entirety. The Chinese text puts more emphasis on the feeling of happiness, whereas the English version focuses more on family as a source of motivation. While a monolingual audience could effectively recognise and relate to Qin's presentation of self as a family-loving and appreciative person, the bilinguals arguably are empowered to discern and interpret more nuanced meanings. Moreover, the position of Chinese on top of English is a purposeful choice that caters to the code preference of viewers, which is in line with findings in studies of the terrestrial, physical linguistic landscape (see also Author, 2020).

In addition, participants may also draw on semiotic objects and linguistic resources from their immediate offline proximity as supplements to their own linguistic

repertoire. That means the online linguistic landscape is constituted partly of semiotic resources from the offline, material environment (see also Blommaert, 2019). Figure 5 illustrates Dulin's post, which utilised a range of multimodal resources such as photos, texts, memes and emojis. The seamless language crossing between English and Chinese, including 'Optus campus' (transliteration: 澳都斯园区), career expo (lit. 职业展会), and day off (lit. 休息日) suggests the bilingual literacy of Dulin, as linguistic diversity has become part of her mundane life experiences (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019). It might be argued that such translingual practice contributes to the construction of her Chinese expatriate identity, with the normative expectation that overseas Chinese people possess multilingual capacity.



Figure 5. Post by Dulin showing compensating for literacy (A busy July, bestie's party, terrible English calligraphy, business trip to Adelaide to do training, tax refund in Sydney, seeing the inside of luxurious Optus campus, coming back to Melbourne to host career expo. Although there's no day off and I had to wake up in early morning and come back at late night for every business trip, everything is worth it.)

Excerpt 7 – Dulin – Compensating for literacy

Dulin: 因为就是我想事情也都是用英文想，所以要非要用中文总结出来我的思绪有点困难，表达不清楚。而且那个时候跟所有人交流这两个名词直接是这样表达的，我也就这样表达。(Because I think things in English, it's difficult to summarise my thoughts and express them clearly in Chinese instead. Also, when I talked [in English] with other people, they said these two words, so I just say them in English.)

While I have refrained from labelling such languaging activity as demonstrating inadequate or fragmentary English or Chinese proficiency, Dulin herself suggested otherwise. Interestingly, she noted her inability to express thoughts clearly in Chinese, thereby drawing on semiotic resources from the offline context of interaction to assemble the spatial repertoire of the post in situ (Canagarajah, 2017). Those English words may not be part of the participant's existing repertoire, but they become available in interactions with other interactants. These emergent resources in the material world were then seized by Dulin for linguistic display and self-presentation. As a result, we see how this situated metrolingual practice has fulfilled her purpose of meaning-making in the online linguistic landscape, where she successfully constructed herself as a hectic professional, an active social being and a life-enjoying individual.

Moments of metrolingual identity performances

WeChat Moment offers multimodal resources that contribute to textual and visual representations of selves in the online space. These self-presentation practices are meanwhile shaped by the material landscape, or the semiotic objects in the physical environment (see also Lyons, 2019). As an online linguistic landscape, the social media platform serves to materialise fleeting moments of identity performances, which allows us to observe multi-layered identities and self-presentation actions. As such, this section shifts the analytical focus from linguistic creativities to the subtleties of identity performances, by examining how repeated metrolingual practices of individuals – including posting, deleting and modifying content – help reinforce self-presentations of metrolingual identities that are characterised by hybridity and fluidity. In particular, I consider how these overseas Chinese participants negotiate their new diasporic Chinese identities and seek recognition of their hybrid identities vis-à-vis the texts, images, and semiotic objects in the linguistic landscape.

As McNamara (2019) suggests, it is through the iterative process of social interactions that subjectivity is constructed; the agency of subjects lies in the possible slight deviations in each of these iterations. In the corpus of WeChat Moment posts, it is observed that participants are inclined to solidify their self-presentations through repetitive uses of semiotic resources drawn from the terrestrial landscape. This is most evidently seen in Meiyang's minimalist posts, where circles, squares, vectors of light, vertical buildings, and horizontal skylines in the physical environment are framed by square- or rectangular-shaped photos, in order to represent consistent architectural aesthetics (see Figure 6). These splitting seconds of performances were well documented by the online linguistic landscape, in which semiotic objects from the offline space were

reassembled to performatively realise an architect identity that is both recognised by Meiying himself as the most efficient label and imposed upon by other social interactants.

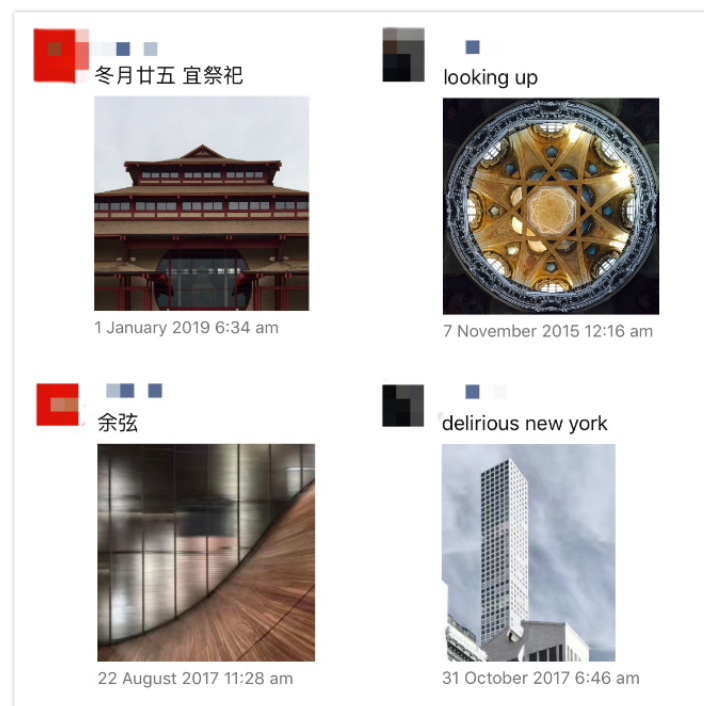


Figure 6. Collage of Meiying's posts (Left 1: 25th of December, suitable for worship; Left 2: Cosine)

There was also a moment when Meiying's impeccable presentations of his architect self were replaced by a more pertinent immigrant identity. Figure 7 illustrates a non-architecture-related post of the Immigrant Tap Room. The indexical relationship between the name of this bar restaurant and the immigrant procedure in the US is made evident by Meiying's comment on his experience of drawing for foreign workers visa. In this case, linguistic materials inscribed on the glass door, which were once emplaced in the lived space, were imbued with new meanings by the participant when repurposed and reused in the online space (Iedema, 2003; Oostendorp, 2018). Meanwhile, the immigrant identity of Meiying was fleshed out through these semiotic actions inadvertently, allowing us to observe how the participant was baffled by the identification processes as

he sought recognition as an eligible “foreign” worker after ten years of residence in the US. This lapse from the self-presentations as an architect implies a deviation from the curated imagery and allows a glimpse of multi-faceted identities.

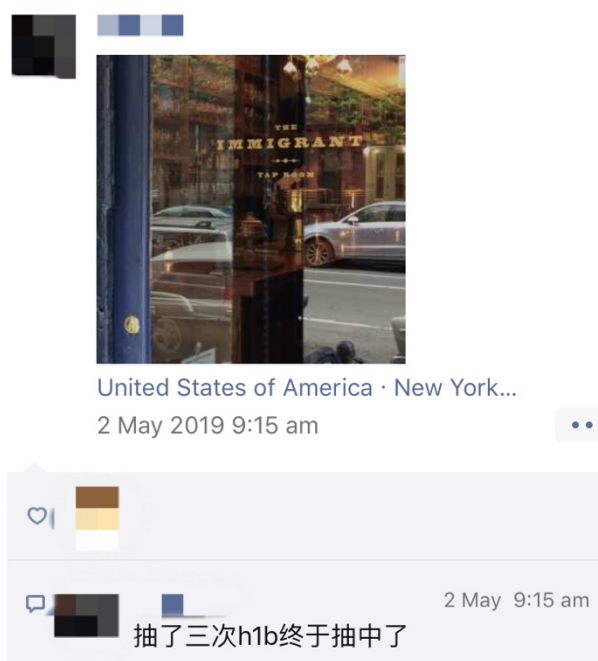


Figure 7. Post by Meiying showing immigrant identity (THE IMMIGRANT TAP ROOM. Finally got selected after three draws of h1b)

Jichun’s posts represent another illustrative example of identity performance through repeated metrolingual practices. Narratives and poetic prose are consistently used in combination with frequent inclusion of semiotic objects in the material landscape, in order to reinforce the identity of a literary researcher who is sensitive to the subtleties of nature and closely associated with Australian academic communities. Figure 8 shows a representative post in which the text was arranged in ways that resemble the genre features of a poem; the translanguaging between Chinese and English suggests an implied understanding of WWC (Working With Children’s Check) in the Australian working context; the screenshot of NTEU (National Tertiary Education Union) strike further

asserts the insider identity of Jichun. The participant's identity aspirations thus can be gleaned from such moment-to-moment analysis of the online linguistic landscape.

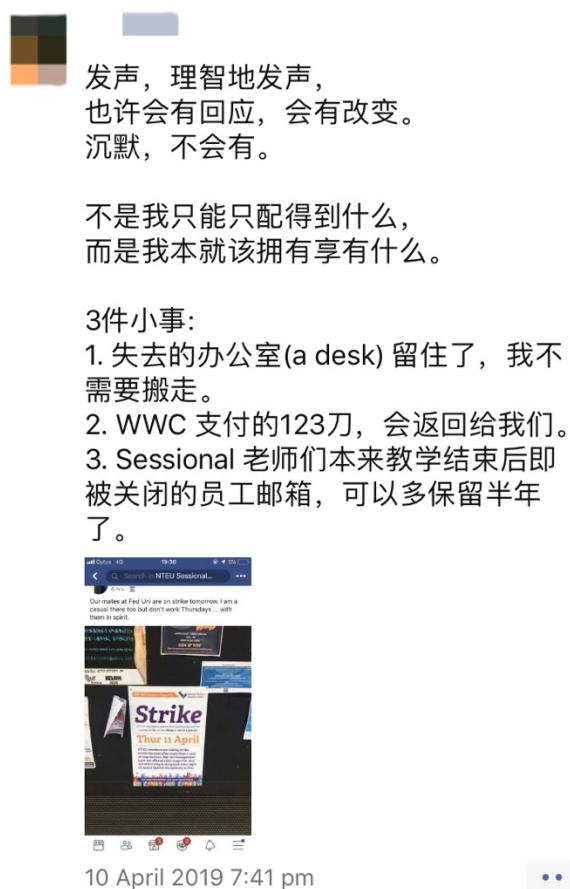


Figure 8. Post by Jichun showing literary researcher identity (Speak out, speak out sensibly. There might be response, might be change. But with silence, there won't be. It is not what I only can or deserve to get, but what I should have enjoyed. Three trivial things: 1. I got to keep the lost office (a desk), and don't need to move out. 2. The 123 dollars paid for WWC will be refunded to us. 3. The staff emails of sessional academics, once were closed immediately after the teaching ends, now could be kept for an additional half-year period. [Facebook screenshot: Our mates at Fed Uni are on strike tomorrow. I am a casual there too but don't work Thursdays ... with them in spirit.]

Additionally, there are multiple layers of recontextualisation in the use of this Facebook screenshot. The strike poster gained legible meaning when it was emplaced on the bulletin board, as the social order in this place serves to regulate what signs are permissible (see also Tufi, 2017). Once the poster was framed in the photograph and posted on Facebook, its meaning was further complemented by the additional text and the visual representation enabled by the online context. The sign essentially becomes an advocacy campaign and a social action; its effects were amplified as it is now able to reach an enormous amount of audience. Jichun interestingly added a third layer of meaning by using the Facebook post as a piece of evidence, attesting to the intended effects of the strike and her membership to the sessional academic community. Hence, the participant's semiotic practices have transcended online-offline borders in the process of recontextualising and resemiotising the semiotic materials from the physical space.

Considering the Chinese diasporic identity as an important factor shaping self-presentations, it is also found that these overseas Chinese participants have different ideologies and metrolingual practices compared to Chinese sojourners who have had shorter periods of overseas experiences. As Han (2020) suggests, Chinese visiting scholars are inclined to project cultural authenticity (by incorporating local semiotic resources), to showcase bilingual capacities (by using English or mixing English with Chinese), to signal cultural affiliations (by interpreting foreign culture for Chinese audience and vice versa). In contrast, for participants of this study, who have resided overseas for as many as ten years, these ostensible presentations of self as cross-linguistic and cross-cultural mediators are less favoured. Wushan, for example, would not seek to project cultural authenticity by employing locally sourced semiotic objects.

Wushan: 一般没有什么东西太明显外国特色...我觉得现在在全世界各个地方都有高大上的地方, 所以也没有什么东西大家觉得你们澳洲有的好新奇, 羡慕嫉妒恨, 不会! 现在已经没有人会有这样的。比如说很早 13 年的时候, 例如你拍两张空气清新绿水青山的时候, 哇, 澳洲那边什么天好蓝哒。但是你都在这边待了六年了, 别人也不会再说你们天还这么蓝吗。(Usually my posts do not incorporate things with foreign features...I think there are high-end places all over the world now, so people would not be surprised by things in Australia. It is not like that there was anything novel that they would envy. No, that is not the case now. For example, early in 2013, when you took a couple of pictures about the fresh air and beautiful landscape, people would wow and comment that Australia has really blue sky. But after you have been staying here for six years, other people would not bother to comment on the blue sky anymore.)

For Wushan, it seemed unnecessary to perform the pretentious role of a language and culture know-how. Similarly, Dulin and Qin both commented that they tended to avoid using English or marking their geolocation in the post, since these practices were perceived as “Zhuang Bi” (showing off), especially so after years of residence in foreign countries. This does not mean, however, that overseas Chinese are not struggling with their diasporic identities. Meiyang’s inadvertent presentation of the immigrant identity and Jichun’s consistent efforts to associate herself with the Australian academic community both suggest the complexities of negotiating diasporic identities in the online-offline space. In Figure 9 and Excerpt 9, for instance, Qin explicitly identifies herself as an overseas Chinese person, or more specifically, as belonging to the Chinese diaspora who share similar overseas experiences, sociocultural beliefs and national affiliations with China.

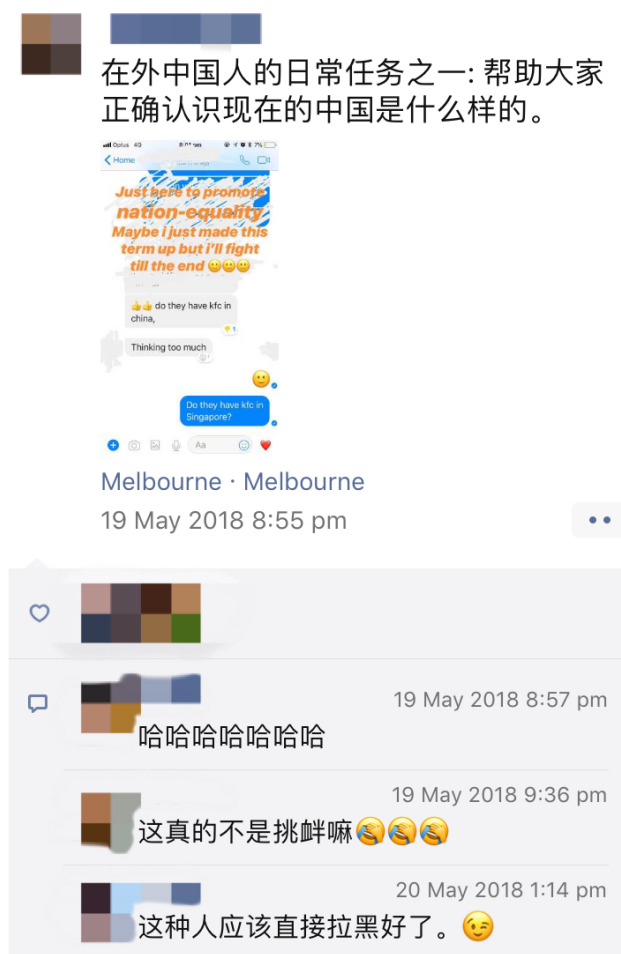


Figure 9. Post by Qin showing negotiating Chinese identities (One of the daily tasks for Chinese living abroad: Helping people correctly understand what China looks like nowadays. [Screenshot: Just here to promote nation-equality. Maybe I just made this term up but I'll fight till the end. 'do they have kfc in china', 'Thinking too much', 'Do they have kfc in Singapore?']. Comment1: Hahahahahahaha. Comment 2: Isn't this a provocative move? Comment 3: Just block this kind of person.)

Excerpt 9 – Qin – Negotiating Chinese identities

Qin: 因为周围的人也很多就都是 overseas Chinese, 大家可能会有这种共同经历或者是共同的想法...我有这种感觉, 我觉得我们就是中国的代言人, 但也我觉得因为但其实中国国际形象也不是很好, 所以更需要我们代言...我会有我真的会有这

种使命感。而且尤其是在我在工作场所，因为大家都是基本上是白人比较多，或者是其他人人都知道少于五个亚洲人怎么样，我是时刻很就是 self-conscious，我会觉得，因为别人接触到中国人可能也就没有几个，所以你是很代表了国家形象。而且我会觉得如果你的表现比较好的话，大家也会就会如果他们有一些不好的印象的话，它其实会改观。(Since many people around me are overseas Chinese, we may share similar experiences and ideas...I've got this feeling that we are the ambassadors of China, but I also felt that the international image of China is not very good, so we need to do more this representing work...I sincerely feel this obligation. Especially in the workplace, most people are white or know fewer than five Asians. I'm always self-conscious. I think that other people may rarely encounter Chinese people, and I should be representing the image of our country. And if you do well, people would change their mind if they had some unflattering impressions.)

