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Article

## “Hindi Bayani/Not a Hero”: The Linguistic Landscape of Protest in Manila

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### Abstract

This article examines the linguistic landscape of Manila during a protest march in November 2016 in response to the burial of deposed president Ferdinand Marcos at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* (Heroes’ Cemetery). This article is situated among linguistic landscape of protest research (Kasanga, 2014; Seals, 2011; Shiri, 2015) where data is composed of mobile posters, placards, banners, and other ‘unfixed’ signs, including texts on bodies, t-shirts, umbrellas, and rocks. Following Sebba (2010), this article argues that both ‘fixed’ linguistic landscape and ‘mobile’ public texts are indices of the linguistic composition of cities, linguistic diversity, and ethnolinguistic vitality (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Through a qualitative analysis of selected pictures produced during the protest march and uploaded onto social media, the multilingual nature of Manila is rendered salient and visible, albeit temporarily, and strategies of dissent are reflective of the language of the millennials who populated the protests.

### Keywords

ethnolinguistic vitality; linguistic landscape; ‘mobile’ public texts; multilingualism

### Issue

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## 1. Introduction

In November 2016, major cities in the Philippines were rocked by intermittent protests as a result of the Supreme Court’s decision to finally entomb the late Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* (LNMB) (Heroes’ Cemetery), the country’s final resting ground for its national artists, soldiers, and past presidents. Marcos, ousted following a people’s uprising in 1986<sup>1</sup> because of government corruption and human rights violations in the 1970s and 80s, was exiled to Hawai’i where he died in September 1989. Although his body was allowed back into the country in September 1993 by then-President Fidel Ramos, Marcos was never accorded a state burial nor were his remains reposed in the hallowed grounds of the national cemetery; rather, his remains were believed to have been buried under-

neath a wax statue encased in glass in a mausoleum that was open to the public for viewing in his hometown in Ilocos Norte. In November 2016, President Duterte granted the Marcos family’s wish to bury his remains at the LNMB. Nationwide protests erupted as a result of that decision, decried as an attempt to rehabilitate the legacy of Marcos, turning him into a “bayani” (hero) and thus deserving of a spot at the Heroes’ Cemetery. Subsequently, anti-Marcos burial protests dominated the discourse on social media, fueled in part by the millennials who populated the protest marches and were relentless in their online engagements to oppose the current administration’s support for the Marcos family. Through the heavy use of digital and social media, the protesters—also dubbed “anti-revisionists”—used a variety of protest signs, from sturdy banners and placards showing large bolded letters to hastily scribbled phrases on sheets of paper, card-

<sup>1</sup> It is also known as the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution because of the number of people who turned out on the Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue (EDSA), a stretch of road spanning 23.8 km of highway, from Caloocan in the north to Pasay in the south. EDSA has come to be synonymous with the toppling of a dictator, as well as a place where one goes to protest.

board, umbrellas, t-shirts, rocks, and even on their arms and faces (Inquirer.net, 2017).

A long, strong history of activism is, therefore, a feature of the Philippine landscape. In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in linguistic landscape (LL), a lens through which the use, display, and placement of languages in public spaces is understood. Although a relatively new field in sociolinguistics, LL research is fast gaining attention among researchers in linguistics, semiotics, sociology, media studies and anthropology for reflecting linguistic diversity and ethnolinguistic vitality (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Other scholars argue that:

rather than reflect[ing] the vitality of their respective language communities and the extent of language use, the publicly displayed texts which make up the LL may provide evidence—to be understood in contexts—of power relationships between languages (or rather, the groups who ‘own’ those languages) and policies designed to manage and control just those relationships. (Sebba, 2010, p. 62)

Studies of this kind help unmask the language ideologies subsisting in a specific time and space. LL studies in the Philippines may be considered to be in its infancy, and studies on Manila’s LL—in particular focusing on the language of protests—have yet to be written. In this article, I argue that LL methods can be applied in making sense of the LL of protests. As linguistic events, the staging of protests requires the presence of “agents who are inextricably bounded to the social context” and whose protest signs may be seen as “mediational means par excellence” (Kasanga, 2014, p. 23) of their individual decisions and expressions. Examining mobile and transitory protest signs may yield insights into language use different from insights generated by observing the fixed LL. Languages that appear in the public space for a limited time may thus pose a challenge to existing understandings of the LL. In undertaking this study, I hope to render salient and visible the multilingual nature of Manila’s transient LL, even as previous studies point to a ‘unilingual’ English reading of the LL (Delos Reyes, 2014; Magno, 2017). Most importantly, the task is to show that the “political genre of resistance [is] a legitimate form of LL” (Shiri, 2015, p. 240).

Composed of three parts, this article reviews studies on LL, the linguistic situation in the Philippines, and the transient LL of protest. A short discussion of the methods I employed when carrying out this research and the results of the study follow, with concluding thoughts wrapping up the paper.

### 1.1. *Studies on Linguistic Landscape (LL)*

The concept of LL—which refers to the language of “public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on gov-

ernment buildings” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25)—paved the way for texts in public spaces to be seen as dynamic and endowed with power, authority, and influence in both informational and symbolic ways. According to the authors, the LL provides informational function to its citizens by demarcating territories via public signs, reflecting the sociolinguistic composition of its cities through the use of unilingual, bilingual or multilingual signs, and facilitating access to services for its citizens within those territorial limits. Symbolic function is communicated to members of in-groups or out-groups by encoding power and authority through the placement, size, and number of signs in the in-group’s language(s). Landry and Bourhis (1997) interpreted the quantity of signs in particular languages as emblematic of the major or minor positions languages occupy in linguistic communities. In addition, the authors distinguished government signs (public signs used by national, regional, or municipal governments on streets, roads, public buildings, and public transport stations) from private ones (commercial signs and advertising billboards) and claim that private signs may “most realistically reflect the multilingual nature of a particular territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (p. 27). Other authors argue that not only does the LL reflect the relative power and status of languages in use in any given community, but that the LL also has the power to shape the linguistic behaviors of the participants in that geographic area (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006).

Current research now includes “discourses in transit” (Sebba, 2010) which refer to ephemera that form part of the ‘mobile’ public texts—such as handbills, flyers, stamps, tickets, and mobile texts on the backs of vehicles—which should not be seen in isolation from other types of public texts that are not fixed in space. Moreover, Sebba (2010) argues that the reading of both fixed and ‘unfixed’ LL may require similar ways of reading because both may encode authority and authenticity in similar ways. More importantly, shining the spotlight on the ‘non-fixed’ LL—which have periods when they serve overt purposes and periods when they do not—helps in making sense of the functions of both fixed and non-fixed LL:

We can conclude that public texts, whether fixed or mobile, have to be read in the context of all other public texts which participate in the same discourse(s) and which impinge or may impinge on the consciousness of readers. (Sebba, 2010, p. 73)

Other authors claim that impermanent signs that are part of a landscape may better track the shifting and changing nature of language in place (Burdick, 2012) and that, although mobile LL are also ideologically mediated, they may be usefully invoked in analyzing language ideologies in linguistic communities.

Other scholars (Kasanga, 2014; Rubdy, 2015; Seals, 2011; Shiri, 2015) have pushed the boundary of LL further afield by looking at transient linguistic events—such

as the staging of protests, mass demonstrations, and occupy movements—in order to uncover the saliency and visibility of languages that temporarily enjoy public spaces. Made of mostly non-durable materials, protest signs perform linguistic acts such as express anger and dissent, contest narratives, and encourage participation from their immediate and non-immediate audiences. This can be done for local and global audiences through multiple platforms of social media. Observing what languages appear during protests may help us better understand a linguistic community.

### 1.2. *The Linguistic Make-Up of the Philippines*

Language issues have always been a thorny topic and the subject of bitter debates in the Philippines. Like many postcolonial countries, it has two official languages—Filipino (based on Tagalog) and English—which are used as media-of-instruction in schools. In addition, a considerable number of regional or “auxiliary” languages that are used at home and count as many Filipinos’ mother-tongues make literacy a special challenge. According to the 1995 census reporting on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the Philippines, there are 14 major languages considered to be mother tongues<sup>2</sup> of Filipinos: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon/Ilonggo, Bikol, Waray, Kapampangan, Boholano, Pangasinense, Meranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, English, and Chinese (which encompasses the Hokkien dialect spoken by the Filipino-Chinese, putonghua, and other dialects) (Hau & Tinio, 2003). Many researchers, among them Kaplan and Baldauf, Grimes and Grimes, McFarland, and Dutcher, claim that there are between 120–168 languages spoken in the country (Dekker & Young, 2005, p. 182), while Ethnologue (n.d.) lists as many as 183 living languages in the Philippines.