Worth noting here is how the post was constructed by semiotic resources and implies a struggle of identification. The Chinese text in the post, as Qin explains, was intended as an invitation for interaction from other overseas Chinese in her friends' circle. The Chinese diaspora that Qin swore allegiance to here was formed upon common experiences, that is, painstaking negotiations of Chinese identities in relation to stereotypic and outdated perceptions of China and Chinese people. The screenshot of the message contextualised the Chinese text by providing a specific scenario where Qin was trying to dispel a bias against the modernity of China, which claimed that China had no KFC. Comments under the post show that Qin's fury over the misconceptions of China was well understood and shared by other overseas Chinese, further indicating the universality of such struggling experiences among the Chinese diaspora against prevailing discourses of and about China. Qin has re-presented her offline experience in

the online space, mediated by the semiotic affordances available in her repertoire including texts, messages and locations. Her momentary semiotic action and self-consciousness of being an exemplar Chinese person was captured by this very moment that consists of the online linguistic landscape.

Discussion and conclusion

As an online linguistic landscape, WeChat Moment affords a unique spatial repertoire consisting of linguistic literacies, personal histories, normative expectations, technological affordances and semiotic artefacts from offline surroundings. In this fluid and porous online context, participants often find themselves drawing on various semiotic resources available in the spatial repertoire to facilitate their presentation of self on the spot (see Table 2). Efforts to self-police the content, manipulate accessibility and compensate for literacy are made possible through metrolingual practices that represent a wide range of social and semiotic actions beyond the normative scope of code-switching. These metrolingual practices are emplaced within a spatiotemporal configuration that comes into being by repeated actions of posting, rather than existing a priori to these actions (see also Canagarajah, 2017).

Table 2

Metrolingual practices, presentation of self, and spatial repertoire

Strategies for presentation of self	Metrolingual practices employed	Semiotic resources drawn from the spatial repertoire
Self-policing of content	1. Supplementing information in an additional language; 2. Posting 'sensitive' content in a less known language;	Multilingual resources; visibility functionality in WeChat Moment

	3. Minimising visibility by delaying posting;	
Manipulation of accessibility	4. Offering limited semiotic resources to obscure meanings;	Absence of semiotic resources; Repertoire-specific resources
	5. Employing out-of-repertoire resources to exclude sections of audience;	
Compensating for literacy	6. Providing linguistic scaffolding for non-literate audience;	Semiotic resources in the offline environment
	7. Drawing on semiotic resources from the offline environment as supplement to the literacy of the poster.	

More importantly, the effects of context collapse and the disciplinary nature of online spaces have contributed to the display of multi-layered metrolingual practices and maintenance of multifaceted identities. In the online linguistic landscape where the boundary among social groups and communicative norms is diffused, participants often attempt to establish a flattened persona that is non-offensive and amicable for all sections of the audience (see also David & Jurgenson, 2014). These efforts can be seen most evidently from the self-regulatory strategy and the providence of linguistic scaffolding. Nevertheless, users of WeChat Moment also demonstrate tactful means of ‘context relapse’ to prevent the audience from converging into a single mass, despite their limited agency in the face of the disciplinary power to conform with normative expectations. Employing out-of-repertoire resources to signal the inclusion of a specialist audience and exclude others is arguably one of such means to re-establish contextual boundaries and to relapse the collapsed context.

Based on the above discussion, this study has made three important contributions. First, it contributes to ongoing efforts in the field that seek to expand the scenery of linguistic landscapes to the online domain. As the analysis of data has demonstrated, the

particularities of social media space, and its semiotic affordances and constraints, shape metrolingual practices and self-presentation choices and illuminate the relationship between language and space in important ways. In other words, the online space, characterised by context collapse and context relapse, has fostered the creative employment of languages and semiotic resources, ultimately resulting in multi-layered, complex means of meaning making and identity marking (Blackwood, 2019). Given the exponential number of communicative events occurring in online digital spaces, exploring languaging activities without considering the spatial repertoires and semiotic possibilities offered by the social media context would result in an incomplete analysis.

Second, this study advances an understanding of metrolingualism and its application to the analysis of online contexts. Viewing WeChat Moment as an online linguistic landscape, the study shows that metrolingualism may be used to account for semiotic practices not only in terrestrial marketplaces and corner shops (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015) but also in social media spaces. While offline spatial repertoires often consist of personal histories, semiotic objects and business activities, contextual boundaries in online linguistic landscapes are more porous and fluid, with more varied meaning-making devices, including technological affordances and resources drawn from the offline environment available to participants. In this sense, metrolingualism offers an in-depth understanding of social actions and linguistic practices that are situated at the ‘online-offline nexus’ (Blommaert, 2019) as well as how they facilitate the presentation of self in a collapsed context.

Thirdly, the online linguistic landscape perspective allows a moment-to-moment analysis of individual’s metrolingual practices, self-presentation strategies and identity performances. It particularly highlights how overseas Chinese struggled to negotiate their ethnic identities and national affiliations amongst other professional and academic

identifications, resulting in a metrolingual identity that is characterised by both the fixity of established social categories and the hybridity of multi-layered identities (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015; Dovchin & Pennycook, 2015). Overseas Chinese have sought to problematise stereotypic conceptions of Chinese identities by reproducing their lived experiences, by drawing upon various semiotic resources and technological affordances that are emplaced in the online and offline environments. These hybrid, heterogenous semiotic and identity practices could be understood in terms of the interplay of metrolingual practices, spatial repertoires and self-presentations.

Overall, as a response to the networked reality and the expanded repertoire of participants in discourse events on social media platforms, this paper attends to the online linguistic landscape of WeChat Moment, which presents a new context of innovative affordances. Adopting an online ethnography of WeChat Moment posts and interviews with Chinese youths, the study investigated how participants in the online space draw upon a complex array of semiotic resources from spatial repertoires to constantly negotiate their self-presentation and manage the effects of context collapse. The analysis suggests that metrolingual practices have facilitated self-presentation strategies, including policing of content, manipulation of accessibility and compensation for literacy. In line with the trend of expanding the scenery, this paper demonstrates the usefulness of metrolingualism theory and the online context in unsettling the boundary of linguistic landscape. To extend this exploratory study, further research could examine how linguistic landscape participants manage their online presence across different social media spaces and the implications for a fragmented self-presentation in spaces of varying degrees of publicity.

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Chapter 8 Discussion: Reflections on recent trends in linguistic landscape research

Thus far, I have examined three case studies and illustrated how semiotic resources drawn from the spatial repertoires of different contexts are employed to construct discourses of nostalgia, power and self-presentation. This section discusses the insights generated from these case studies and how they advance our understanding with regards to the theory, methodology, power and relevance in linguistic landscape research.

Theoretical orientation

As a burgeoning field of study, linguistic landscape research has often been criticised for lacking theoretical depth, especially regarding its quantitative survey-based analysis of language use in public spaces (Blommaert, 2013). However, this study shows that linguistic landscape studies would benefit from a flexible and open theoretical terrain that allows the adoption of approaches and perspectives from multiple disciplines (see also Van Mensel et al., 2017). Through a comprehensive search of literature and a rigorous investigation of three case studies, I have been able to demonstrate the value of integrating the theoretical perspectives of geosemiotics, superdiversity and metrolingualism. In this section, I will explain in detail how each of the case studies has shed light on the theory of linguistic landscape research.

To begin, the Euroa case advances scholarship by shifting our perspective to the rural linguistic landscape. There is a trend in linguistic landscape research to focus on metropolitan centres because of their complexity and multiplicity. As a result, Rojo and Portillo (2015) among others call for more attention to peripheral contexts and marginal communities. Situated in the rural context, the Euroa case aligns with emerging efforts in the field of linguistic landscape that examine how rural areas constitute part of the discursive construction of society (see Jenks, 2018). It offers an opportunity for us to

reassess the theoretical assumptions underlying linguistic landscape analysis that are applicable to superdiverse, urban areas. As the case study demonstrates, the geosemiotic framework can account for meaning making in the rural landscape as much as the urban context. Signs can be analysed in terms of their semiotic resources, spatial emplacement and processes of production and consumption, even in rural places with an almost monolingual neighbourhood. The close-knit community in Euroa facilitated our analysis of the historical trajectory of signs and the shared knowledge of community members. The emplacement of the Chinese restaurant and its relationship with other English-monolingual signs also becomes evident in the rural context where Chinese restaurant is the sole ‘ethnic other’ in the linguistic landscape (Moriarty, 2014).

In addition, the Euroa case offers alternative insights into the theoretical perspectives of superdiversity and metrolingualism. Although linguistic landscape studies tend to focus on superdiverse, globalised cities as sites of study, superdiversity theory in fact dismisses the simplistic mapping of multilingualism based on frequency counts of languages (Arnaut et al., 2016). For example, Blommaert (2013) specifically warns against the quantitative perspective and argues for longitudinal, historicised analysis of small neighbourhoods as ways to reveal social changes in linguistic landscapes. The Euroa case thus aligns with the superdiversity perspective in that it contextualises the discourse of nostalgia within the rural narrative of Australian country towns and traces the trajectory of mobility in the signage of a Chinese restaurant. Insights from this study suggest that linguistic landscape research can benefit from the historical lens offered by superdiversity theory without restricting the contexts of study to metropolitan cities.

On the other hand, the ‘metro-’ prefix of metrolingualism suggests a problematic focus on metropolitan cities (Jaspers & Madsen, 2016; Jaworski, 2014a; Schneider,

2017). The explanatory power of metrolingualism lies in its understanding of languaging as a social practice situated in the semiotic assemblage of histories, objects and activities; the Euroa case shows that adopting this assemblage perspective of sign making does not necessarily require an analysis of the urban context. As Pennycook (2019) argues in its recent formulation of mundane metrolingualism, diversity should be understood in terms of semiotic assemblages rather than “diversity premised on either normative, demographic accounts of human diversity or more interactive accounts of superdiversity” (p. 184). In other words, the analytical focus may be shifted to the complexity of semiotic assemblages in both urban and rural places, rather than the sheer number of visible languages. The Euroa case thus serves as an exemplar case for an expanded view of metrolingualism that does not preclude rural contexts from the scenery of linguistic landscape analysis.

Likewise, the Bendigo case represents another attempt to shift the analytical apparatus from urban cities to regional towns. Regional places such as Bendigo may not boast an abundant collection of signs, and Chinese elements were added onto English signs sporadically as symbolic markers of ethnic heritage. It would be difficult to classify these decorative uses into specific linguistic categories, but metrolingualism offers an alternative perspective that acknowledges the fragmented uses of semiotic resources, the ‘ordinariness’ of social practices and the blurred boundaries of languages (Dovchin, 2017, p. 145). Such an expanded view of semiotic practices enables us to move away from labelling languages on signs and instead focus on a broader set of signage that contains Chinese cultural symbols, such as the dragon playground. Viewing languages as one of the semiotic resources, however, does not suggest an exhaustive analysis to the meaning potentials of each multimodal resource. As the case

study shows, the purpose of revealing the construction of social discourses through semiotic materials is better served by using geosemiotics as a heuristic.



Figure 8.1 The assemblage perspective

The inclusion of semiotic materials in the analysis also entails a view of ‘semiotic assemblages’ (Pennycook, 2019). The shift of focus from individual signs to signs as interrelated systems is necessary especially in contexts such as Bendigo, due to the rarity of multilingual signs and the lack of consistency in the use of Chinese language. The clear demarcation between Chinese places and the rest of the linguistic landscape in Bendigo makes it convenient to examine Chinese sites as semiotic assemblages where convoluted interactions among people, objects and spaces occur. In addition, the assemblage perspective further addresses the pertaining issue of the unit of analysis in linguistic landscape research. Despite the widely received argument that “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” can be the focus of linguistic landscape analysis (Backhaus, 2007, p. 66), public signs often entangle and overlap with each other, thus making it difficult to determine a unit of analysis that could be consistently applied to any instances of sign use. As Figure 8.1 illustrates,

newspaper clips are attached to a larger and more permanent sign with glass frame. To untangle these signs would be less favourable than to view them as part of the semiotic assemblage of the Joss House Temple, based on which we can then consider the ways in which the entanglement of people, gods and buildings contributes to the distribution and production of cultural tourism discourses.

More importantly, what underlies the seemingly homogenous linguistic landscape of Bendigo is a multicultural past when a large number of Chinese migrants worked and lived on the goldfields. An examination of the past of Chinese signage in this case has advanced our understanding of ‘historical bodies’ in the linguistic landscape (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Specifically, the presence of Caucasian bodies in the lion-awakening ceremony or imperial dragon processions may be conceived as a transgression of cultural norms that have been discursively constructed throughout the history of practising these traditions exclusively by the Chinese people. In a similar way, Chinese presence is legitimated by the historical context of Bendigo and seen as embodying a set of social orders and cultural values that are distinctive from non-Chinese communities. By taking this historicised view of human bodies, we are able to recognise the trajectories and conventions that have shaped the behaviours of people and enregistered their bodily movements with sociocultural meanings (Blommaert, 2018; Bucholtz & Hall, 2016).

Aligning with current trend in the wider discipline of applied linguistics (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016), the investigation of WeChat Moment focuses on online communicative events and requires a rethinking of geosemiotics. Given that context collapse brought together both online norms circulating the friends’ circle and social orders permeating offline social networks of users, the analysis of social arrangements governing interactive activities in online digital spaces should be sensitive to both

online and offline realities (Blackwood, 2019). The additional sets of technological affordances offered by social media platforms have further complicated visual semiotic analysis (Lyons, 2019), which needs to consider a wider variety of multimodal resources drawn from online and offline spatial repertoires for meaning making. It is also necessary to revisit the notion of place semiotics especially when intertextuality has become characteristic of the relationship between signs and their situated online environment. WeChat Moment users, for example, intertextualise semiotic materials from not only other social media platforms but also overseas places they visit to “reconstruct the original or authentic contexts ... for potential Chinese addressees” (Han, 2020, p. 6). Analysis of place semiotics should thus attend to how signs emplaced within a particular online context are indexical of other online and offline spaces.

Superdiversity theory is well positioned to capture the diversity and complexity of online digital spaces. Nexus analysis, in particular, focuses on how social interactions are mediated by languages, objects and technologies and how people, discourses, spaces and semiotic resources bear a history and project future actions (Blommaert, 2013; Lane, 2010). As we have seen in the online linguistic landscape of WeChat Moment, participants tap into a range of multimodal resources and technological affordances available in the spatial repertoire to accomplish the social action of self-presentation. Since people are socialised into the norms and expectations circulating in both online and offline spaces, their practices of policing content and manipulating accessibility in the collapsed context are predictable. In this sense, superdiversity theory offers a historical lens on social practices in the online linguistic landscape, which likely requires an ethnographic scrutiny of the researcher’s own social media space as a gateway to the nexus of action (see also Georgakopoulou, 2017).

The case study of WeChat suggests that the analytical scope of metrolingualism may be extended to incorporate online linguistic landscapes. While the primary focus of metrolingualism has been offline spoken interactions, Dovchin and Pennycook (2017) demonstrated the possibility of merging the conceptual framework of metrolingualism with digital literacies to account for translingual practices and flexible identifications of urban youth on Facebook. With WeChat Moment, which boasts a different configuration of semiotic affordances and contextual boundaries, metrolingualism has again been proven useful in understanding how languaging practices contribute to the presentation of online selves. As Blommaert (2019) argues, online interactions are essentially embedded in offline social practices and are reflective of offline identities, especially when considering the implications of context collapse. If metrolingualism were to account for how linguistic landscape participants navigate collapsed contexts and negotiate their online performances, the key concept of spatial repertoire would need to include the semiotic resources from both online and offline environments which people draw on to engage in social activities.

Overall, these three case studies have advanced our understanding of the theoretical orientations in the field of linguistic landscape in the following aspects. Firstly, they direct our attention to rural and regional cities. The insights into the construction of affect, power and identity drawn from these places could complement our understanding of urban landscapes that are premised upon superdiversity, complexity and mobility. Secondly, the analyses of three case studies are sensitive to the sociocultural contexts where the Chinese participants situated, which lends extra credence to our interpretations of lived experiences. Without these ethnographic details, our analysis may be biased by the visual frames that we unconsciously impose upon signs when taking photographs (see also Coupland & Garrett, 2010). Thirdly, these case

studies have injected new meanings to the key theoretical concept of space in linguistic landscape research. More than recognising the emplacement of signs in the physical environment, this thesis demonstrates how an assemblage of signs bear histories, regulate emotions and generate meanings. As a result, this thesis advocates a theory for linguistic landscape research that is informed by the key principles of geosemiotics, the historical lens of superdiversity and the assemblage perspective of metrolingualism.

Methodological evolution

Recently, the field of linguistic landscape is undergoing a major methodological shift towards qualitative and ethnographically oriented approaches. Early studies have primarily used a quantitative survey to document multilingual signs in city centres (Blackwood, 2015). The quantitative analysis often involves photographing all public signs in urban districts and enumerating languages on these signs. However, as researchers gradually realise the simplicity of such analysis and start to bring in methodological frameworks from other disciplines, mixed approaches that combine a qualitative analysis of signs with interviews that are intended to probe the motivations for sign-making have become more prevalent. Aligning with the recent trend of qualitative approaches, this thesis employed ethnographic datasets that provided a situated and grounded understanding of sign-making in public spaces. In what follows, I shall discuss how each of my case studies has contributed to the methodological debate in the field of linguistic landscape.

The linguistic landscape of Euroa represents a case where the quantitative approach is not readily applicable. Unlike superdiverse urban centres, Euroa is a rural town with few traces of multilingualism. Therefore, a quantitative survey that seeks to document the use of different languages in the rural linguistic landscape would be ill-fit. However, starting with categorising signs and enumerating languages, I was able to

draw out the primary features of the entire dataset and identify perplexing semiotic choices for later qualitative analysis. The quantitative view has in a sense paved way for achieving a more in-depth understanding of linguistic landscapes. Thus, I would agree with Amos (2016) among others that the quantitative analysis provides an important panoramic view of linguistic landscapes and this perspective should not be simply dismissed despite the methodological shift towards more qualitative approaches.

Adopting a research design that takes rural and regional spaces as study sites requires ethnographic insights into the historical trajectories of signs, people and places in the linguistic landscape. As a result, I conducted fieldwork investigations and collected a wide range of data including photographs, field notes, observations, casual talks and interviews. I see my methodology as ‘ethnographically oriented’ because it aligns with current trends in the field of linguistic landscape which embraces a broad definition of ethnography that often involves short-term fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with sign makers (see also Hult & Kelly-Holmes, 2019). Some may argue that this approach is not ethnographic as such, given that sociolinguistic ethnography in the narrow sense typically requires the participation of researcher in the everyday activities happening at the study site and the observation of people and their language use from an insider perspective (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). However, in consideration of the scope of this research, the ethnographically oriented approach adopted here has been proven both feasible and sufficient in revealing the operation of affective regimes in the rural landscape and probe the histories and ideologies represented by Chinese semiotic assemblages.

If time and resources permit, an insider perspective of the Chinese communities would likely generate more insights into the dynamics of power that might not be captured during short field trips. Lou (2016), for example, presented a compelling case

of the Washington Chinatown through active engagement in council meetings and contacts with members of the Chinese community. It is recognised that an ethnography of linguistic landscapes that involves long-term residence and greater engagement in community events would shed light on the processes of social stratification in the local neighbourhood. As Järlehed (2015) suggests, a longitudinal analysis can reveal the “layering of different ideological presuppositions” on public signs which are repositories of past meanings and vehicles for future meanings (p. 175). These insights could be obtained through a systematic observation and photographic documentation of a selection of signs in the public area during ethnographic fieldwork.

In addition, participation in community meetings and activities may enlighten our understandings of the discourses around Chinese signs in the area. For the Bendigo case in particular, my analysis of official documents provided clues to the neoliberal ideology of cultural tourism, but residence in the local neighbourhood would generate more insights into how the discourses of Chinese history in Bendigo are reproduced on a daily basis (see also Lou, 2016). Through closer relationships with residents, including those from the Chinese communities, I would be able to collect more truthful narratives of people’s lived experiences in the diaspora context. While I was welcomed by the Bendigo Chinese community and granted access to the imperial dragons, I could probably conduct systematic observations of or even play a part in the Chinese cultural activities to understand better the construction of Chineseness. That said, greater empathy with the observed community would also make it more difficult for researchers to take an etic perspective (Gobo, 2008). I have experienced such emotional reluctance while exiting the field although I only had a short period of engagement with members of the Bendigo community.

Compared to terrestrial linguistic landscapes, the analysis of the WeChat space has raised a series of methodological issues. The first issue is in relation to the definition of scope for data collection and subsequent analysis. To capture the diversity and multilingualism of public space with digital cameras, researchers have tended to limit the scope of data collection to the central blocks of cities where there is great density of signage (Papen, 2012). On social media platforms, however, users and their generated contents are interconnected globally and cannot be confined within geographical boundaries (Blommaert, 2018). While plenty of tools are available for researchers to scrawl tweets or Instagram posts according to hashtags or geotags, WeChat Moment does not allow similar scraping of user data without credential verifications.

In the case study of WeChat for example, very few posts were geotagged with locations, making it impossible to impose any spatial scope on the dataset. The networked feature of social media place also overthrows the concept of ethnic or linguistic communities, since more fluid identities and mixings of semiotic resources are observed (Li & Huang, 2020). To accommodate these practical concerns, I collected posts from my own friends' circle on WeChat and retrospectively obtaining screenshots of posts generated by users within a specific period (see also Han, 2020). Instead of taking a homogenous view of the Chinese diaspora in the online linguistic landscape of WeChat within the Australian context, I recognised the diversified overseas experiences of my Chinese friends and the transnational nature of social media that well exceeds national boundaries.

In practice, I aligned with the 'online ethnography' approach proposed by Georgakopoulou (2017) and analysed the presentation of self on WeChat Moment based on multimodal analysis of posts and in-depth interviews with focal users. Such an

approach is characterised by an inquiry into the researcher's own social network in order to formulate a coherent argument based on retrospective narratives of participants (Ellis et al., 2011; Pitard, 2017). It is acknowledged that studies focusing on topical analysis of social media content rarely track down participants and investigate the underlying motivations for semiotic choices. Lee and Chau (2018), as an exception, conducted online interviews with a selection of Instagram users besides a content analysis of hashtags and demonstrated the value of probing the rationale behind social media posts. My study of WeChat Moment serves as an illustrative example that draws on both photographic and interview data to explore the metrolingual repertoires of participants in the online linguistic landscape.

The investigation of online digital spaces also entails some ethical implications. An important ethical concern for social media research is obtaining informed consent from users before collecting posts and conducting interviews. It is generally believed that social media platforms fall within the public domain and therefore published user data can be harvested without informed consent (Williams, Burnap, Sloan, Jessop, & Lepps, 2017). In dealing with semi-public data or private data, however, anonymisation of sensitive information and protection of user privacy become an important issue. As Hibbin, Samuel and Derrick (2018) note, it is not always feasible to seek permission due to the difficulty of tracking down users on social media applications. In the most up-to-date version of *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*, Franzke et al. (2020) suggest common ways to mitigate risk against research subjects when it is impracticable to obtain informed consent including deleting identifiable information or pseudonymising datasets. To address the ethical implications ensuing from my case study of WeChat, I conducted a careful assessment of the risk of collecting and publishing users' Moment data. Specifically, I followed the framework for ethical

research with social media data proposed by Townsend and Wallace (2016) to consult the terms and conditions of WeChat and anonymise user identities in my dataset. These guidelines on legality, privacy and re-publication could be used to inform further research on online linguistic landscapes that involve data collection on social media.

Overall, the thesis has contributed to our understanding of the methodological evolution in the field of linguistic landscape in three important aspects. First and foremost, the study has aligned with qualitative and ethnographic approaches which are currently trending in linguistic landscape studies. What the qualitative perspective offers is an in-depth analysis of how human experiences are shaped by semiotic practices in public spaces, which complements important ethnographic details to the quantitative counting of languages. That said, linguistic landscape studies often start with a quantitative analysis to gain a panoramic view of linguistic and semiotic use in the public space. As the field continues to expand its scenery, quantitative analytical tools such as topic modelling and geolocation tagging (e.g. Hiippala et al., 2019) will likely gain momentum in further studies of online digital spaces.

Secondly, this thesis has provoked further thinking regarding what ethnography means and how it can be operationalised for linguistic landscape research. According to Blommaert (2018), the value of sociolinguistic ethnography lies in its historical perspective, and longitudinal studies of a small neighbourhood is both required and encouraged. In comparison, linguistic landscape researchers have opted for alternative forms of ethnographic investigations which often combine semi-structured interviews with sign owners and photographic documentation of public signs. Informed by this broad conceptualisation of ethnography, I compiled a dataset of photographs, interviews, policy documents and field notes during multiple visits to my study sites. It

is recognised this eclectic approach has generated necessary ethnographic insights into the research questions without exhausting the limited resources for a sole researcher.

Another related issue raised by this research project is the ethics of conducting linguistic landscape research, which have been a neglected topic in the field so far. It is widely recognised that the primary dataset for linguistic landscape research is photographs of public signs. While signs on the streets are commonly believed to fall within the public domain, the boundary between the public and the private has in fact become increasingly blurred, especially under online contexts. Linguistic landscape researchers are restrained in the ways that they collect, analyse and disseminate data containing public or private information. Studies of marginal contexts in particular would need to consider how the anonymity of interviewees could be best maintained. Although I have taken a prudent approach and obtained consent before collecting data, these ethical issues are certainly open for debate.

Framing of power relations

Participant power has been a crucial issue pertaining to the larger fields of social semiotics and critical discourse analysis. For linguistic landscape studies in particular, power relations have been considered as one of the driving forces for the structuration of multilingualism in public places, alongside collective identity, self-presentation and commercial reasons (Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael, 2015). Previous studies have introduced a binary categorisation to distinguish ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom up’ signs or official and non-official signs, attributing the code choices to ideological or commercial reasons (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). Under this framework, language use in the private domain is seen as regulated and dominated by national or regional language policy, which represents sovereign and ideological power. Woldemariam and Lanza (2014) suggest that such discourses of power have left little room for the grassroots to display

their agency through creative or transgressive semiotic practices such as bilingual word play and graffiti.

However, to fit power into a binary conceptualisation that distinguishes between the powerful and the powerless, the dominant and the subordinate, as well as the official and the non-official is problematic, as it overlooks the complexity and fluidity of power relations in the public sphere. As Canagarajah (2013) argues, there is a constant reconstruction of linguistic forms and a renegotiation of power relations in translocal places, meaning that power dynamics cannot be simply captured by two extremes of the spectrum. It is in this belief that I set out to advance an understanding of power in linguistic landscape studies, aiming to promote a recognition of the complexity and fluidity of power relations in linguistic landscapes. In what follows, I shall examine how each of the case studies shed light on this important issue.

Although the Euroa case was not formulated as an explicit response to the weak framing of power relations, it indeed examines the discursive construction of nostalgia discourse that permeates and regulates the semiotic landscape of the rural town. As McNamara (2019) reminds us, the power of the discourse, in Foucault's terms, circulates down to every level of society so that its influence is everywhere and in every interactive event, including meaning making activities in the public space. In this sense, the Euroa case has alerted us to the power of nostalgia discourse in structuring the rural landscape. It invites further consideration of the power relations between those who designed material conditions to operationalise the sense of nostalgia, and those who participate in and are subject to the nostalgia discourse.

As has been demonstrated in the study, the evocation of nostalgia emotions has been made possible through 'affective regimes', that is, the spatial conditions that hegemonically regulate the materialisation of particular kinds of affect (Wee, 2015, p.

109). The concept of regimes has been discussed in Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005), where they refer to “a set of behavioural expectations regarding physical conduct including language” as “interactional regimes” (p. 212). This type of communicative regime was used to describe the hegemonic status of a monolingual ideology that has been imposed upon interactions and meanwhile subverted by ethnolinguistic diversity. That said, Gal (2012) suggests that multilingualism could be the new sociolinguistic regime because it similarly advocates a form of standardization. As we have seen in the case of Euroa, the monolingual and nostalgia regimes operate locally in parallel with the multilingual and globalised regimes that govern mainstream Australian society.

Significantly, the term ‘regime’ in sociolinguistic contexts serves to “emphasise not only a condition, a normative, taken-for-granted dimension which regiments situated understandings of language, but also the importance of inequality of resources and power” (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 213). The case study of Euroa has revealed the ways in which the set of multimodal resources, including texts and objects, govern the emotion of nostalgia at different places. To be more specific, as part of the efforts to draw the tourist gaze, serif fonts and memorial plaques are designed in ways that constitute the materials conditions that serve to evoke the sense of a longing for the past (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Based on this understanding, it might be argued that the Euroa case has highlighted the imbalance of power between the authorities and the local residents, although they are both subjects of the monolingual, rural and nostalgia discourse.

Such inequality of power has become particularly prominent in the example of the Chinese restaurant signs. Being the sole Chinese restaurant in town, Flam Shan stands out from the otherwise monolingual landscape. Given the marginalised presence

of Chinese language and semiotic resources, it seems logical to argue that English language and Australian rural culture have overarching power in Euroa's linguistic landscape. The presence of a Chinese restaurant also transforms Euroa into a translocal and transnational space (Canagarajah, 2013; Duff, 2015). That is to say, the visibility of Chinese in Euroa is indexical of both diasporic Chinese communities in other parts of Victoria and the Chinese community from which the Flam Shan family originally came from. In this sense, the Chinese restaurant possesses an exotic power since it offers a fantasy of otherness for Euroa residents, although this is at the cost of subjectifying the Chinese cultures and languages to the discourse of commodification.

The first part of the Bendigo case offered an explicit framing of the concept of power that could help situate further inquiries within the stream of studies that undertake critical analyses of linguistic landscapes. The study was motivated by the recognition that there is a lack of understanding of power relations in current scholarship, as previous studies are often concerned with the description of language use itself, without necessarily questioning the critical implications of such use. For those who do examine the ideological basis of sign making, the concepts of power and agency have often been discussed against the background of English imperialism (Coluzzi, 2016), language policy (Sameulson & Freeman, 2010) and post-war conflict (Themistocleous, 2019), in ways that assume an indexical relationship between official language and political ideology. It is with the aim to move away from such tokenistic accounts of power that I have proposed the use of 'power over', 'power to', and 'power through' in my study to highlight the possibility of adopting alternative perspectives on power relations.

As my study suggests, 'power over' specifically denotes the line of research that approaches the question of semiotic choices and appropriations of linguistic forms from

the perspective of language policy (e.g. Screti, 2015). The baseline assumption is that power imbalance exists in forms that may signal dominant or coercive forces of the authorities over other social actors in the public space. In addition, I identified a stream of ‘power to’ studies that aim at examining the innovative semiotic practices observable on public signs, most notably in protests where a range of semiotic resources are used for deterritorialization purposes (e.g. Lou & Jaworski, 2016). Often, these events involve creative or subversive uses of languages and semiotic materials that are seen as a form of self-expression or agency of those who are otherwise silenced in the linguistic landscapes. Most importantly, my study has argued for an understanding of ‘power through’ semiotic landscapes, that is, the ways in which an assemblage of people, activities and objects is charged with sociocultural meanings and represents claims for power. For example, I found that Chinese semiotic resources such as Chinese bodies and imperial dragons have been used to signify inclusion, value, literacy and ownership, which are important forms of negotiations and appropriations of power under the discourses of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the Australian context.

The framework of ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power through’ represents my preliminary efforts to advance an understanding of the important concept of power in linguistic landscape studies. This first part of the Bendigo case study thus contributes an analytical framework of power for the field which could be used as a heuristic for further studies. As I have established the argument that choices of semiotic resources are indexical of power relations, the triadic model of power can then be applied to analysing semiotic materials in different contexts and their critical implications. That said, one question remains unsettled in this study: the contesting power of ownership and commodification in the diasporic spaces (Heller, Pujolar, et al., 2014). While the study has implied that institutional power was imposed on the production of discourses

of the Chinese history in Bendigo, it did not examine the neoliberal ideology underlying such power from the perspective of tourism landscaping. In other words, the imprint of Chinese identity on Bendigo city might be the result of linguistic and cultural commodification, notwithstanding the fact that the Bendigo community values and shares the memory of Chinese gold miners.

To take up this issue, I focused on the contested claims for commodification and ownership in the second part of the Bendigo case. It is recognised that studies of tourism landscapes often highlight the predominant power of linguistic commodification in such contexts, but do not necessarily give equal attention to multimodal resources (e.g. Moriarty, 2015). While such investigations of tourist cities have shed light on the construction of authenticity for tourist experiences, there is generally a lack of attention to the critical implications of the neoliberal ideology underlining cultural tourism. Exceptions might include Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen (2014) who explored the tensions between host and tourists in their choices of linguistic resources in an indigenous, minority language context. In line with such thinking, the second part of the Bendigo case has contributed to our understanding of the issue of power by proposing a theoretical framework for analysing power in space.

To illustrate, I followed Malinowski (2015) and Shohamy (2015) to reinterpret Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad, which suggests that the public space consists of three elements, perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. Of note, each of these spaces has been populated by different linguistic landscape participants, who have, knowingly or unknowingly, contributed to the production of the discourses of power that permeate the public place (Van Dijk, 2008; McNamara, 2019). Instead of treating power and space in their totality, I have used the triadic framework to delineate the ways in which groups of social actors in each space engage in the discursive

construction of power imbalances. The perspective of ‘power in space’ has thus enabled an in-depth analysis of the power relations that manifest through unique sets of semiotic representations in the linguistic landscape.

Specifically, my study identifies three claims for power in Bendigo’s landscape, as represented by visibility, commodification and ownership. Firstly, power in the perceived space can be understood as visibility, for it indicates a social order that can be perceived based on the presence or absence of material resources (c.f. Trumper-Hecht, 2010). As my study suggests, photographs of Chinese signs in Bendigo’s landscape form the data set that could be used for analysis of visibility. Secondly, the conceived space has been filled with the neoliberal ideology of cultural tourism that essentially aims to commodify the Chinese history and cultures in Bendigo. Based on this observation, power in the conceived space can be understood as commodification, which represents a means of production, control, domination and power (c.f. Ng, Tang, Lee, & Leung, 2010). This form of power can be revealed by the project plans and official documents of the authorities and organisations. Thirdly, the lived space is where the inhabitants passively experience and proactively seek to change. In contrast to the power of commodification, my study has located a sense of ownership within the Bendigo Chinese community. Give that ownership represents a natural right to appropriate the space, it can be seen as a claim for power voiced by the marginalized, minority groups in the linguistic landscapes. Interviews of local residents proved to be an empowering device that gives voice to the otherwise unheard narratives.

As has been discussed, the Bendigo case study has offered analytical frameworks of power and space. The case study of WeChat, furthermore, has added to our understanding of power in terms of the metrolingual resources possessed by social media users. To illustrate, participants of online linguistic landscapes, as Kallen et al.

(2020) argues, have a multimodal repertoire consisting of various semiotic resources and technological affordances. It is the extent to which they draw on resources from this spatial repertoire to make signs that speaks to their power for self-expression (see also Archer, 2014). As my study shows, multilingual users who have transnational experiences exhibit significant levels of creativity and agency in constructing idiosyncratic narratives, both for their personal joy and audience engagement. Hence, one important insight that could be gleaned from the WeChat case is how resourceful social media users possess more power than those with limited multimodal literacy in terms of the presentation of their identities.

Another contribution of the WeChat case to our understanding of power in linguistic landscape studies is that it demonstrates the porousness of online contexts, which have allowed offline social hierarchies to seep in. Drawing on the nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004), my study has shown how the WeChat Moment can be seen as an online-offline nexus for social actions. The ways in which power operates in the collapsed context of WeChat, where the boundary between online and offline spaces are blurred, can be understood from two perspectives. According to Dovchin and Pennycook (2017), the fluidity in identity construction that has often been observed by researchers in online interactions is in fact underlined by fixed identity categories in the offline reality. In other words, when users engage in sign making in the virtual space, they have brought along the interaction order, or the set of social orders governing the performance of identity categories from the real world (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019). In so doing, power can equally serve as a structuring force for the online linguistic landscape as it does for the offline space.