English is a late, if the most potent, addition to the mix of languages in the Philippines. When the Americans came to these islands at the turn of the 20th century, English gained official status through the mandate of the use of English in Philippine classrooms. Act No. 74 (*An Act Establishing a Department of Instruction in the Philippines*) made English the basis of all public school instruction, supported by the arrival of the first tranche of American teachers on board the *USS Thomas*, thereafter referred to as the “Thomasites”. The Thomasites would help establish English as the language of the colonizer and of the rich and educated, in the process crowding out vernacular languages in use in these islands even prior to Spanish colonization. Filipinos took to English warmly such that an initial survey into the use of English revealed that, by 1918, 28% of the surveyed population claimed to have the ability to read English (Thompson, 2003) and speakers of English would jump from 0 speaker in 1898 to 26.6% of the population by the mid-1920s (Gonzalez,

1998; Hau & Tinio, 2003). The Monroe Survey Commission in 1925, however, found that the public education system was in disarray because of the ‘foreign language handicap’ (Bernardo, 2004), but recommended the continuation of the English-only policy in spite of its flaws. In 1940, the Commonwealth Act 570 designated Tagalog (renamed ‘Pilipino’ in 1959) as an official language alongside Spanish and English. Mother tongues were allowed in the first and second grades, but only as ‘auxiliary’ (a word not defined in any form in the document) media-of-instruction, with English still being the principal medium of instruction. The 1973 constitution under President Marcos’ martial law showed a shift in state policy in the realm of education and adopted the policy of a bilingual education. On 16 March 1973, the Department of Education and Culture issued Order No. 9 which articulated the goal of developing individuals able to communicate in both Filipino and English (Tupas, 2000) by enriching subjects in the Pilipino and English domains. In the first policy review made ten years after its implementation, Gonzalez and Bautista (1986) found that the Bilingual Education Policy had not been implemented years after its introduction. Other findings attributed the decline in students’ English proficiency to it as well (Gonzalez, 1998; Hau & Tinio, 2003).

Despite the changing of the guards shortly after the EDSA Revolution and the reworking of the 1987 Constitution, the language-in-education policy has remained essentially unchanged. Article XIV stated that:

For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, *until otherwise provided by law*, English. The regional languages are the auxiliary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein. (emphasis added)

The policy did not articulate substantial changes. The following provisions remained:

- the use of English and Pilipino (changed to Filipino) as media of instruction from Grade 1 onwards: English, in Science, Mathematics and English; and Filipino in Social Studies, Character Education, Work Education, Health Education and Physical Education.
- the use of regional languages as auxiliary media of instruction as well as initial languages for literacy (as spelled out in Department of Education, Culture, and Sports Department Order No. 54, series 1987). (Nolasco, 2008, p. 3)

A real threat to the privileged status of English arrived in the form of a persuasive landmark report made by the Congressional Commission on Education of 1991 which

<sup>2</sup> An updated census of Philippine languages in 2000 placed the majority of the population speaking any of the following languages (in millions): Tagalog 21.5, Cebuano 18.5, Ilocano 7.7, Hiligaynon 6.9, Bicol 4.5, Waray 3.1, Kapampangan 2.3, Pangasinan 1.5, Kinaray-a 1.3, Maguindanao 1, Tausug 1, and Meranao 1 (Gunigundo, 2010; Nolasco, 2008).

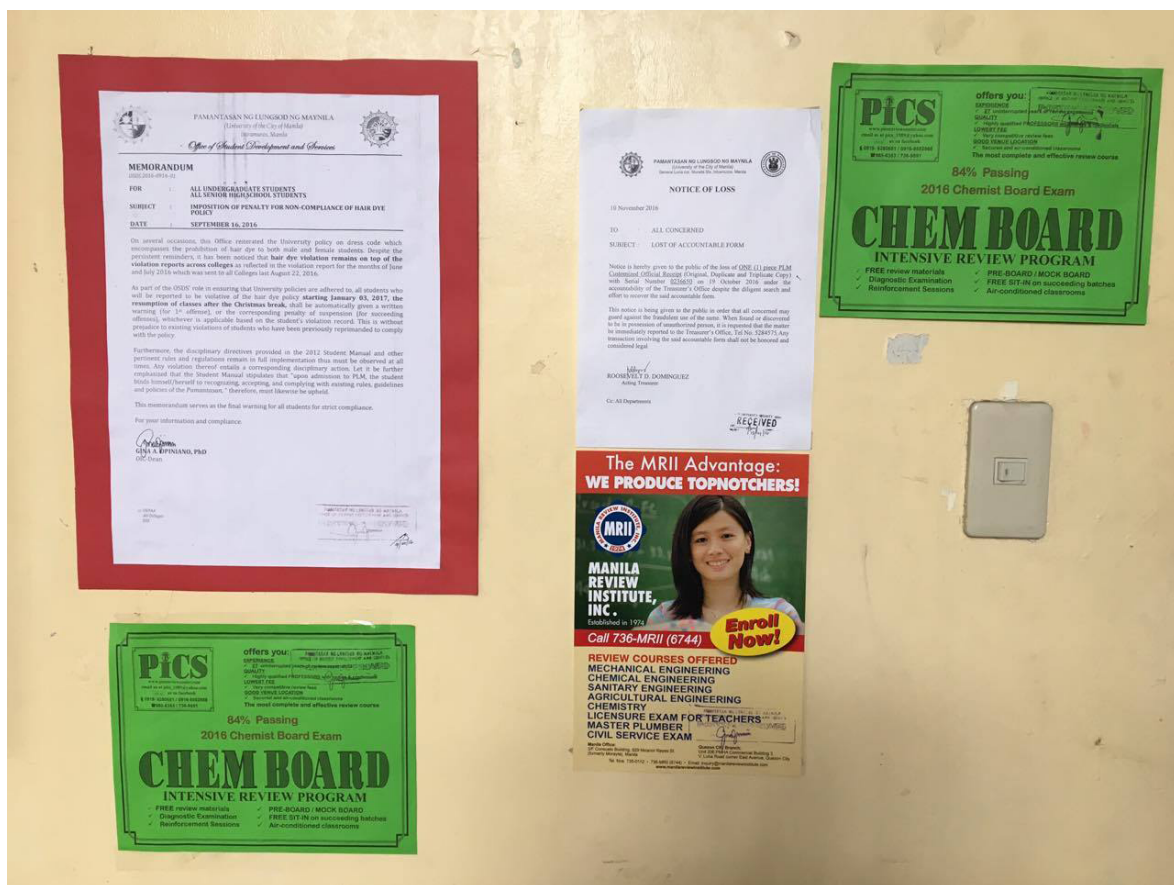
recommended that all subjects, except English, be taught in Filipino at the elementary and secondary levels. But this recommendation was never carried beyond the halls of Congress. In fact, in 2003, the Arroyo government issued Executive Order No. 210 entitled “(E)stablishing the Policy to Strengthen the Use of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction”:

- English shall be taught as a second language, *starting with Grade 1*;
- English shall be the medium of instruction for English, *Mathematics and Science from at least Grade 3*;
- English shall be the primary MOI in the secondary level, which means that the time allotted for English in all learning areas shall not be less than 70%;
- Filipino shall continue to be the MOI for Filipino and social studies (emphases added by the author; Nolasco, 2008, p. 3)

On 14 July 2009, through Department Order 74 (s. 2009) entitled “Institutionalizing Mother-tongue Based Multilingual Education”, a watershed moment in Philippine education recognizing the important role of the home languages in education was finally enacted. An important provision states:

2. Mother-tongue-based Multilingual Education, hereinafter referred to as MTB-MLE, is the effective use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction. Henceforth, it shall be institutionalized as a fundamental educational policy and program in this Department in the whole stretch of formal education including pre-school and in the Alternative Learning System. (Department of Education, Culture and Sports, 2009)

Against this linguistic backdrop, English continues to occupy a privileged niche in academia, despite the attention now accorded mother tongues in education, or attempts towards making Filipino students become fully bilingual. The presence of monolingual signs in English in Philippine universities (Figure 1) is a telling reminder of what language has always been valued in academic settings. In fact, in a study of Cebu’s Higher Education Institutions, Magno (2017) found that “monolingual English was the prevalent language utilized in the linguistic landscape” (p. 101) dominating the 51 billboard displays in the five universities that were surveyed in the study. Although a major language in Cebu, Cebuano lagged behind Filipino and English in the number of billboard displays, despite individual preference of reading in multiple languages of English, Filipino/Tagalog, and Cebuano-Bisaya) of students who were surveyed. Magno (2017)



**Figure 1.** Monolingual signs. Announcements in English, whether for official or promotional purposes, are found on walls and billboard displays in many public and private universities in the Philippines.



writes that “the students still appreciate and find multilingual posts more appropriate than just using the local language” (p. 98).

The predominant use of English in universities is not unique to the academic landscape, however. English dominates the public space of transport stations as well. In a LL study made of Manila’s transport stations—the Light Rail Transit (LRT) 1 and 2 and the Metro Rail Transit (MRT)—Delos Reyes (2014) found that there were more monolingual signs in English than in Tagalog. English is the language of choice inside LRT and MRT train stations where over 50% of top-down signs (i.e., government-produced signs) were written in monolingual English. Owing to the status and prestige of English in the country, the top-down signs are deemed to inspire best behaviors among Filipino commuters as well as reflect the government’s preference for English in formal contexts. Delos Reyes (2014) further observes that commuters speak any number of Philippine languages, but the English code choice reflects the language beliefs and ideologies of the sign creators (p. 37).