Maly and Blommaert (2019, p. 12), on the other hand, note that social actions in online linguistic landscapes are the result of ‘interactional co-construction’, meaning

that sign making is accomplished by social media users in collaboration with their audience (see also Blackwood, 2019). Similar to traditional linguistic landscapes, there are multiple parties involving in meaning making in online spaces and thus negotiations of power may well occur among these social actors. For example, the study of WeChat indicates that users are well aware of the collapsing of different identities into one ambiguous online self. To perform themselves online, linguistic landscape participants have to constantly evaluate and carefully curate their self-presentation in relation to the expectations of the audience. Such efforts are characterised by unordinary and unexpected uses of metrolingual resources. In Foucault's terms, social media users are subject to the power of the awareness of surveillance imposed upon them by the public (McNamara, 2019). The case of WeChat thus informs us of such invisible power that exerts influence on the behavioural and communicative patterns of users.

In summary, the thesis has shed light on the framing of power relations in linguistic landscape research in two important aspects. The first and foremost contribution is that the study has proposed a triadic framework for analysing 'power over', 'power to' and 'power through' in linguistic landscape research. The analytical lens offered by my study could inform and advance our understanding of what the concept of power means; which parties are subjects to unequal power relations; and how power is constructed by semiotic resources. More specifically, my study also demonstrates the value of the spatial triad in helping us analyse the various forms of power in public spaces. In other words, viewing space as consisting of the conceived, perceived and lived elements has enabled me to delineate the relationships among social actors who view, design and interpret the linguistic landscapes. The findings of the contesting claims for commodification and ownership importantly highlight the power

dynamics in tourism landscapes that are currently under-researched in linguistic landscape studies.

Another insight into the issue of power in linguistic landscapes is the recognition of the regimes of power in the linguistic landscape. The thesis suggests that linguistic landscape participants, regardless to which ethnic groups they belong, are subject to the power of discourse in one way or another. Even the emotions that were once believed to represent the most personal and intimate feelings of individuals could be regulated through affective regimes, which are material conditions that govern the evocation of appropriate emotions at particular places (Wee, 2015). To such end, any further study into linguistic landscapes would need to be aware of the discourse to which its analysis and interpretation are subject. Notably, the regimes of power exist not only in physical linguistic landscapes, but also in the online social media space. The online context is filled with sets of social orders from both the virtual and the offline reality, which operate in collaboration or in conflict with each other. As my study shows, these social hierarchies serve as regimes of power that define the ways in which users present themselves and interact with their audience.

Expanding the scenery

As a fledgling area of sociolinguistic and social semiotic research, linguistic landscape studies are constantly expanding its analytical scope. Despite the fact that the field has been commended for its flexible approach and interdisciplinary horizon (Van Mensel et al., 2017), it has not been well recognised as a stand-alone subject area for the very same reason. In an effort to advance this research area, it might be necessary to ask the ‘so what’ question, that is, why should we focus on documenting linguistic and semiotic practices observed in the public space and are such analyses in any way relevant to the participants in linguistic landscapes? Answering these questions would

necessitate a rethinking of what linguistic landscape means and in what ways people are influenced by the exposure to the linguistic landscape.

As an increasing amount of communication is transcending national boundaries and happening in the online space, Blommaert (2019) challenges us to embrace an online version of linguistic landscapes that includes websites, discussion forms or even social media. Such an expansive view of linguistic landscape would require researchers to identify references to the online communities in the physical signs and then examine the multiplicity of communicative practices in online spaces (Maly & Blommaert, 2019). Another issue of the expanded scenery is to articulate the ways in which linguistic landscapes hold different stakes for various social actors, especially minority communities. While previous studies have focused on the visual semiotics of signage, Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) invite us to consider the role of the sense of smell in structuring the public space. In lieu of such thinking, the sensual and emotional aspects of sign making experience may as well fall within the scope of linguistic landscape research. With these in mind, I shall discuss the ways in which each of my case studies has improved our understanding of the expanding scope of linguistic landscape research.

The Euroa case has addressed the issue of relevance by shifting focus to the affective potential of linguistic landscapes. I followed the suggestion of Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) to take an expansive view of linguistic landscapes that includes semiotic resources and material objects into the analytical repertoire. With the semiotic perspective in mind, I examined a wide range of public signs in Euroa that were made of distinct materiality, including newspaper clips, handwritten notes, framed pictures and flower banquets. My analysis aligns with recent studies where researchers look beyond the linguistic forms and consider objects in our surroundings. Pennycook

(2019), for example, notes that share bikes in Sydney's cityscape are material artefacts that mark the discourse of consumption, convenience and contamination. Hiramoto (2015) among others view tattoos as material resources for the construction of nostalgia discourse. What is needed in current research, however, is a recognition of not only the diversity of semiotic resources but also the implications of these semiotic choices for linguistic landscape participants, and this is exactly what my study of Euroa has contributed to.

The study of Wee (2015) is probably the first of its kind to highlight the significance of affect in linguistic landscapes. It importantly proposes the concept of affective regimes to denote the ways in which specific emotions may be activated by semiotic choices. Based on the perspective that affect can be embodied and embedded in the material environment, my case study of Euroa has demonstrated that the sense of nostalgia is not simply cognitive and personal, but constructed, ordered, narrated, and iterated through public signs created by linguistic landscape participants (Pennycook, 2019; Stroud & Mpendukana, 2010). The affective resource of nostalgia was again used for the production of two distinctive discourses. On the one hand, the emplacement of heritage trails signs and the Victorian-style buildings evoke the sense of nostalgia, with an aim to brand the historical and rural image of the town and set it apart from the mundane urban life of tourists (see also Ferguson & Sidorova, 2018). On the other hand, Chinese emblems were layered upon Malaysian paintings in an ethnic Chinese restaurant, activating a nostalgia of home country for the Chinese owners themselves, while indexing authentic 'Chineseness' for customers.

My case study of Euroa is aligned with the emerging stream of studies that focus on visceral linguistic landscapes with an embodiment approach (Milani et al., 2019). Based on the role of material resources in arousing deep, personal feelings, as

articulated in the case analysis, I would argue that linguistic landscape studies are of great relevance to human senses. To illustrate, the affective potential of linguistic landscapes means that people are not only creators or readers of public signs but are subjects to the affective discourse in ways they might not be conscious of. A critical concern arising from the affective regime is that the affective resources, which were believed to be the last bit of individual agency, may be exploited for commercial purposes. The fact that affects are not internal, but external to the human mind, also echoes the posthumanist thinking that challenges the field to shift from human-centred approaches to the constellation of objects, bodies and spaces (Pennycook, 2019). With studies now attending to various landscapes, including but not limited to bikescapes, smellscape and foodscapes, we can see that the linguistic landscape becomes increasingly relevant not only because of its visual aesthetics, but also its pervasive effect on other senses of human beings, such as olfactory and gustatory senses. The evocative potential, together with the representative and symbolic functions of linguistic landscapes, certainly merits further research.

The case study of Bendigo serves as another response to the issue of relevance in the sense that it encourages a reassessment of the implications of linguistic landscapes on various social actors. In other words, the study has illustrated from different perspectives the ways in which semiotic resources are employed to construct discourses of solidarity and commodification, which in turn serve as a social order governing the practices of linguistic landscape participants (see also Themistocleous, 2019). Given that decision makers, minority communities and local residents hold different stakes in the linguistic landscapes, it might be argued that linguistic landscape is and continues to be a relevant area of inquiry where researchers can further establish their role in mediating social actions in the lived space.

To be more specific, the first part of the Bendigo case focused on the history of exclusion and inclusion that shaped the lived experiences of the Chinese community in Bendigo. As my study shows, exclusion was enabled primarily by the enforcement of discriminatory policies that served to restrict or even eliminate the presence of Chinese languages and bodies on the goldfields. Absence and silence in linguistic landscapes thus represent the racialized othering of the Chinese in the public space (McNamara, 2019). On the other hand, inclusive actions of the Chinese community, such as inviting members from the Caucasian community to partake in Chinese cultural rituals, were materialised through the physical distance between foreign bodies and semiotic objects, including imperial dragons. In addition, the entry of Chinese semiotic resources into the mainstream discourse of the Bendigo community was observable through the visibility of a dragon playground in the shopping centre. In a sense, linguistic landscapes were created by and meanwhile enabled the Chinese community to constantly be involved in the iterations of inclusive and exclusive discourses.

In the second part of the Bendigo case, I established the contested claims for ownership and commodification, which demonstrates the relevance of linguistic landscapes to both the Bendigo authorities and the Chinese diaspora. As has been established by Shohamy (2015), official policies play a key part in proclaiming the legitimacy of linguistic and semiotic resources observable in public places. The decision makers in the Bendigo case, however, not only legitimized the visibility of Chinese semiotic resources but also marketed the Chinese as the historicised and exoticized other, as part of their efforts to brand the image of the city and attract tourists for profit (Moriarty, 2014). As such, the Bendigo Council benefits from an effective and efficient use of linguistic landscapes as a means for marketing the experience of cultural tourism. For the Chinese diaspora, accepting the arrangements of linguistic and cultural

commodification is less a choice than a strategy to maintain their ethnolinguistic vitality. In the era of globalisation, the Bendigo Chinese are certainly faced with the challenge to make their niche history both accessible to the local people and relevant to new Chinese migrants.

As my case study suggests, linguistic landscape certainly holds relevance for a range of social actors who conceive, perceive and live the public space. Public signage is the nexus through which negotiation, accommodation and appropriation of meanings take place (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Linguistic landscapes thus serve to represent the semiotic practices of sign makers and reiterate the ideologies and sociocultural values that underline these practices. While it has been established that policy makers, diaspora communities and brand marketers are important stakeholders in the public space, I have yet to discuss the pedagogical implications of linguistic landscapes. The Bendigo case has suggested that lack of multimodal literacy for sign reading would result in the disempowerment of participants of the linguistic landscape. It can therefore be assumed that linguistic landscapes may be used as educational resources to improve the literacy of heritage language learners (e.g. Daly, 2018). Further study is required to establish the viability of linguistic landscape as authentic input for language learning.

The WeChat case has extended the boundary of linguistic landscape to the online context. The assumption that linguistic landscape should be confined to language use in physical spaces or within geographical areas has been challenged by processes of globalisation and digitalisation (Blommaert, 2019). As people become more reliant on social media as means for multimodal communication, multilingual signs on the streets are more often taken for granted as part of the mundane urban landscape (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019). The static nature of signs in the physical landscape means that they may not reflect the changing discourses circulating in the public domain. In contrast, the

online space certainly features more mobile and innovative communicative practices, including newer forms of signs such as memes and emojis. Therefore, the case study of WeChat is indeed a timely contribution to our understanding of meaning making in the online space.

The shift of focus to online linguistic landscape opens up a wide range of semiotic resources that hold different potentials for meaning making. While public signs in the offline space typically feature images and texts, social media platforms possess a richer set of semiotic affordances that allow more flexibility and creativity in semiotic practices (see also Blackwood, 2019). For example, users of WeChat Moment may post images, texts, videos or any combinations of these modes, geotag their posts with physical locations, and link to external content. As my case study illustrates, these multimodal resources have been employed by users to create meanings that could only be revealed by ethnographic knowledge of individual users and understanding of intertextual references (Han, 2020). The technological function of social media has implications for communicative practices in the online context as well. WeChat users have reported to control membership and viewability of the Moment, as strategies to manage the effect of context collapse in online spaces. In a sense, users' self-presentation in online context is governed by another set of social norms that may or may not intersect with fixed social categories in the offline reality.

One issue that emerges from my study of social media space is to draw the line between online linguistic landscape and media studies. There has been a stream of research that focuses on the content of tweets, comments and blogs as sites for ideological debates. For example, Zhu, Skoric and Fei (2017) examines selective avoidance of dissonant political views on Facebook by content removal and unfriending contacts. However, as Kallen et al. (2020) suggests, the concept of online linguistic

landscape would be meaningless if it remained an investigation of online contents; instead, online linguistic landscape resides in the semiotic affordances of online spaces that can be harnessed by social media users for display and representation. Compared to sign making in terrestrial space, online linguistic landscape gives prominence to the role of sign readers as much as sign owners, who can participate equally in the construction of meaning (Kallen et al., 2020). In line with such thinking, I would argue that the case study of WeChat has demonstrated the possibility of treating online linguistic landscape as a spatial repertoire of semiotic resources and technological affordances. This specific analytical lens helps differentiate online linguistic landscape research from media studies but establishes its relevance to current linguistic landscape research.

Thirdly, extending the analytical focus of linguistic landscape to the online context has demonstrated its relevance to a wider range of users around the globe, apart from local participants. For example, Maly and Blommaert (2019) view public signs as the online-offline nexus of social actions. In practice, they traced the website links contained in terrestrial signs back to online communities that appeared to be well-managed by members from around the world. While traditional linguistic landscape studies are often concerned with people who live within a geographical circumscription, the online perspective in fact helps contextualise local practices in relation to a digitalised, interconnected and polycentric world (Blommaert, 2013). In a similar vein, the WeChat case indicates that Chinese communities in the online linguistic landscape cannot be easily defined due to its transnational nature. The interconnected community that consists of members who are ethnically Chinese but geographically dispersed speaks to the porousness and transparency of online context.

To conclude this section, my thesis has shed important light on the scope and relevance of linguistic landscape research in three aspects. It begins by shifting our

focus to the neglected role of affect in the linguistic landscape. As Pennycook (2018) suggests, the fields of linguistic landscape or applied linguistics in general have privileged the visual and acoustic senses of human beings; a posthumanist perspective would be needed to decentre the human beings and refocus our attention on the material objects in the surroundings. By framing the sense of nostalgia as an affect that can be governed or evoked by material conditions (Thrift, 2008), rather than as an emotion that is characteristic of the psychological state of human beings, the study has moved one step further to extend the analytical scope of linguistic landscape research so that the field would stay relevant to the current thinking of posthumanism.

Apart from rethinking the relevance of the field to a posthuman agenda, my study has also suggested that linguistic landscapes have implications for members of minority groups in various ways. Of note, material affordances in public spaces can be designed to arouse affective responses among those who are positioned as the ethnic other. This experience of othering can be both empowering and disempowering for the minority communities, in the sense that they can commodify such exoticized fantasy for profit, though that means subjecting their languages and cultures to neoliberal ideology (see also Moriarty, 2015). The relevance of linguistic landscapes can then be tested by its affective and critical implications on social actors in the public space.

More importantly, the thesis has extended the scope of linguistic landscape to the online context of social media. This seemingly drastic move has in fact prompted the field to re-evaluate the validity of conducting linguistic landscape studies of a geographically defined area. Lyons (2019) among others has shown us that social media posts remediate the production of place by reinscribing privilege and reiterating gentrification of the physical landscape. My study went further to examine the semiotic resources and technological affordances of online linguistic landscapes and showed how

the collapsed context serves as a nexus where online-offline social actions are underlined by offline reality.

Linguistic landscapes of Chinese communities

Based on the previous discussion, we can see that this thesis has further explored four recent trends in linguistic landscape studies by way of examining three cases of the linguistic landscapes of Chinese communities in Australia. While these case studies situated in different settings and highlighted separate themes, they collectively constitute a comprehensive investigation of Chinese communities in the diasporic context. In this section, I discuss how each of the case studies sheds light on an important aspect of the Chinese diaspora, and how these insights inform our understanding of the heterogeneous nature of Chinese communities.

Nostalgia forms an important part of diaspora Chinese experiences. Depending on their migration trajectories and life events, Chinese expatriates have established affective relationships with their homeland in different ways. Instead of locating this affect as a psychological and emotional state, we can trace the representations of nostalgia in the linguistic landscapes. Specifically, for fourth-generation Chinese, nostalgia manifests through the reinvigoration and appropriation of Chinese cultural symbols, imperial dragons and traditional rituals in particular. These semiotic objects in a sense become the last resort for Chinese Australians to reinstate connections with a fetishized version of Chinese culture, one that had resided in their memories at the time when they were displaced geographically from homeland. For Chinese migrants who have resided in the host country for decades, however, nostalgia becomes an eclectic choice that could be exploited for identity branding. For example, a Chinese ambience could be reimagined and recreated by employing semiotic resources which appear exotic for customers who have limited exposure to Chinese cultures. These resources

are both expressions of nostalgia and commercial strategies. By contrast, while there are moments where nostalgia is fleshed out through Chinese food and childhood photos, newly arrived Chinese people do not often exhibit nostalgia towards ancient Chineseness as much as they negotiate the normative expectations of their diaspora Chinese identities. Metrolingual practices represent one of the important ways to navigate these norms and to present an aspired self-image that is distinct from nostalgic imaginations.

In the materialisation of nostalgia and memories, Chinese communities are constantly involved in power struggles that manifest in varied forms. Chinese descendants, for example, were found to be engaged in the battle of power for recognition of their cultural heritage through visible semiotic activities, including dragon processions and lion dances. These efforts contested with the ideologies of the local authorities who sought to reproduce bona fide Chinese experiences for touristic consumption. Such attempts to renew and recreate Chinese heritage in the diasporic context either by the Chinese or the non-Chinese communities often reply upon nostalgia or memories of the past. The process of commodifying Chinese histories would inevitably involve packaging up Chinese semiotic resources, although this does not necessarily imply that Chinese communities are deprived of power. Chinese migrants could also willingly exploit their own exoticism and orientalism for commercial purposes. The capacity to market Chineseness as consumer products is an indication of the power of Chinese communities, as they can exert complete discretion on the use of Chinese elements and prescribe the definition of Chinese for sign readers. Power is also embedded in online spaces, resulting in complex negotiations of Chinese diasporic identities in line with both online and offline social orders. Online linguistic landscapes consist of ephemeral moments of identity performance which are subject to

immediate public scrutiny. This perpetual panopticon partially accounts for the eclectic self-presentation strategies that aimed at avoiding conflicts of values.