In fact, majority of Filipinos weave in and out of Tagalog, English, ‘Taglish’ (the code-mixed variety of Tagalog and English), ‘gayspeak’, along with any major languages, such as Bisaya, Bicolano, or Tausug, spoken in the streets of Manila but are never acknowledged, much less reflected in the fixed LL. In the case of Manila, a diglossic language situation prevails where the high-status language, English is the default language of the public signs but spoken only by a minority of the population (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Thus, investigating the mobile or transient LL is necessary for a more nuanced understanding of Manila’s LL of protest.

### 1.3. Dissent and the Transient Linguistic Landscape of Protests

The transient or mobile LL may present a much more complex linguistic picture in a multilingual city such as Manila. Analysis of the LL requires that non-fixed LLs be considered as well since “space can be reappropriated and reinvented to create visibility for a suppressed minority” (Seals, 2011, p. 190). Furthermore, the act of displaying languages in public places is a political act (Barni & Bagna, 2016). Seals (2011), Shiri (2015), and Kasanga (2014) articulate the potent use of transient protest signs in achieving concrete and practical political ends. Investigating the factors that led to the ousting of Tunisian president Ben Ali in 2011, Shiri (2015) points to the “subversive, counter-power genre” (p. 255) protest signs that were responsible for the success of the Tunisian demonstrations during the four-week period between 17 December 2010 and 14 January 2011. Drawing on all the languages in the protesters’ linguistic repertoire, including English, protest signs expressed their opposition to the Tunisian president’s repressive administration and mobilized support for the protest march across the region. In addition, the heteroglossic protest signs sub-

verted the power structure enjoyed by local media, eloquently expressed the evolving goals of the march, and ‘memed’ protest march slogans outside of the country (p. 255). Likewise, Seals (2011) shows how an abstract space can be turned into a ‘landscape of dissent’, where protest signs come and go to constantly re-invent the landscape. On 21 March 2010, during the National Immigration Reform March, minority languages that were not normally represented in public spaces transformed the landscape into one of “visibility and power” (Seals, 2011, p. 190). Kasanga (2014) illustrates how code choice in protest signs in Tunisia and Egypt was determined less by protesters’ linguistic repertoires than by the target audience for whom the signs were made. English, when used in protest signs, was a tactical choice to appeal to audiences outside Tunisia and the Arab world, especially for international media that could help push the revolution along. Interestingly, English in such a space is a ‘safer’ language than French, with whom the Tunis have a tenuous colonial linguistic relationship.

Anchored in this and similar research, this paper asserts that through the transient LL of protest which employed mobile and partly impromptu protest signs, the multilingual nature of Manila emerges.

## 2. The Study

The current study addresses the following questions: (1) What language/s appear in the transient LL of protest in Manila?, (2) What strategies and linguistic devices are employed to express dissent?, and (3) How can the transient LL of protest challenge the fixed LL?

In this study, data sets are limited to pictures of posters, placards, embodied texts of the transient LL that have been uploaded on the internet. Limited to selected protest signs ( $N = 103$ ), data will further be delimited to those produced and displayed in mid-November 2016 in sites of protest in Metro Manila only, although the Marco Burial protest was nationwide.

To address the question of sampling: Gorter (2006) poses methodological problems of data collection and selection, since the field of LL research is still in its infancy, especially so in the case of transient or mobile LL. I adopt Backhaus’ definition of a sign as “any piece of text within a spatially definable frame” and as such use the individual protest sign as the unit of analysis (Gorter, 2006, p. 3). Each protest sign is a token only if it is unique. Multiple posters containing the line “Marcos is not a hero”, count as only one linguistic token. This research is limited to representative sample pictures of protest signs that were uploaded to social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and Messenger, and the online magazines Rappler, PhilStar and Inquirer.net. This study is well aware of the challenges inherent in using the transient data of mass protests that now only survive as photos and videos on the internet.

Following previous research in transient LL of protests (Kasanga, 2014; Seals, 2011; Shiri, 2015), the

language of protest signs was categorized into types. The languages represented on the protest signs were English, Tagalog, ‘Taglish’, Ilocano, ‘gayspeak’, and other symbolic languages, such as Facebook’s ‘angry’ and ‘poo’ emojis, numbers, and flags. Signs that protested the burial of Marcos at the LNMB, or which decried President Duterte’s decision to entomb the body at the LNMB, were considered data. ‘Counter-protest’ data<sup>3</sup> had not been analyzed in this study.

**3. Findings and Discussion**

During the protest rallies in November 2016, a total of 103 pictures of protest signs were collected from social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Messenger, and online magazines such as Inquirer.net, Philstar, and Rappler. Many of the first protest signs from the near-impromptu march were hastily scribbled signs on coupon

bond papers, cardboard, construction paper and other flimsy materials, with the exception of occasional vinyl banners (see Figure 2).