Nostalgia and power have implications on the semiotic practices of the Chinese diaspora and the construction of multi-layered identities. For descendants of early Chinese miners, they tend to identify themselves as Chinese Australians. Chinese identities and literacies represent one part of their heritage lost during the assimilation period (and some of them indeed have multiple heritages due to inter-racial marriages). It is the sense of nostalgia for the foregone history that prompted them to reclaim this aspect of identity, by practising Chinese traditions and semiotic activities. In the process of reclaiming Chinese identities, however, there were struggles for the power of being recognised as Chinese people as such and being owners of Chinese cultures in the diasporic context. The situation of first-generation Chinese migrants is different since their Chinese identities are more prominent and it is the Australian identities that they are likely to aspire and pursue. In the case of Euroa, we see that after nearly two decades of residence in the local community, the Chinese family was eventually accepted to be “our people”, although the perceptions of hardworking Chinese and exotic Chinese ambience suggest the opposite. It appears that Chinese migrants have to constantly juggle around Australian and Chinese affiliations. In addition, relatively new Chinese expatriates have stronger connections with their home countries and display more eclectic decisions on identity performances. Their aspirations are not necessarily gaining either Chinese or Australian identities, but to project an imagery that is characterised by deconstructed linguistic norms and respect for diversity. Such a presentation of self, as we have seen, can be controversial for Chinese people without overseas experiences and result in contestations of power.

These facets of Chinese experiences in the diasporic context attest to the heterogeneous nature of Chinese communities, which denies stereotypic interpretations of Chinese cultures and identities. As this thesis and recent studies (e.g. Wu et al., 2020) demonstrate, investigations of linguistic landscapes tend to overthrow conventional views which see Chinese communities and Chinatowns as ethnic enclaves. It is important to note that the geographical boundaries of Chinese communities are blurry (see also Amos, 2016), the cultural and national affiliations of Chinese people vary, and the linguistic practices of Chinese individuals are diverse. While some Chinese people do cling on semiotic representations of nostalgia and exoticism, newly emerging Chinese communities display more complex semiotic choices and hybrid identities, both of which could no longer be simply associated with the Chinese ethnicity as such. It thus seems problematic to use the concept of ethno-linguistic vitality to describe these rich and diverse semiotic practices in the linguistic landscape, when these fixed identity categories are constantly challenged and negotiated. These complexities with the linguistic landscapes of newly emerged Chinese communities or new developments of long-established Chinatowns are certainly worthy of further exploration.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

As an emerging field of study, linguistic landscape research is attracting increasing attention from researchers of discourse analysis, social semiotics and language education. With a primary focus on the role of space in meaning making, studies have been conducted under a wide range of contexts to document and analyse the use of languages and semiotic resources in public places. Aligning with these efforts, this thesis has aimed at further exploring the four recent trends in linguistic landscape research by way of examining three complex case studies.

Summary of the study

Linguistic landscape research has been criticised for lacking theoretical depth when it comes to the analysis and interpretation of public signs and the sociocultural environment where they are emplaced. Since Ben-Rafael (2009) proposed the four structuration principles of linguistic landscape, including the good reasons, self-presentation, power relations and collective identity, researchers have drawn from interdisciplinary theories instead of adopting a consistent theoretical approach (see Van Mensal et al., 2017 for a discussion). Linguistic landscape research may benefit from a broad unit of analysis and a flexible approach in some ways, but these theories need to be comprehensively surveyed, validated and updated by solid empirical evidence.

The second debate was about the simplistic quantitative method used to claim the correlation between the presence of languages and the ethnolinguistic vitality of minority communities in public space. As the field is witnessing a methodological shift towards qualitative approaches, it is necessary to reassess the validity of quantitative analysis in understanding the processes of social stratification and transformation (Blommaert & Maly, 2016). In the meantime, while a sociolinguistic ethnography of local neighbourhoods generates important insights, it requires input from additional

research resources, including long-term fieldwork, and does not give a panoramic view of the linguistic composition in a given area (Blackwood, 2015).

The third issue for linguistic landscape research was to recognise how power relations structure public spaces. While discourse analysts have problematised Bourdieu's (1991) framing of institutional power by highlighting the role of material resources in the discursive construction of social hierarchies, linguistic landscape studies have yet to grapple with the relationship between power and discourse, and they often subscribe to a categorical analysis of power that makes a simplistic contrast between 'top-down' (national language policies) and 'bottom-up' (grassroots linguistic practices). The concepts of power and agency need to be properly defined before we can disentangle contested claims of linguistic landscape participants and fully understand power relations between host and migrant communities (Heller, Pujolar, et al., 2014).

The fourth trend was concerned with the expanding conceptual scope of the linguistic landscape. Linguistic landscapes have evocative potentials since the spatial arrangement of semiotic resources can arouse affects, emotions and memories among people (Lee & Chau, 2018; Lou, 2016; Lyons & Karimzad, 2019). Viewing linguistic landscapes as places of affect and memory decentres sign readers and refocuses the attention on the surroundings, thus raising important questions as to the relevance of linguistic landscapes in constituting part of human experience (Pennycook, 2018). Moreover, the exponential scale of online communication has invalidated our normative beliefs about linguistic and semiotic use in the public space. Technological affordances of social media platforms have enriched the spatial repertoires from which participants draw on semiotic resources and engage in innovative communicative practices (Blommaert, 2019; Dovchin & Pennycook, 2017). In this sense, the extent to which the

offline, physical linguistic landscape remains a relevant subject of inquiry in the digital era becomes increasingly questionable.

To advance our understanding of the four recent trends in linguistic landscape research, I employed an adapted geosemiotic framework (Chapter 3) as a heuristic guide to investigate the case studies of Euroa, Bendigo and WeChat Moment. Integrating the concepts of historical bodies (Blommaert, 2013) and semiotic assemblages (Pennycook, 2017) with geosemiotic theory (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), I analysed the linguistic landscape in terms of three overlapping aspects, including social orders governing communicative practices, visual semiotic principles for meaning making and emplacement of signs in the physical environment. Photographs, observations, field notes and interviews were collected to analyse the ways in which personal trajectories, semiotic objects and spatial environments combine to make meaning.

Specifically, the first case study addressed the issue of affect in linguistic landscapes by focusing on the material narration of nostalgia in the rural context. Drawing on the notion of affective regimes from Wee (2016), I argued that nostalgia may be ordered, narrated and accomplished by means of situated material semiotic artefacts without the presence of people in the linguistic landscape. Based on ethnographic data collected through photographs, interviews and fieldnotes from Euroa, I illustrated how affective regimes are constructed by multimodal resources and employed to create nostalgic signage for imagination and for consumption. Situated in the rural context, the case of Euroa challenged the urban-centric paradigm, attests to the value of ethnographic analysis and sheds light on the evocative potential of linguistic landscapes.

The second case study investigated the construction of power relations in the linguistic landscape of Bendigo. In the first part of this study, I suggested that current

linguistic landscape literature focuses on two types of power relations, including the institutional power over grassroots language practices and the creative power to engage in innovative expressions. However, a ‘power through’ perspective was needed to account for the ways in which semiotic resources are indexical of power relations. To this end, I scrutinised the Chinese signage based on photographic and interview data and illustrate how power relations can be interpreted in terms of inclusion, perceived values, literacy and ownership by various social actors. I argued that linguistic landscapes serve as important sites for us to interrogate the semiotic representations of power in diasporic contexts.

Taking an alternative perspective, the second part of the Bendigo case focused on the contesting claims of visibility, commodification and ownership in the tourist-facing landscape. While the commodification of languages for mass tourism has been explored in a number of sociolinguistic studies (e.g. Heller, Jaworski, et al., 2014), the role of semiotic materials in constructing tourism discourses in relation to genuine efforts of heritage conservation was largely neglected. Following Malinowski (2015) and Shohamy (2015), I adopted the triadic model of space based on Lefebvre (1991) to analyse how Chinese semiotic resources are employed in the conceived, perceived and lived spaces. The study importantly gave voice to the Chinese diaspora, who claimed ownership of their semiotic resources in the midst of the institutional powers that sought to commodify Chinese cultural heritage as products for tourist consumption.

The third case study was inspired by the observation that the field of linguistic landscape has rarely engaged with the growing number of metrolingual practices (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2019) and the implications of ‘context collapse’ (Georgakopoulou, 2017) brought about by social network sites. As a response to Blommaert’s (2019) call for attention to the networked reality of an online-offline

sociolinguistics agenda, this case study attended to the linguistic landscape of a social media platform, one which presented a new context consisting of innovative affordances. Drawing on screenshot data and in-depth interviews with WeChat Moment users, the study examined the ways in which metrolingual practices contribute to the presentation of self in online linguistic landscapes. Results suggested that participants utilised a complex array of semiotic resources available in the spatial repertoire, including the technological affordances of WeChat, to constantly manage their self-presentation and the effects of context collapse. Using WeChat Moment as a novel space, the study argued for an expanded view of linguistic landscapes that considers the relevance of online communicative practices in the networked era.

Overall, this thesis aligned with recent trends in current linguistic landscape research by way of examining three case studies of linguistic landscapes with a focus on Chinese languages and resources. Each of these studies has provided innovative perspectives on the theory, methodology, power and relevance of linguistic landscapes under particular contexts, as well as shedding light on their value to linguistic landscape research. The following section summarises the insights generated from these cases and establishes the overall contributions of the study.

Contributions of the study

This thesis advanced our understanding of linguistic landscape theory in four respects. Firstly, it interrogated the urban-centric perspective adopted by most linguistic landscape studies, one that focuses on superdiverse areas such as metropolitan centres and globalised cities. However, as the studies of Euroa and Bendigo demonstrate, rural towns and regional cities similarly witness negotiations and contestations of affect and power, and thus these areas should not be precluded from the analytical scope of linguistic landscape if the discipline is to pride itself on having a flexible and adaptable

approach, one that can be widely applied to different contexts. That said, the linguistic landscapes of marginal and peripheral communities are certainly not comparable to multilingual cityscapes in terms of the abundance of public signage and the richness of semiotic activities. Although most linguistic landscape researchers will still be attracted to the complexity, mobility and superdiversity of urban contexts, it is advisable to draw on insights from otherwise neglected places, such as rural communities, to complement our understanding of linguistic or semiotic practices in the linguistic landscape rather than denying such an opportunity.

Secondly, the thesis highlighted the evocative potential of linguistic landscapes. In line with the current trend in the field of investigating the organisation of human senses through semiotic resources, I put forward the idea of nostalgic regimes to describe the set of conditions in the public space that prescribe the evocation of nostalgic feelings among participants. As the Euroa case shows, nostalgia is ordered and narrated by material resources external to people in the linguistic landscape. The materialist perspective on nostalgia as an affect rather than an emotion is underlined by a non-representational perspective that seeks to account for human experience based on the surroundings in which people are situated rather than their psychological state or mental representations of events (Thrift, 2008). By shifting the analytical lens to how language and space evoke affective responses, this thesis represents a preliminary effort to encourage a dialogue between linguistic landscape research and the posthumanist agenda in applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2019), one aimed at decentring the human and refocusing on the spatial environment.

Thirdly, the thesis contributed an analytical framework of power to linguistic landscape research. With the recognition that the concept of power is ill-defined and rarely examined in current studies, I identified the various forms of power and analysed

how power is represented and constructed through semiotic resources. The Bendigo case especially illustrated how power may be understood in terms of bodily expressions, inclusive practices, linguistic literacy and appropriation of Chinese history. Importantly, Chinese diasporic communities sought to sustain their power and agency by asserting visibility and ownership amid the prevailing discourses of commodification in the tourist-facing linguistic landscape. The interpretation of power in this thesis emphasises the vital role of linguistic/semiotic resources in the distribution and reproduction of the discourses of power (McNamara, 2019) and furnishes the basis for further discussions about power and its implications.

Fourthly, the thesis extended the analytical scope of metrolingualism theory to account for semiotic practices in online digital spaces. Metrolingualism was conceptualised based on real-time encounters in the offline world, where personal trajectories, business activities and semiotic artefacts are assembled *in situ* to facilitate interactions. However, as the WeChat case demonstrates, social media platforms represent a different spatial repertoire from which individuals can draw semiotic resources to negotiate the presentation of self and counteract the implications of context collapse. More often than not, participants of online linguistic landscapes exhibit metrolingual practices or creative uses of semiotic materials and technological affordances. The notions of spatial repertoire and metrolingual practices, once reserved for offline contexts, can thus be used to understand meaning making in online spaces, which are characterised by collapsed social boundaries and intertextual references to offline realities.

Methodologically speaking, this thesis employed an adapted geosemiotic framework, one which could serve as a heuristic guide for linguistic landscape research. Refocusing attention to the neglected dimension of the interaction order of

geosemiotics, I highlighted the importance of historical bodies in helping us to understand the ideological structures and sociocultural beliefs that circulate in the public place, as well as the personal histories of linguistic landscape participants whose behaviours have been enregistered with meanings. Another innovation to the geosemiotic framework is the adoption of an assemblage perspective towards signs. Expanding the unit of analysis from individual signs to semiotic assemblages not only avoided the problematic enumeration of signage but also enabled an in-depth analysis of how people, signs and activities interact at particular places and moments. This updated geosemiotic framework provides an innovative and adaptable analytical lens for further linguistic landscape studies.

In line with current methodological shifts in the field of linguistic landscape, an adapted geosemiotic analysis, such as the one suggested in my study, necessitates a comprehensive dataset consisting of photographs of signs, interviews with sign makers, observations of social activities and the collection of ethnographic details about sign making. Since the field started with the quantitative analysis of signs and only recently shifted towards qualitative approaches, some linguistic landscape researchers have labelled studies based on fieldwork data as ‘ethnographically oriented’ (Baranova & Fedorova, 2019; Troyer & Szabó, 2017). In comparison, linguistic anthropologists, such as Blommaert (2018), advocate a sociolinguistic ethnography that requires longitudinal investigations to capture the processes of social transformation and stratification. With the ongoing debate over what counts as an ethnography of linguistic landscapes, I assert that my study was built upon rigorous fieldwork that generated ethnographic insights into the processes of sign production and consumption.

Apart from its theoretical and methodological contributions, this thesis generated important insights into the sociocultural activities of Chinese diasporic

communities in the Australian context. In response to the call by Shohamy (2015) to focus on ethnolinguistic communities in peripheral areas, this study explored a wide range of contexts spanning rural, regional and online spaces. Insights from these linguistic landscapes complemented earlier findings on the semiotic practices of Chinese communities that have been generalised to globalised cities (Shang & Guo, 2017). Importantly, this study considered the migration trajectories and personal histories of Chinese communities and how these lived experiences have shaped the semiotic choices of individual sign makers. Such a linguistic landscape perspective on the Chinese diaspora enabled a micro-level analysis of linguistic and semiotic uses in the public space that contributes to our understanding of the processes of social mobility and cultural integrity within Chinese communities (Li Wei, 2016).

This thesis also contributed to my reflexivity as a researcher, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of my ethnic identity and positionality in relation to participants. Due to my shared ethnicity and migrant status with the researched communities, I was able to interpret their diversified sociocultural practices and capture the different meanings of being a Chinese person in the linguistic landscape. As my analysis demonstrates, the Chinese restaurant owners in the Euroa case have layered their Canton identity over that of the previous Malaysian Chinese owner; the goldmine Chinese descendants in Bendigo have held onto their historical traditions of dragon procession while embracing new members who have recently migrated from Mainland China; and the Chinese youths on WeChat have injected individuality into their obscure online selves in various ways. These findings have allowed me to reflect on my affinity with the Chinese ethnicity while being overseas and to reconsider the influence of my Northern Chinese identity on my readings into Chinese signs, which may be underlined by vastly different ideological, socioeconomic and cultural beliefs.

Agenda for further research

Instead of drawing conclusions at this point, I see my thesis as part of a long-term research agenda aimed at assessing the usefulness of linguistic landscape analysis in addressing various sociolinguistic issues. Indeed, linguistic landscape research offers a flexible and adaptable analytical tool that can be extended in different directions, and this section will discuss some of the possible paths forward for further research.

To begin with, the issue of power in linguistic landscapes merits further attention. Unequal power relations have often been understood in terms of the relationship between official language policy and community language practices (Shohamy, 2015). This thesis has problematised such a binary conceptualisation and demonstrated that power may take various forms and be represented through different semiotic resources. However, the contingencies of power – that is, power as it shifts with time and place – have been left unexplored. It might be worthwhile to ask whether the semiotic power of minority groups functions by itself or as an effect of time and place. For example, the density of Chinese signage significantly increases during the Chinese New Year in Melbourne, with a range of cultural activities on display, including Miaohui (temple fairs), dragon procession, lion dancing and even flying pig-shaped balloons for the Year of the Pig in 2019. It could be said that the semiotic power of Chinese in the Australian context reaches its peak during the traditional festival, based on the view that power can be represented through the visibility of Chinese signage. However, such power soon declines as people continue on with their routine lives or become acquainted with the ethnic other through repeated exposures to Chinese cultural activities over time (McNamara, 2019, p. 10). To obtain a diachronic perspective on the power of Chinese communities, it might be necessary to contrast the

linguistic landscape during festive seasons with the mundane semiotic practices that participants live and experience as part of their everyday lives.

Place serves as another important factor in structuring power relations. This thesis has demonstrated that power may be constructed through semiotic objects in the material environment. In this sense, I have viewed the linguistic landscape as a spatial repertoire from which participants could draw resources to distribute and reproduce discourses of power (Lyons & Karimzad, 2019). As a possible extension to our understanding of the role of place in mediating power relations, we might ask to what extent we can attribute the popularity of a Chinese restaurant to its convenient location near a popular scenic spot, not necessarily because of its ethnic appeal? In other words, the power of Chinese communities may have been an effect of physical emplacement. Questions like this might prompt us to revisit the relationship among signs and examine the ways in which power is perceived based on the situated environment.

Alongside such thinking, our assumptions about power also need to be reassessed in the context of online linguistic landscapes, which represent a completely different context “made of digital, rather than terrestrial, images, and language displays” (Kallen et al., 2020, p. 97). In online linguistic landscapes, the common belief that the density of public signage indexes booming economic activities and that the visibility of languages on signage signifies the ethnolinguistic power of relevant communities (Lai, 2013; Landry & Bourhis, 1997) may no longer be warranted. For example, Google Maps hosts an extensive database of geotagged photographs contributed by active users. By taking shots of the physical spaces, people resemiotise the signs with individualistic interpretations of semiotic moments and specific framings of offline reality (Coupland & Garrett, 2010). These photos are then viewed by a global audience who attach an additional layer of interpretative meanings to the online linguistic landscape based on

their personal trajectories, cultural backgrounds and multimodal literacies. How would we then identify power relations in such a complex place, one for which multiple layers of meanings have been generated by user groups from a global community, thereby invalidating traditional classifications of ethnicity and languages?

Given the sheer amount of communication occurring in digital spaces, it would be reasonable to assume that not all postings are getting the same attention in the form of views or likes, which may serve as an indicator for influence or power. It might be interesting to further explore the kinds of posts or semiotic choices that are most favoured in online linguistic landscapes. Given the semiotic affordances of social media platforms, how could users employ semiotic objects, sociocultural concepts and intertextual references to offline spaces to engage in an ‘ethnographic branding’ of the influencer identity (see also Ferguson & Sidorova, 2018)? With the analytical toolkit offered by linguistic landscape and geosemiotic analysis, it is possible to understand from a marketing perspective how original posters can create appealing content for their audience, or even to draw on big data methods to derive the textual and visual features of posts that enjoy the most publicity on social media. Further studies could explore this predicative validity of online linguistic landscapes and generate business advice on branding strategies or semiotic principles for designing advertising signs.

Another possible extension of the current study is to consider the role of other semiotic resources in displaying, indexing and mediating meanings in the linguistic landscape. Pappenhagen et al. (2016) suggest the possibility of including oral communication in the analytical repertoire of linguistic landscape. They view sound or speech as linguistics actions that are performed by interactants based on a shared knowledge of their perceptual space. In this sense, future studies could analyse the ‘linguistic soundscape’ (Pappenhagen et al., 2016, p. 148) and compare structures of

oral multilingual communication with the patterns of textual multilingualism.

Additionally, Williams (2017) provides a way forward by thinking about the role of hip-hop remixes in carving out creative multilingual spaces to project local meanings, values and voices. As the study suggests, the ethnic music of minority cultural communities could be an innovative semiotic resource in linguistic landscapes that indexes defiant or transgressive claims. Thus, music could be another semiotic mode awaiting further exploration in linguistic landscape studies.

Apart from the acoustic and visual senses, Pennycook (2015) argues that smell is an important semiotic resource that helps us navigate complex social spaces. As much as we are preoccupied by ‘higher senses’ of sight and hearing, the role of ‘lower senses’, including smell, is often neglected. For this reason, the significance of smell in urban environments could be further explored in two aspects. Firstly, it might be worthwhile to examine the ways in which smells are regulated in relation to modernist ideologies, business activities and local practices. It would be important to question the hierarchy of olfaction in public spaces, wherein the use of Western perfumes, Indian spices and Chinese medicinal herbs interpellates different social, racial and gender identities. Secondly, smell is a powerful semiotic resource that could evoke affects and memories associated with places. While in the Euroa case, I have suggested the connections between food and nostalgia, it would be interesting to see how smells interact with tastes to infuse places with imaginations about the past (see also Lou, 2017). The fact that smells serve as a more mobile and fluid semiotic resource than texts and images may necessitate a sensually and culturally sensitive interpretive framework based on idiosyncratic, lived experiences of people in the linguistic landscape.

While this thesis has adopted an ethnographic approach to compile a dataset of photographs, interviews and field notes, further studies could employ videography or

narrated walking methods to obtain more ethnographic details of the linguistic landscape. For example, Hult (2014) has demonstrated the use of video cameras to capture the visual landscape of highway systems on a drive. Videography seems to be a superior medium compared to still photographs in its ability to document signage along transportation routes or even signs on mobile vehicles. More significantly, Troyer and Szabó (2017) suggest that various types of videography, including video panoramas or videotaped walking tours, could potentially disrupt the visual frames imposed by the photographic representation. In other words, video recordings offer additional details of people and actions that could encourage us to go beyond the conceptualisation that linguistic landscape is essentially built on multilingual “texts in spatially definable frames” (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009, p. 372).

On the other hand, narrated walking, which may be recorded in a video or audio medium, could help us understand the mobile construction of place. Stroud and Jegels (2014), for example, have been able to observe the enactment of social discourses through the narrated experiences of residents who traverse public semiotic landscapes. These narratives, formulated from the perspective of inhabitants or tourists, were invaluable additions to Stroud and Jegels’ analysis of crime and xenophobia discourses in the public space. As an alternative to interviews with sign readers, self-narrated walking, or what Szabó and Troyer (2017, p. 308) call an ‘inclusive ethnography’, is particularly suited for linguistic landscape research considering the current emphasis on the spatial and temporal aspects of meanings. To this end, further studies could consider using walking-based methods to investigate how bodies interact with the semiotic landscape and the ways in which their physical movements are regulated by the interaction order (socially and culturally encoded norms of interpersonal distance) that is inherent to the space.

This thesis has touched on the issue of literacy in various places. An example is my discussion of how the lack of linguistic literacy in the Chinese language has disempowered the Bendigo Chinese, especially in light of an inflow of skilled migrants who are fully literate in modern Chinese languages and cultures. I also argued for an expanded concept of literacy as multimodal repertoires composed of personal histories, normalised sociocultural behaviours and spatial resources. As an extension to such an understanding, future research could look into the potential of linguistic landscape as an authentic resource for second language teaching. Indeed, Gorter (2018) reminds us that environmental print from ‘schoolscapes’ could be adapted for teaching English or Chinese as a foreign language. Malinowski (2015) further shows that teachers and learners could design research projects about linguistic landscapes that focus on various sociocultural issues, such as subjectivity and historical changes. Based on the insights from these preceding studies, we could seek to establish the pedagogical value of linguistic landscape by bridging it with research on second language writing or intercultural communication.

As Van Mensel et al. (2017) note, linguistic landscape is a thriving field with different theoretical and methodological underpinnings being adopted and adapted from various lines of sociolinguistic research as well as from other disciplines. Given its kaleidoscopic nature, the potential of linguistic landscape research lies in its flexibility and responsiveness to the description and analysis of sociolinguistic realities in societies characterised by mobility and complexity. It is likely that linguistic landscape researchers around the world will continue with the current momentum and advance the field on various fronts.

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Appendix A Glossary

Linguistic landscape: Multilingual and multimodal signs in the public space, also called semiotic landscape and multilingual cityscape

Public sign: Signs found on the streets or other places accessible to the public

Top-down: The authorities; government policy

Bottom-up: The communities; private sector

Informational function: Linguistic landscape marks the geographical boundaries of ethnic and linguistic communities

Symbolic function: Linguistic landscape is not an exact reflection of the physical place, but indexes people's desire for exoticism, fashion, cosmopolitanism.

Social semiotics: Study of principles of meaning-making of semiotic resources in social context

Semiotic mode: A socially organised set of material resources for making meaning

Semiotic resource: Material and conceptual resources for meaning making

Sign maker: Producer and interpreter of a sign

Geosemiotics: Study of the relationship between meaning-making of signs and their emplacement

Interaction order: Social arrangements among people in situated interaction

Visual semiotics: Study of the organising principles of images for meaning making

Place semiotics: Study of the organising principles of placement for meaning making

Metrolingualism: Fluid language use in urban settings

Superdiversity: Huge increase in diversity of cultures, histories, people and languages due to a stronger wave of globalisation and mobility

Ethnography: Describing sociolinguistic phenomena in rich details using longitudinal data from observations, fieldwork, interviews, etc.

Nexus analysis: A type of ethnography which studies social actions of people by examining their historical experiences, interaction order and discourse in the material world

Multimodality: Integrated use of different semiotic modes in communication

Appendix B Interview protocol

Background information

Name:

Age:

E-mail:

Nationality:

Native language:

Other languages spoken:

Years of residence in Australia:

Interview questions for sign owners

Question 1: We are very interested in learning about why you choose the sign. How much freedom did you have in deciding the elements of the sign?

Possible probes:

- What were the constraints you faced with resource-wise, policy-wise and context-wise?
- Did you create the sign by yourself or appoint a graphic design to do the job?
- Were there generic themes and templates that you could simply choose from?
- Who did you think are the possible audience of the sign?

Question 2: Why did you choose the specific language combination?

Possible probes:

- Which of the following factors were most important to your choice:
presentation of distinctiveness, appeal to attention, assertion of collective identity and influence of powerful language choice?
- Did you have any thought about putting one language on top of the other?
- Why did you choose a larger font size for one language than the other?
- How did you decide on the typography?

Question 3: What were your considerations about the colour and the materiality of signs?

Possible probes:

- Do those colours have any symbolic meaning in your culture?
- Which factors were more important to you in deciding materiality: quality and life expectancy, convention and cost?

Question 4: Why did you choose to put on the images and patterns?

Possible probes:

- Where did your inspirations come from?
- Would you say that the images and patterns are equally useful as texts in conveying your message to the readers?

Question 5: How did you decide on the spatial arrangement of different elements?

Possible probes:

- What effects would you like to achieve with the composition?

Interview questions for sign readers

Question 1: We appreciate your insights into the reading of public signs. Can you please describe your general impression of this sign?

Possible probes:

- Would you notice the sign if you walk on the street?
- What is good or bad about the sign?

Question 2: What information can you get from the sign?

Possible probes:

- Does the sign offer you any clue of the sign owner?
- Who do you think is the sign targeting at?

Question 3: Can you please comment on the language combination used on the sign?

Possible probes:

- Do you speak any of the languages used here?
- How do you feel when you see these languages on signs?

Question 4: What would you say about other components of this sign, for example the images and patterns?

Possible probes:

- What about its colour, materiality and spatial arrangement of elements?
- Do any of these elements make sense to you as a reader?

Question 5: Would you say that the sign is effective and engaging for its audience?

Possible probes:

- Would you choose to purchase goods or services from the shop this sign belongs to? Why or why not?

Interview questions for participants in Euroa

Questions for Chinese migrants

Question 1: How did your migration history shape your life trajectory?

Possible probes:

- What drove you to Australia?

- How long have you been living in Euroa?

Question 2: What has been your experience living in Euroa?

Possible probes:

- How did you fit in to the local community?
- Are you connected to local, translocal or transnational networks of the Chinese?

Question 3: When and why did you open this restaurant?

Possible probes:

- Who were the previous owners?
- What does Flam Shan mean?
- What choices did you make about the signs and decorations both within and outside the restaurant?

Question 4: Do you have any other comments about your understanding of Chinese in rural Victoria?

Questions for non-Chinese residents

Question 1: Are you native to Euroa?

Possible probes:

- What is your understanding of Euroa?
- What is the demographic and cultural makeup of Euroa community?

Question 2: What is your opinion about Chinese migration to Australia?

Possible probes:

- What is your general impression of Chinese migrants?
- Have you had any connections or contacts of the Chinese family in Euroa?

Question 3: What do you see as the symbols or markers of Chinese?

Possible probes:

- How would you comment on the exterior of the Chinese restaurant?
- How do you like the signs, paintings and decorations inside the restaurant?
- Would you say that the design of the Chinese restaurant in general gives you a sense of exoticism?

Question 4: Do you have any other comments about the presence of Chinese in Euroa?

Interview questions for participants in Bendigo

Section 1: Personal experiences

Question 1: How long have you lived in Bendigo?

Possible probes:

- Are you born here, or did you migrate to Bendigo with your family?
- Where were you or your family originally from?
- How often do you visit your birthplace?

Question 2: Do you have Chinese heritage?

Possible probes:

- Which subgroup of Chinese do you identify with?
- What languages do you speak?

Question 3: What is your overall impression of Chinese in Bendigo?

Question 4: Since when did you notice Chinese become part of Bendigo's landscape?

Possible probes:

- How do you feel about Chinese signage in Bendigo?
- Are these signs familiar or exotic to you?

Question 5: Whom do you think the Chinese signage are here for?

Possible probes:

- Would you experience nostalgic feelings for homeland?

Question 6: What kind of customers are you expecting?

Question 7: As an insider of the Chinese establishments, have you been to other Chinese places in Australia?

Possible probes:

- What is your understanding of the Chinese culture?
- What is the Chinese Museum about? What are its goals and missions?

Section 2: Chinese and Bendigo

Question 8: What do you think about the relationship between Chinese and Bendigo?

Question 9: Why do you think the idea of building a Chinese theme park won't succeed?

Question 10: Why are you taking a pessimistic attitude towards the re-development of the museum?

Question 11: Do you feel the Chinese presence is a special point of pride or has special significance in your identity as the people of Bendigo?

Question 12: Do you see your own collective heritage as somehow related to the history of Chinese in the region?

Question 13: Having consumed the semiotic resources of Chinese culture, do you feel it has added to your identity in some meaningful ways?

Question 14: Why would the Museum display a nostalgic picture of China?

Question 15: Is the history of Chinese still relevant to Bendigo today? Or would it be more relevant to display today's China?

Section 3: Wrap-up questions

Question 16: Do you have any personal contacts in the Chinese Association or know any Chinese in Bendigo who might be interested in participating the research?

Interview questions for participants in Melbourne (WeChat)

Question 1: How long have you lived overseas?

Possible probes:

- How do you think the overseas experience has shaped your perspectives and values?

Question 2: What were your motivations for posting on Moment?

Possible probes:

- What was the time of your last post?

Question 3: How do you see the relationship between the image and the text in your post?

Question 4: Why did you use Chinese or English or both for this word or phrase?

Question 5: Where did you draw resources to create a post?

Question 6: Who were the post intended for?

Question 7: Did you make special efforts to make sure certain people cannot read your posts?

Possible probes:

- What was your principle for applying grouping or controlling access?

Question 8: How would you like people to see yourself through the post?

Possible probes:

- In what ways do you think that the affordances of WeChat have facilitated or constrained your self-presentation?

Question 9: How is this online image of yourself similar or different from your offline image?

Appendix C Field notes

[27 Feb. 2018]

On 27th Feb 2018, I had my first visit to Euroa. The day before I head off to Euroa, my friends have warned me to take care of myself and stay safe. Had refused their request for sending my locations via Wechat, I was a little bit worried to be honest, as my supervisor always says, I'm too urban and I should see what regional Victoria is like. Arrived at the town at 9am in the morning, I ambled around and found several heritage sites, including the hotel, the bank and the memorial. The buildings appear to be in Victorian style. I went to the shopping centre of the town, and took photographs of almost every store, both close-ups in front of the store and distant views across the street. The shopping centre is literally a street, with shops lining up on both sides. The signs are almost monolingual English. There is much less diversity in languages and cultures as told from the signs, compared to Melbourne city or suburbs. There are several signs that appear repetitively on many stores' windows, which could be commercial cooperation between the event holder and the shops. Flam Shan Chinese restaurant is the only Chinese restaurant in the area, and Chinese is the only minority group language observed. When I first saw the Flam Shan sign by itself, I found it so ancient and nostalgic. But now when the entire town is old and backdated, which seems to be a forgotten place in the flow of history, the ancientness of Flam Shan sign is well integrated into the overall picture, in harmony with other signs on the street. In other words, it is not only the Chinese restaurant that is nostalgic, the entire town seeks to preserve its heritage flavour as a tribute to the history. The accentuated ancientness thus may not be so purposeful as it is just natural to craft the sign that way.

I was not able to take photos of signs inside the Chinese restaurant as it was closed on Tuesdays. By the way, the owner might not allow photos to be taken within

the restaurant, since when I was taking photographs on the streets, people were looking at me suspiciously, because there are few foreign visitors to the town. A man tapped me on my shoulder when I was taking photos of the exterior of the post office and asked if I needed any help. I said I was doing linguistic research in the area and photos are my primary source of data. The man was walking a dog, and apparently is a local resident. He smiled to me and said in Chinese ‘你好’ and ‘好天气’. It strikes me that people from small towns can be so nice and friendly. The man’s response in Chinese also breaks my stereotypic view of the rural town and demonstrate that there are hidden multilingual phenomena under the seemingly monolingual landscape. People’s willingness to embrace different cultures and languages is also a manifestation of the effect of globalisation and mobility.

Apart from contact with a random resident, I also spoke to the staff at the visitor information centre and the library, both are very helpful and warm-hearted. The visitor information centre staff gave me a lot of information about the history and heritage sites of Euroa. There is said to be a famous bank robbery story in the town which I have not spent much time to figure out. However, the general idea is the offender did that for the benefit of the people, which is another heart-warming legend. There is also one small leaflet, bearing a short prose about how it could be very nice to live in a small town in comparison to a large one. The tone of the poem is gentle, soft and laid-back, and that’s how readers or visitors would feel after visiting the town by themselves, just like I did. Unfortunately, the centre staff had no enough information about the population makeup, or the language spoken by Euroa residents on the visitor brochure, and she then referred me to the library where there might be more resources available about demographics and other statistics. But she did mention that the town is originally made up of Irish, English and Scottish immigrants. How is this composition different from other towns is

regional Melbourne and how that can be reflected in people's character and the way they communicate in public space remains unknown.

The library is just several metres away from the visitor centre, both on the same side of the street. It is compact and well set out. While I was wandering in the library, I noticed there were mothers with kids, grey hair, young males coming to the library for printing and copying, as well as several telephone calls booking computers and reserving books. I've always felt that Australians like reading more than Chinese do. I remember in one workshop at university about creating concise tweets, the host asked us what our bedside books were, and almost all people have some kind of reading habits before bed, except me. I guess this explains why the library, though small, stands at the centre of Euroa as a cultural hub and attract many local visitors. Seeing that I'm wandering around, a librarian asked what I was looking for. After I explained my intention, she then showed me the library's collection of Euroa history and geography. The town in fact has been well researched and documented by keen residents. There is official chronology as well as photo album from interested individuals, both helping document the change of the overall landscape.