The millennial-led mass action uncovered the saliency of a transient LL of protest, where expressions of dissent took many forms. The hastily scribbled protest signs showed the different languages used by Filipinos on the ground, such as Tagalog, English, ‘Taglish’, Ilocano, ‘gayspeak’, as well as multimodal forms that included emojis, numbers, and flags (see Table 1).

Code choice indexed Filipinos’ diverse linguistic repertoire which were creative, allusive, oftentimes sarcastic. I argue that although the country’s official languages are English and Filipino and that the fixed LL of Manila reflects these languages in varying degrees of saliency, the transient LL of protest reflects many other languages in use on the ground that are not rendered visible unless through the LL of protest (Seals, 2011).



**Figure 2.** Monolingual protest sign (English). College students from a university in Manila, along with student organizations, make their feelings known via a large vinyl banner announcing “Marcos is not a hero”. (“Kalayaan” in ‘Kalayaan College Student Organizations’ is Tagalog for ‘freedom.’) (Photo by Terzeus S. Dominguez for Philstar.com).

**Table 1.** Languages used in protest signs.

| Category                                   | Quantity (Individual Tokens) |
|--|------------------------------|
| English                                    | 30                           |
| Tagalog                                    | 29                           |
| ‘Taglish’                                  | 29                           |
| ‘Gayspeak’                                 | 8                            |
| Ilocano                                    | 3                            |
| Multimodal (use of emojis, numbers, flags) | 4                            |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>103</b>                   |

<sup>3</sup> The local government under the Duterte administration staged a ‘counter-protest’ to the November 2016 Protest March. While these ‘protesters’ had also used posters, placards, and other protest paraphernalia, they were not analyzed because ‘protest’ in this study is defined as action taken against the current administration’s decision to entomb Marcos’ body at the LNMB.

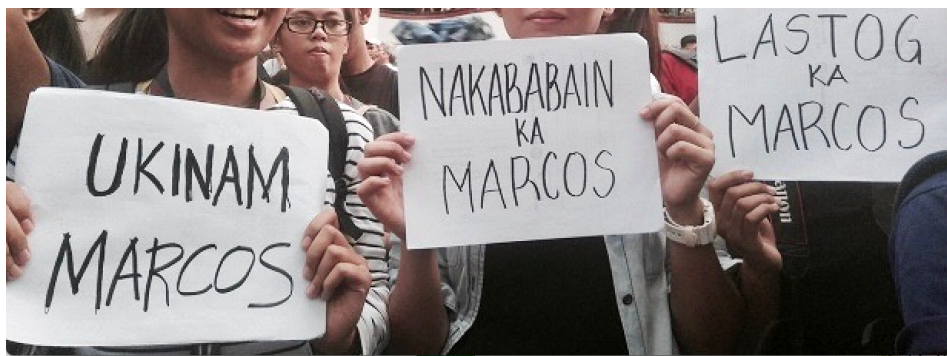
**3.1. The Multilingual Nature of Manila’s Transient LL of Protest**

In expressing disgust and anger towards the Marcoses, as well as in opposition to the Supreme Court’s ruling to bury the deceased president alongside other heroes at the LNMB, the protesters made most of the signs up as they marched along, using whatever linguistic resource is available to them. Anger was expressed in protest signs through the use of swear words in monolingual English, Tagalog, Ilocano; bilingually in the use of colorful ‘Taglish’ swear words, and multimodally through the use of Facebook’s ‘angry’ icon brandished during the protest. Protesters also used Marcos’ native language, Ilocano, to

denounce him bitterly (Figure 3).

One of the goals of the protest in November 2016 was to push back against the portrayal of the former president as a ‘hero’ and thus deserving of a hero’s burial. The Filipinos who took to the streets were chafing under the historical revisionism perpetuated by the administration for trying to portray Marcos as the greatest president this country has ever had, as well as a decorated soldier and war hero who deserved to be buried with military honors. Expectedly, many signs proclaimed that Marcos was not a hero (Figure 4).

Protest signs identified with Labor groups used ‘academic’ Tagalog to express dissent, taking on an ideological stance against the use of English. Latinate words, such



**Figure 3.** Monolingual protest signs. Young women express dissent by swearing at Marcos in ‘colorful’ Ilocano (‘Ukinam, Marcos’). Two other signs call him shameful (‘nakababain’) and arrogant (‘lastog’). (Facebook photo).