In one of the records, I identified a name 'LIN', and an Asian-looking girl in a school photo, which might be a sporadic immigrant domiciled in the neighbourhood, but it can potentially testify the relationship between Chinese and locals. When asked how the librarian felt about the only Chinese restaurant in town, she answered quite positively, saying that it is lucky to have one Chinese restaurant because there isn't much diversity, no Korean, Indian and other minorities adding to the vitality of the community. She also commented on the hard working and hospitable attitude of the Chinese family. She said the two daughters of P1 once worked in the library part-time, and now they are both in Melbourne. "We're very lucky to have a Chinese restaurant.

There're no Indian, Korean restaurants here. P1 is a lovely person. I forgot her husband's name. Her two daughters actually worked in the library part-time. Now they are both in Melbourne. I think they've been here for quite a long time." Her words inspired me that perhaps I should find some local residents and interview their views about Chinese immigrants, just to hear the other side of the story besides the Chinese themselves. It may be helpful this way to construct a more objective account of the relationship between Chinese and locals.

[3 Mar. 2018]

On 3rd March, I went to Chinese Museum in Chinatown after lunch. Located in a quiet back corner of Chinatown, the museum does not expect a large number of visitors as far as I can tell. The museum is not sufficiently funded, evident from the broken cabinet and simple display boards. The history of Chinese migration starts some 160 years ago and have undergone ups and downs with the introduction of the notorious 'White Australia' policy, but Australia has opened its arms in the recent decades and embraced diversity. The section featuring new immigrants' experience and identity is the most interesting. It is intriguing that immigrants from southeast Asia and China have settled down in Australia for various reasons, including political persecution and regional conflicts, and they all have a deep love for Australia. Their willingness to integrate into the community, to share the place with other ethnic communities, and to identify themselves as belonging to Australia strikes me significantly.

The narrated stories from these immigrants portrait a very positive image of Australia, which is a bit different from my own impression. I'm also an 'immigrant' in some sense, although I haven't got permanent residency in the country. I respect cultural and linguistic diversity, yet do not think integration is the best outcome for me. Born and bred in China, I cannot easily identify myself as an Australian, nor do I have the eagerness to be part of the WASP community. When talked about diversity, my idea is different communities shall build mutual understanding but that does not mean white supremacy. Evidently, minority cultures are much less valued in Australia and to be cynical, the diversity discourse itself is promoted and circulated by the white, with a condescending attitude.

The gold mine exhibition, on the other hand, is all dark and creepy. It attempts to create a scene reminiscent of the gold mine. Added to the atmosphere is gambling

noise from a lower house, Cantonese opera, trafficking ship, and, to my surprise, a temple for tourists to draw their luck. It is difficult to imagine that the designer would add superstitious elements to a historical exhibition. Although the temple could possibly be an integral part of the 'kuli', it is not acceptable for me personally to allow interaction between tourists and history in a superstitious way, not especially if it is designed to earn out-of-pocket donations. Walking along the slide up to the ground floor, I saw a huge dragon for festival performance, which can be as long as 50 metres roughly. Along with the lions, flags and balls, the exhibition of 'dancing dragon' seems strange. I've seen these performances during traditional festivals and grand openings in China, but here, the colours are brighter and the design more exquisite with better materials. Somewhat I feel that they are not 'culturally appropriate' in the environment, in Melbourne Chinatown. There is a subtle disharmony or discordance. Perhaps because I'm from northern China and have been brought up in different traditions and customs compared to those practiced in southern China, Guangdong and Hongkong in particular. The dancing dragons in Melbourne are not familiar nor real to me. However paradoxically, they seem to be 'authentic' Chinese for the old immigrants and the Australians, judged from their engagement and enthusiasm to interact with the lions.

[9 Mar. 2018]

On this second trip to Euroa on 9th March 2018, I was able to talk to more people in the community and also speak to the key participant for my research. Apart from the tiring train trip in the early morning, the journey was generally pleasant, with people all being nice, friendly and helpful. My first interview participant in life is P2, editor of The Euroa Gazette and alumni of The University of Melbourne. P2 is a young man, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Journalism. He has big nice smiles and seems to me as easy going. During the interview, I probed his views about living in small towns and about Chinese/Asian migrants. The views come out as quite neutral to positive, but I should be mindful that P2 is a well-educated young male who have exposure to metropolitan lifestyle. He might be more open-minded than the typically secluded rural people. From P2's perspective, the Chinese restaurant was quite an exotic experience for him as a young child, and possibly for people in small towns who have limited exposure to diversity. However, it is clear that he does not feel the Chinese restaurant so special anymore as he had lived in superdiverse cities like Melbourne. The fact that the lived experience shapes and are shaped by subjective views is an interesting subject to note. P2 also commented on the name of Flam Shan. Apparently, it is a mystery to him as well, although he does share some feelings with my supervisor, whose intuition establishes a link between 'shan' and 'sham' as being fake and factitious. Whether it's stereotypic or not, the 'hardworking' tag was attached to the Chinese restaurant owners. As P2 states, P1 would open the door even when some drunk men knocked in the middle of the night.

Perhaps more intriguing is the story told by P1. The story started when P1 and her husband settled down in Australia some twenty years ago. P1 remembered the year clearly for good reason. She says her husband left China for holiday in Australia just

one month before 6.4 Tian'anmen Square event happened. Then Australia began to grant permanent residency to those coming from China with the condition that they must remain in Australia for four years. It is in the name of political persecution that her husband took the opportunity to stay in 1989. Years later, P1 joined him in Australia in 1995. Originally from Guangdong Province, the couple have preferred small towns and finally bought the current restaurant business in Euroa. Flam Shan, as the name of the restaurant, is like a mystery never solved. According to P1, the restaurant was once owned by the Malaysian, and then sold to the Chinese. When P1 bought the business from the Chinese, the restaurant has existed about 22 years. Now it's another 18 years passed since P1 owned the business. During the whole time, the décor of this restaurant remains almost unchanged, so did the name. Asked by a lot of customers, P1 sought explanation from the previous owner, according to whom, Flam Shan is somewhat associated with the joint/leg of lamb, symbolising prosperous business and strength. Her husband says the name may be in Malay language, but I haven't figured out its meaning. Due to complicated paperwork and cost, the couple decided not to change the name of the restaurant. So the restaurant almost remains as it was forty years ago, thus the ancient feeling.

The interior of the restaurant was also inherited from its predecessors. Wooden walls, wooden chairs and tables are all telling a story of history. As told by P1, most of the pictures on the walls were put up by the previous owner, although there are a few recent additions. The bright coloured plastic flowers on two sides of the bar house were intended to add something there and avoid emptiness, so did the digital picture above the counter, though it no longer flashes with bird sounds anymore. The big paper fan, the ambulant and the embroidery decorations are all P1's delightful choices to lighten up the place and to have good luck in running the business. The picture of night

metropolitan, on the other hand, is bought because it's on sale plus it looks good. The horses were gift from friends, so does the curtains. Where I originally thought the customers are the primary concern when deciding on the decorations, it turns out the choices are more out of personal preferences without really much thinking in them. The menu might be a different case, though. It bears no Chinese at all except the rounded symbol of dragon on the first page. Clearly, P1 is not expecting Chinese customers as much as the locals.

It was not easy for the couple back in the 1990s, but they managed to run the restaurant successfully and raised two daughters who are now both study in Melbourne. P1 laughs and says that many of her old customers never change their orders for many years. It was hard for me to imagine someone would stick to one Chinese dish forever. While I was eating at Flam Shan, I also overheard people from the adjacent table saying that they love Chinese food because it's savoury and rich in flavour. P1 would be very happy to hear that kind of comments as a reward for her hardworking attitude. P1's always been quick at cleaning tables, taking orders, delivering meals and checking on customers. I was amazed how she is so accustomed to the fast-paced working environment in the restaurant and how she balances that with her leisure time. However, the food is not good for me; it's not abominable, but seriously not authentic Chinese food. The formula is so simple: stir fry chicken/beef/pork with frozen vegetables bought in bags from supermarket plus a selection of sauce ordered from Cantonese-speaking suppliers. Either for convenience or other reasons, the couple adjusted the flavour to meet the taste of the locals not Chinese. I somewhat wondered what meals they would cook for themselves, and I remembered P1 said they usually started with soup for family dinners. It makes sense since Cantons are so good at making soups, but another question is why they even didn't give the customers a chance to pick whether they

would like 'authentic' or 'adapted' Chinese food.

P1 enjoys her life in Euroa community. She says sometimes it's too tired to run the restaurant, but it's ok, and she can manage that. Above all, after the hectic lunch hours, the couple often go to markets during breaks in the afternoon and come back to open the restaurant for dinner until 10pm, when almost all restaurants and cafes on the street has closed down. The long working hours are also the reason why people say P1 is especially hardworking. By the way, P1 has good relationship with people in the neighbourhood. She knows their appetite, but more importantly, she gives out gifts to people who invite her to parties at their houses. P1 speaks frankly that she never goes to parties at other people's houses, because she feels the cultures and foods are so different. For holidays, the couple may visit some of their Chinese friends in neighbouring towns, and occasionally keep in touch with them via WeChat. The husband, during my brief talk with him, says it's lonely being in a small town, with no friends and relatives. He often watches Chinese TV shows at home. It seems that P1 is more positive about her life and more willing to embrace the differences than the husband does. Maintaining a friendly yet somewhat distant relationship with the locals, P1 feels happy about living in a small town overall. She says there is not much difference between cities and villages, except the number of people and shops. Here in Euroa, she is also able to get Chinese products as she wants because she orders those sauces and ingredients from Cantonese speaking merchants. She is content with the life and there is really nothing she wants to complain about.

Both daughters of the couple come back to help the family business during weekends. P1 got no help hands during lunchtime, so she runs back and forth between the front of the house and the back kitchen. P1's smile, however, suggests she enjoys the present. The story of P1 might as well end here, but the Flam Shan restaurant

continues attract customers in the regional area.

[24 Aug. 2019]

I took an early train for my first trip to Bendigo with my friend, who is a young Chinese male of the same age with me. My expectation was that Bendigo would be infused with Chinese culture and signage, similar to Box Hill in Melbourne. However, it turns out this is just another Australian city where multiculturalism is kept at minimal. Handy signage was given along the road to direct us to the shopping centre. “5 minutes to shopping centre”, as it says. As I walked on the street and took a closer look at the signage, I found quite a range of ethnic cuisines were on offer, including Turkish, Thai, Indian, Nepalese, Japanese and of course Chinese. Then I started to realise perhaps my previous impression of the anglophone landscape is too presumptuous.

As we wandered on the main streets, a few Chinese things stood out to attract our attention. This includes first of all, Toi Shan Chinese restaurant. Both Eric and I agreed that we would not eat at this restaurant because the decor is associated with early Cantonese restaurant opened overseas. It’s unlikely we could get cuisines from our hometowns in this type of restaurant or any our favourite modern Chinese cuisines. (We later discovered in the Golden Dragon Museum that this restaurant was the first Chinese cafe in Bendigo that offered Chinese food with table service. It was run by a series of Chinese owners until recently passed down to the Chan family. Quite in the contrary to its nostalgic, local decor, the menu of Toi Shan restaurant struck me with its modern, international design. The lion head has been drawn elaborately with a cartoonist’s touch and appears more playful and less serious. The colour is not traditional Chinese red. It has a tint of orange that makes the letter more vibrant. The sans serif font also helps create an easy-going feeling.

DIN FUNG dumpling restaurant appears to be a recent establishment because of the darker colour scheme and variety of cuisines including Northern Style Boiled

Dumplings. Somehow, I've worked out that usually the Chinese restaurant with poor English translations tend to be more authentic for me and those with very good English translations make me worry that their food has been localised to cater to local customers. DING FUNG seems to be the latter, so my friend and I both agree the dishes do not appeal us at all.

Then here comes the creepiest New China Restaurant. If we would hesitate before Toi Shan and DING FUNG to think twice over their authenticity, we would simply walk away from this New China Restaurant and never want to go inside, just because the signage has a black background with white characters, and this particular colour combination is reserved for mortality rituals in Chinese culture. The colour gives out a stressful and sorrowful atmosphere that pushes us away from it. The uncomfortable feeling also comes from seeing the strangely coloured (purple, yellow and orange) panda in a welcoming pose, with one hand lifting the bowl and the other holding a chef spoon. The panda is more like a MARVEL production rather than China-born and -raised cuddly little creatures.

Apart from restaurants, Chinese massage shops also find their place in Bendigo's linguistic landscape. Cupping and foot reflexology are promoted as "ancient art" of Chinese massage on the shop sign. In comparison, on another window, lotus flower is employed as a symbol of ancient Chinese power and put on the bedside for ritual purpose. The owner even details the name of the school where she was trained for to lend extra credence for this business. What reassures me is the pop-up job advertisement written in Mandarin Chinese "recruit staff". At least the owner knows, and we can see that there are Chinese people living in the neighbourhood that serve as the target audience of this signage.

The highlight of our journey is visiting the Joss House. The saying that “worshippers are welcome at no charge” caught us, so we pretended to be worshippers. When the reception staff asked us what we came here for, we just answered “worshipping” with a lack of self-confidence. The staff followed up my religion and my answer were “Confucianism”. Of course, Confucianism, I thought to myself. Everyone born in China can’t do without influence from Confucius. It’s rooted in the fundamental values of our whole society. So, I would call that an honest answer. We bought a bunch of red incense just as normal worshippers would do, under the pressure of our pretending.

As I reflect a bit more on Chinese religions, my belief was that the 80’s and younger generation of Chinese generally do not have religions, except a few with ethnic minority or Christian family backgrounds. However, my parent’s generation, although not being superstitious, believe the existence of gods and ghosts to some extent. We even invited a Fortune God and a Guan Yin at my own home. On important traditional dates, such as big Chinese festivals and memorial dates of deceased family members, my mother would worship those gods by burning the yellow papers and incense, as well as offering fresh fruits. She sometimes bows in threes and other times kneels in threes, depending the gravity of matters she prays for. I’m pretty sure this is her own way of worshipping and I’ve seen other people adopting different poses and procedures. Some kneel with their hands facing up, some with hands facing down, some flip their hands upside down, some burn one incense, some burn three, some burn a lot. But three is definitely a magical number for worshippers. I was formally educated to be atheist but actually a agnostic. Influenced by my mother, I’m more like “go to temples and worship if there is one; work hard and count on yourself if there is none.” I won’t seek out for

help or guidance from these unknown powers, but if I happen to walk in a temple, there is nothing wrong to just worship and show respect.

The temple is compact and crowded. Gods from different religious traditions were housed together, showing inclusiveness or just the reality of money shortage. There are many gods I've never met before nor heard of in my life. Southern China puts more value on ancestral links and religious rituals than the place where I come from, so they worship more gods in more sophisticated ways. I picked Confucius, Guan Kung and Guan Yin for my burning incense, because I know what these gods offer in return, knowledge/academic career, protection against bad, and health/happiness. The other gods are just too unfamiliar with me, so I doubt they can even comprehend my prayer. Interestingly, during our visit, quite a few young Chinese couples were worshipping. I'm not sure whether they are regular patrons of the Joss House, but certainly they didn't look like international travellers, but more like residents who lived nearby. There was one male who wholehearted knelt down before the altar for ancestors of Chinese miners. My speculation was that he must have some Chinese heritage related to those predecessors.

Our visit to the Golden Dragon Museum, Yi Garden, Guan Yin Temple and the Gate was not very satisfying. While the \$12 ticket guarantees entry to all these places, in fact, except the museum, the rest places of interest does not even have a ticket checking point and is literally unattended and free entry. A few lingering signage, such as the ticket price signs, suggest that once these places were guarded. A very Chinese signage is the fish feeding advertisement, which reads "feeding fish brings luck so don't you ever miss it. One bag of fish food costs 50 cents and you can buy it at the gate." This type of signage is typically seen in temples and gardens with fishponds, which are built to generate profit and add character to the landscape. Golden fish are seen as

symbols of luck in some places, but generally in my mind, feeding fish is just for fun but not for luck. Throwing coins into ponds are more associated with luck because you give away something in exchange for something. Anyway, the Garden was not particularly impressive especially compared with the Friendship Garden in Sydney, which was built with much more effort and maintained very well. The Pleasure Garden has simply gone unnoticed and poorly maintained. The plaques have worn out and in English only, suggesting an Anglophone audience.

We walked past four cornerstones a few times without realising that the Ornamental Gate once stood there has been demolished with no clear schedule of rebuilt, until I connect the photo and map on the brochure with that particular area. The Guan Yin Temple seem to be frequented by people because of the fresh food and fruit offerings. The incense was burning as we went in, only to find there was no one around. My intuition was that Chinese people show more reverie or are more concerned with religious places. Deep inside, these kinds of establishments are more important for them than the pleasure garden.

The Museum seems to be the core building that stands upon the Dai Gum San Precinct. It took a bilingual strategy overall, but confusingly, with a mixture of traditional and simplified Chinese. English of course is the default language, and Chinese explanatory notes simply acts as add-ons when it comes to introducing items in the collection. However, on a few other occasions, Chinese is only reserved for Chinese terminology that cannot be rendered directly by English. This include dragon chariot (万圣龙车), serpentine jade (蛇纹岩玉), Nanyang jade (南阳玉) and emperor Xianfeng (咸丰帝). However, it is not clear to me why the first two were written in simplified but the last two were traditional. What is even more perplexing is that words were in different fonts. On other signs, including one on the fire door, one on the exhibition

altar, and one on boards, simplified Chinese was chosen for no obvious reason (perhaps because translator was called in to do the translation, for the ANZAC). There were incidents of misuse of Chinese characters on the ticket price signage, where garden is translated into “圆”, when it should be “园” simplified or “園” in traditional character. “Low price” should be “低” rather than “底”. “Children under 15 years” should be “儿童票(15 岁以下)” instead of “小孩票(15 岁下)”. “The Bendigo Experience” was literally translated into “大金山经历”, which is not colloquial Chinese but Chinese with strong English accent. These together suggest the translation might be done by Google Translate.

I keep wondering who owns the history of early Chinese migrants in Bendigo. Actually, when I asked my friend his overall impression of Chinese in Bendigo’s landscape, he says Chinese or China in Bendigo is not much about Chinese or China itself, but more about promoting the image of Bendigo. He feels that Chinese history is used to add to the City’s depth and appeal for tourists, and not because those powerful people really care about Chinese culture or heritage. What they care is the what represents Chinese and how these symbols could create exotic experience for customers. He commented the Chinese things “boring” and cannot feel any connection that we were hoping for. I tried the narrated walking method with my friend, but it didn’t go very well as our route was random and my prompt questions were unstructured. Our first research and experience tour end later that day with a bit disappointment and sorry for the Chinese in Bendigo.

[1 Sep. 2019]

My second trip to Bendigo was with a western male. I rose up early and he drove us all the way to the city. On our trip to Bendigo, we stopped at Kyneton for a quick coffee and breakfast. Luckily, we found out a couple of Chinese signage in the small town.

This includes Oriental Phoenix Chinese restaurant, which serves Specialty Asian Noodles and Chinese Dumplings Freshly Hand Made. The dumplings look like fried dumplings rather than boiled dumplings. I guess the former is more savoury and might suit the taste of wider range of customers, but boiled dumplings are the default way of cooking dumplings in northern China. On a pop-up paper sign, the owner advertises a staff vacancy - “We need staff. Student or non-experience all welcome. Please bring resume or just come in to ask. Thanks.” It looks like the sign owner is not expecting someone with Chinese language skills. Usually it is assumed that Chinese restaurants would more likely to hire Chinese staff, at least that is what I have observed around Melbourne. Cantonese restaurants, in particular, would prefer staff speaking both Cantonese and Mandarin so that they can communicate easily with colleagues who speak Cantonese and customers who mostly speak Mandarin. In this case, it might be that there is a small Chinese community in the town so hiring Chinese-speaking staff is just not possible or practical. There is not a single sign written in Chinese on the windows of the restaurant, except one auspicious sign “福” which is simply a generic consumer product prevalent in China.

Another finding is New Garden Chinese Restaurant. “新園” is rendered in Chinese to form the left part of the shop signage, although the English name certainly predominates my attention. The right part is occupied by a noodle bowl and chopsticks, pretty straightforward. I’m not sure, though, why green and red would be used as the

main colour scheme of the restaurant. For me, it is simply not good-looking. My speculation is that green is a colour reference to garden and red to Chinese. Other than the Chinese name, the offerings are quite different from Oriental Phoenix. From what is observable from the outside, the restaurant has Toffee Banana (new desert), Peking Roast Duck, Pancake with Peking Duck, Fillets in Bird Nest (Choice of sauce: garlic, szechuan, mongolian, plum), Fried Duck with any Sauce and King Prawns in Bird Nest (Choice of sauce: garlic, szechuan, mongolian, plum). Since the two restaurants are on the same street, they may need to adopt some kind of product differentiation strategy to attract different types of customers and avoid direct competition. The dishes are not particularly appealing and even reminds me of the Flam Shan. Choice of sauce is not cool for Chinese eaters at all, except its fancy containers - “bird nest”. I personally hate the choice of sauce because that indicates the program of cooking Chinese food is simple, and everyone can cook Chinese food as long as they buy the sauce. But this is far from being true. The essence of Chinese food is not the sauce; it’s everything: fire, wok, timing, ingredients, cutting and many more. Even I follow the same steps and use the same amount of materials as instructed by my mum, I cannot cook a dish that tastes exactly the same, not because I don’t have the secret sauce, but because I’m not familiar with the procedure and how long food should be cooked. This is why the simplicity of Chinese food in New Garden annoys me. However, I have to say, Peking Roast Duck with Pancake is a proper way of eating Peking Duck, on the premise that the chef could bake great ducks.

Finally, we found a van on which the sign reads Mitchell Antiques Bazaar (Antiques & Collectibles). “古董” means antiques in Chinese and it seems that there are Chinese people who are active in this area, which might be hidden at first glance. A man with grey hair walked out of this van. He is in mid-fifties and was smoking at the

moment. It is very likely that he could be the owner of this antique shop, but I could never figure out in this brief encounter.

We embarked on our journey to Bendigo again after this short morning tea break and finally arrived when the city and its people just woke up. Bendigo has a magnificent Sacred Heart Cathedral sitting high up the hill. After parking the car near the cathedral, we started our walking tour of the city as we headed towards the Golden Dragon Museum. A surprising finding in the shopping centre was that the children's playground is dragon-themed. The whole playground in fact mimics the shape of a dragon. Three main colours are red, yellow and green. A stair and slider are carefully built into the dragon head. The tail and the body feature a few run-throughs. On a tent from the City of Greater Bendigo, the dragon playground was semiotised into a symbol which features the dragon slider and children playing in it. The city has appropriated the dragon and its associated Chinese culture into the city's landscape. These semiotic resources are seen as valuable in building up the city's character and attracting tourists from Australia and abroad.

Almost across the street with Dai Gum San Precinct is an Asian Grocery (亚洲食品超市) run by Chinese people. Opening hour signage was written entirely in English and interestingly, with wrong spelling (opening instead of opening) and wrong singular form (hour instead of hours). An English name - Jacky - was also given perhaps to make it easier for customers to pronounce and memorize. The last time we visit, we found a huge container sitting outside the shop. It seems that the food has been transported from Port of Zhengpu in Ma'anshan, Anhui Province all the way here to Bendigo, Australia. That perhaps explains why we saw "fresh garlic" selling at the "lowest price" or \$1 each in a basket in front of the shop. On the side, the same information was given in Chinese - "大蒜全城最低价" (garlic lowest price in the city).

In this second visit, I found a few other things which I ignored in the first trip. The first is a few signage inside the Guan Yin Temple. One is “廣種福田” and “Temple Donation”. The Chinese was intended to mean when you make offerings, give donations, do good things and improve moral values, you can receive some good/lucky things in return, which is just like when you sow seeds in the field, you can have a harvest in autumn. So instead of “福田” (field of buddha) which does not exist in any Chinese dictionary, it should be “福田”(field of good fortune or blessings). On a note, “福”(/fu/) and “佛”(/fo/) does sound similar. It is quite confusing as to the language ideology of the sign maker because there is no consistency in the choices of languages. Sometimes it’s traditional Chinese and English, sometimes English only, but other times simplified Chinese and English.

Another interesting finding was the ideals written on plaques which explicitly suggest the conceived space in the minds of the authorities. Sadly, they are not owned by nor for the Chinese. For example, the reflection wall dragon mural was jointly made by La Trobe University Ceramics Department and Bendigo Chinese Association, which is not only a symbol of authentic Chineseness, but “a symbol of the continual growth and involvement between our communities in Bendigo.” From the perspective of Bendigo City, they celebrate such collaborations and their connections with Chinese, though in the faintest sense. But from the viewpoint of Chinese themselves, is an Australian version of Chinese Garden anything to celebrate? I doubt. Another sign in the garden reads: “Bendigo now has a Chinese garden equal to any Chinese garden of the same size anywhere in the world! Based on the gardens in the Imperial Palace in Beijing, the architecture and construction of the garden is authentic in every way.” This was complemented by a few other plaques, which are translations of a Beijing poet and calligrapher’s poetry on the walls. “In deep thinking, visitors will go home with cranes

nestled in their sleeves.” “Travellers in Australia, will see ... a rich country of many cultures and beauty”. “The lions and dragons exhibit show that Chinese culture is strong and alive in Bendigo!” “The sense of belonging is deeply shared by all people living in multicultural Australia.” There is nothing wrong for the poet to be optimistic or ideal about Chinese in Australia, but the whole artist feels like a spokesperson for the Bendigo City. It’s like you always interview people who give good reviews for a product and pretend the bad ones do not exist.

I also had another new finding in the museum: the mission statement. It clearly states the purpose of Golden Dragon Museum is “to house and preserve the collection of the Golden Dragon Museum and the Bendigo Chinese Association; to collect, preserve and care for materials of historical and cultural significance to the Chinese Community, particularly items relevant to the goldfields region of Victoria; to promote goodwill and understanding between Chinese Australians and people of other races and nationalities through exhibitions, publications, research and public programs; in conjunction with Museums Australia (Victoria), to provide a venue for professional workshops and training for smaller museums.” Another signage argues that the Museum provides a snapshot of “a living history” since it “displays and preserves the culture and living history of the Chinese people of Bendigo, from the 1850s gold rush to the present day. Much of the museum’s collection of Chinese regalia is still paraded in local festivals.”

Until then, I should realise that when talking about the Chinese Community, the museum, Bendigo City and the Bendigo Chinese Association refer to the original Chinese miners and their descendants who still live in Bendigo today, although many of them no longer look like Chinese anymore after inter-racial marriages. What they think is of historical and cultural significance are objects dating back to the gold rush rather

than today. For them, Chinese heritage may arguably be of much less cultural importance and only serves as a semiotic symbol with void meaning. In terms of the living history, they also refer narrowly to the dragon parade which still exists today. By no means would they care about how these Chinese are living their lives in Bendigo or elsewhere than clinging to that semiotic traditional event. I can't stop but wonder how contradictory it is for the authorities to think that promoting Chinese heritage in Bendigo would attract tourists from the outside, when the Chinese Australians in Bendigo themselves (represented by the Bendigo Chinese Association) don't give much attention to their Chinese identity. With the rise of China, Chinese are no longer those humble, diligent, weak miners in the past. We've become stronger, more confident and more assertive in social encounters and life choices. I doubt if Bendigo is ready to embrace the new character of Chinese or if it has made any attempts to do so. As my companion often mentions, perhaps the Bendigo Australians feel it is safer to appropriate hard-working Chinese miners into the City's history than to accept its current associations with modern Chinese people.

During our entire trip, I feel that my companion could more easily get around with people than I do. He received warm greetings from an old man sitting on the bench and was warmly welcomed when we walked in the museum by a staff roughly older than my companion. The staff also introduced us to a few things that might be of interest, but clearly he was speaking to my companion rather than me. I do look friendly, but I was not greeted by anyone when I went there with my Chinese friend. I'm sure it's something about gender, age, race and personality, but it does feel strange if I reflect on these two different experiences. As I live longer overseas, it also becomes more difficult for me to communicate with my hometown people, as I would appear overly polite and distanced. Realised it or not, diaspora experience is gradually

transforming my identity into something that sits between Chinese and Westerners.

Perhaps one day, someone from China would point to me and say: “look, she appears like Chinese but actually she isn’t,” which is exactly the same as what I’m doing to those Bendigo Chinese people.

[9 Oct. 2018]

I took my third trip to the Bendigo today. On my way to the Golden Dragon Museum, I stopped over at a Japanese fast food outlet to have teriyaki beef udon soup. The soup and udon were fine, but the teriyaki beef didn't live up to its reputation. The restaurant seems to be run by a Chinese-looking Australian and Caucasian-looking Australian. People came in to buy sushi and sushi rolls. Curry chicken also looks like a popular choice. As I was about to eat my udon soup, an old woman asked me to move a little bit so that she could get her walk scaffold. She was kind and nice and we started a brief conversation about China. It turns out that she had worked in China for seven years in Xi'an and Suzhou, two vastly different cities, each with their unique charms. She left the Japanese restaurant with a box of sushi for dinner and "enjoy your Australian made Chinese food". I couldn't figure out why she mistook Japanese with Chinese food but apparently she was well aware that Asian food in Australia is not authentic and may only be a compromised choice when you have no access to real ethnic food in a foreign country.

Walking to the Golden Dragon Museum was straightforward with Google Map. I made an appointment with the staff responsible for research inquiries. The gentleman in his mid-thirties was a bit timid, but he was happy to assist me in any way I needed. After I explained that my research project is about Chinese signage, he directed me to the exhibition hall and introduced me to selected pieces that might be of my research interest. At the beginning, I was reluctant to see the exhibition because I've been there twice and the impression I had was the nostalgic Chinese dragon, dim light and weird classic Chinese music. However, there were indeed quite a few signage pieces that had been ignored by me in my first two visits.

The first includes the early Chinese name of Bendigo as “叻呢咕”, which is distinct from its Chinese name “本迪戈” or “班迪戈” today. This is because most of the early Chinese immigrants came from Toi San in Guangdong Province, so Toisanese, which was influenced by Cantonese and Hokkien, was the main language of communication. In present days, Mandarin Chinese clearly takes over this regional dialect as one of the mostly used minority languages in Australia. Hence, underlying the name change is a sociocultural transformation within the Chinese community.

The second is written in English and Chinese. The sign has a standard government document layout. The title, issuing authority, author and date were identified clearly at the top of the page and written in English. Lines help to define and distinguish the boundary for main text, which was written neatly in traditional Chinese. According to P6, the Museum research officer and volunteer coordinator, the Chinese was written by the Australian author. It was amazing that he could write even more beautifully with elegant calligraphic style than most Chinese people. It can also be imagined that in the early days most Chinese people didn't speak much English. So the announcement was written and addressed to this group of people. There were said to be a few people who served as important linguistic and cultural intermediaries because they were literate in both languages. Author of the government announcement was likely one of them.

The third and the fourth were displayed in glass boxes. One reads “恩记” from right to left, and the Chinese characters have also been romanized in Toisanese to provide phonetic clues to non-Toisanese speakers. The other one adopted the English monolingual strategy. Jas, the doctor, aimed to create a local image for his practice.

Figure 5 was a wooden shop sign. The board was likely to be used to attract customers' attention. The main text was written vertically with older Toisanese

grammar, which is not so straightforward for modern Mandarin Chinese speakers. On the top of the sign were four Chinese characters that didn't make much sense. Similar with the case of Bendigo's Chinese name, these four characters all have “口” as their radical, which might be a consistent way to render English words among early Chinese immigrants. P6 speculates that the four characters phonetically resembles the English brand name “Mr Hill”.

One of the highlights of my tour with P6 was when he showed me the dragon collections. The section is barred, and ordinary visitors are not allowed to go upstairs to actually have a closer look at the dragon. At least that was my experience as a visitor in the previous two trips. But luckily I was admitted into the forbidden section this time. The dragons are magnificent and of various styles depending on where they were made. The Hong Kong- and Foshan- made dragons are obviously much more elaborate than the rest, perhaps the dragon parade is rooted in their traditions and are of much more ritual significance. They even distinguish between daytime dragon and night dragon. The latter one uses almost transparent materials so that light can go through and the dragon can glow in the dark. Lanzhou and Beijing dragons, on the other hand, are much more basic and have much fewer colours, mainly red, gold and blue. They have a rough style to bring out the wild side of the dragon and that is probably why I felt more related and familiar to these creations than the Sun Loong and Loong. The banners used in the dragon parade seemed to be something people proud of, but I've never seen those in my life in China, so they appeared to be completely alien. There is also a tradition to feed the dragon with pomelo leaves which again is not in my own culture.

My another finding is about the secret fraternity group called “致公堂”, which seemed to reside in bridge street and still exists today in Bendigo. Chinese miners in Bendigo mostly came from Siyi or four places in Canton province - Taishan, Xinhui,

Kaiping, Enping. To fight against discrimination and unit together, various forms of communities and associations were formed. Zhigongtang or Chee Kung Tong is one of these fraternity groups. It was formerly known as Yee Hing Hui of Hong Men (Couchman & Bagnall, 2015). They worship Kwan Gung in Bendigo Joss House because he was loyal to friends. The couplet on both sides of the gate reads “義炳乾坤 宏開景象，興來豪傑大振良圖” (the generosity of the land gives great vision; the hero brings prosperity to develop this land), showing allegiance to Hong Men. The first character at the beginning of each sentence can be put together to form the word “義興” (yixing), another name for Hong Men. Nevertheless, the group is more than a fraternity and actually has a political agenda, at least that is what their banner advocates. It reads “strategic country governance”. It advocated Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary cause back then and currently operates as a civil association, known as the Chinese Masonic Society Melbourne Lodge.

The Museum may be influenced by a certain political ideology in general. According to P6, Bendigo Chinese Association had an influence on the purpose of the Museum, and paradoxically, Chinese does not have much representativeness in Bendigo Chinese Association. This suggests that the preservation of Chinese history in Bendigo is in someone else’s hands.

Historically, Bendigo Chinese were not well received by the white Australians. Things changed when the local council needed to raise money for construction of hospital. Bendigo Chinese voluntarily proposed to use dragon parade to help fund raising, and it turned out to be very successful. Since then, the dragon parade has become an important part of Bendigo history and the locals have recognised their ties with Chinese. There is a banner in the museum which reminds Australians that Chinese once made great contributions to the Bendigo society, and it is displayed during the

dragon parade every year. On the other hand, it seems that the dragon parade becomes the last Chinese semiotic event that Bendigo Chinese Association clings to.

I also got a chance to talk to the owner/manager of the Chinese Museum, who has third-generation Chinese heritage. While we were talking, an old man came in to donate a “precious” teapot, which is a modern artwork produced in the Pearl River Delta. The boss seemed to be very decisive about not letting this kind of thing into the historic collection and so she turned down the offer. I’m pretty sure that she would not identify herself as Chinese anymore, as she and her father no longer have Chinese literacy and asked me to sight translate the Chinese text on the teapot package. The boss had been part of the council committee for the Dai Gum San project. When I asked whom the Dai Gum San was meant for, she said the Museum is meant for Chinese Australians whereas the Guan Yin Temple was meant for a broader Asian audience, especially the Koreans. For the Yi Garden, they intended to attract tourists. Constrained by budget, they chose Baoding’s design, which cost \$1.2 million as opposed to the \$5 million quote by Australian builders. The wooden structures and stone benches are almost entirely made in China and then transported to Bendigo. That explains why Baoding People’s Government was inscribed on the cornerstones of the demolished ornamental gate.

The research library at the museum has an extensive newspaper and photo collection that I didn’t have enough time to explore. From my first few glimpses, there had been a lengthy debate over the Dai Gum San project. According to P6, the project proposal consumed millions of dollars because planning kept changing. He himself expressed frustration over the authority’s ideal to build a Chinese theme park on the original Chinese community site. As an insider of the museum and outsider of Chinese community, he agreed that the museum need to connect with modern China but

preserving Chinese history in Australia remains their main function. He also pointed out people genuinely value their Chinese heritage but since many people have multiple ethnic heritages, they may not necessarily identify themselves as Chinese. After all these years, they have been assimilated into the Australian society in terms of their appearances and cultures.