**Figure 4.** Monolingual and bilingual ‘Not a hero’ protest signs (clockwise, from bottom left): A girl prays during the protest, with “Marcos no hero” written on her face (Inquirer.net photo); A word-for-word version of “Marcos no hero” in Tagalog, above (From Kevin Mandrilla Facebook page); ‘Gayspeak’ protest sign asserts “No way is Marcos a hero” (left) (Facebook photo); and, a sign in slang above proclaims “Girl, don’t try to convince me that Marcos is a hero” (Facebook photo).



as ‘pasismo’ (fascism), and ‘estado’ (state) expressed dissent in line with the protesters’ ideological beliefs (Figure 5). Outside of protests and marches, however, these academic Tagalog are not commonly used by ordinary citizens. In contrast, one protest sign (Figure 6) alluded to the historic leftist engagements in mock, self-conscious ‘millennial-speak’. Although playful, many signs nevertheless captured the zeitgeist of the youth protest: colorful signs were humorous and sarcastic, articulating the protesters’ dissent by drawing from all linguistic resources available to them and mobilized their linguistic capital. Although only temporary, the transient LL of protest challenged the current reading of the LL of Manila as ‘unilingual’.

3.2. *Strategies of Dissent: Allusion, Puns, and Humor*

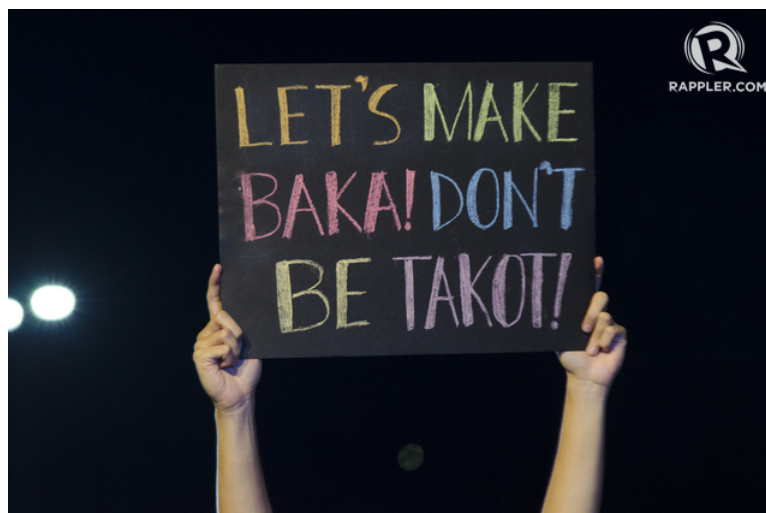
Mostly college-educated Filipinos, the millennials who populated the protests drew from a wealth of linguis-

tic, cultural, and social capital to launch a mass protest to oppose the current administration’s stance regarding the place of Marcos in Philippine history. Framing the protest within a modern, liberal, and democratic framework of an honorable, just, and decent society which the protesters felt the Marcos family and President Duterte were intent on ignoring, the Filipinos protested the current administration’s willingness to move on from a legacy of impunity by giving in to a ceremonial burial at the LNMB. Through their protest signs, the rallyists also extolled the virtues of soldiers, heroes, and past presidents entombed at the LNMB and referenced the patriotic lives of national heroes Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio who fought the colonizers, and the heroic participants of the 1986 People Power to remind the Duterte administration of its responsibility in upholding these values (see Figure 7).

Like the protest signs studied by Shiri (2015) in Tunisia and Kasanga (2014) in Egypt and Tunisia, the tran-



**Figure 5.** Bilingual protest sign. A poster of Marcos is hit by a group of laborers with their ‘Marcos no hero’ mallets. The poster reads “Marcos is an executioner of laborers” in a mix of Tagalog and Spanish words.



**Figure 6.** Bilingual protest sign. A playful way of encouraging the youth to ‘engage’ and to not be scared using a mock-activist tone, where ‘baka’ means ‘engage’, a word often used and associated with protests and mobilizations by the radical Left (Rappler photo).

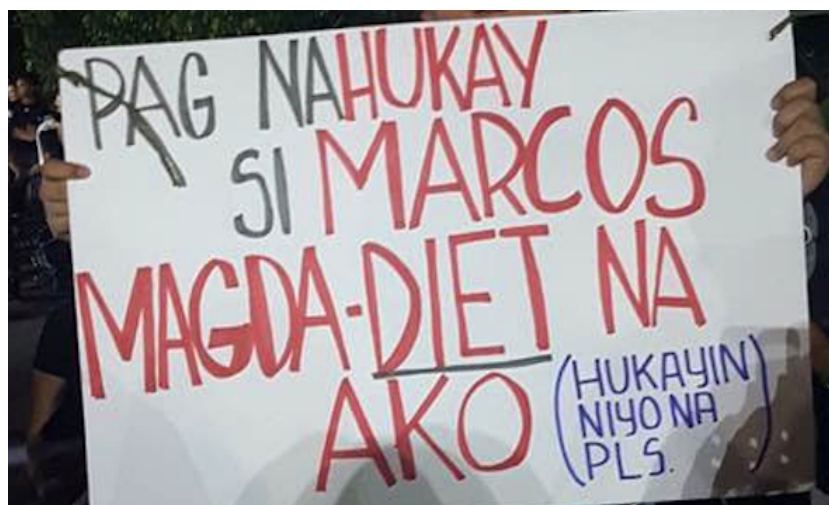


**Figure 7.** Bilingual English protest sign. ‘Libing’, which means ‘bury’, is a pun of the phrase ‘living a lie’ which references the life of Marcos, who had been accused of having war medals he didn’t earn. “Hukayin si Marcos” is Tagalog for “Unbury Marcos” (From Kevin Mandrilla Facebook page).

sient LL of protest in Manila also drew from intertextual references from a variety of genres and contexts, as well as icons of courage from Western pop culture, like Superman and Harry Potter. Some signs also referenced computer games and television anime (‘Voltes V’) which Marcos suppressed in the 1980s. Clearly, the millennials’ linguistic resources and tech-savviness mobilized in a time of protest were designed to appeal to a predominantly young audience, whose support they were courting because of their shared interests. Some protest signs also underscored the tradition of protest in the country, linking the November 2016 protest to the 1986 EDSA revolution that toppled Marcos.

Although ‘Taglish’ and ‘gayspeak’ do not normally appear in the fixed LL of Manila, they are the languages majority of Filipinos use in the streets of Manila. ‘Gayspeak’, which uses Filipino slang such as “beshies” (best friends) and “mumshies” (mothers), is mostly employed for hu-

morous effect, and for many Filipinos, as a show of solidarity for friends in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Similar to popular American slang, such as “stay woke” (derived from “stay awake” which means ‘to be aware of what’s happening in the world’, the Tagalized “pakyu” (fuck you), parody of Tinder “Ang tinde” (“Very ridiculous”), and other similar ‘gayspeak’ lingo popularized in the social media underscores the participants’ creative linguistic inheritance. Puns that use both Tagalog and English, such as “libing a lie” make sense to those who have access to both Tagalog and English, creating for the Filipino audience a layer of meaning not available to foreign audiences. A clever mention of ordinary concerns, such as healthy eating and dieting, succeeded in making protest topics both collective and personal (see Figure 8). Other protest signs exploited the rhythm and onomatopoeia of Tagalog words and phrases, including “potpot” (the sound car horns



**Figure 8.** Taglish protest sign. A protest sign that announces that the bearer “will go on a diet as soon as Marcos is unburied” highlights the personal nature of protesting social issues. The bearer pleads further: “Please unbury him now”. (From Kevin Mandrilla Facebook page)

make), “busina for hustisya” (‘honk for justice’), and “No to Macoy, yes to Chicken Joy”, the latter being an unmistakable reference to the hugely successful Filipino fast-food chain *Jollibee*. Each of these signs shows that a protest march in the Philippines could be festive and entertaining while grappling with a very serious social issue.

#### 4. Conclusion

In analyzing the LL of protest in Manila, my interest was to see what language/s appeared in the transient landscape of protest and what linguistic resources were deployed by protesters in expressing dissent. In addition, a transient linguistic event like the staging of protests is instructive in determining the position of different languages in linguistic communities and which can pose a challenge to the fixed LL. Since the fixed LL may be highly regulated because of policies on languages in public, and so may not accurately reflect languages on the ground, transient LL of protests could represent the actual number of languages in use. Mobile LL allows the presence of diverse languages to become visible, too. Thus, while previous research indexes a ‘unilingual’ LL, research on mobile LL may yield a more nuanced reading of a linguistic community. Seals (2011, 2015) claims that the “reappropriation of space on multiple levels strengthens visual power and symbolic power” (p. 201) and can transform the landscape of dissent from erasure to visibility. As was the case in the transient LL of Manila, the languages of the protest signs—many of which are not normally represented or are mostly absent from Manila’s LL—became visible, such as Ilocano, ‘Taglish’, and ‘gayspeak’. Finally, the transient LL of protest also reflected young people’s linguistic creativity and capital as they drew from many sources to express their opposition or dissent. Through humor and sarcasm, puns or swear words, the protesters were able to find their voices within the space of a transient LL of protest.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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**Appendix**

Classified according to languages, the following tables contain 103 selected protest signs collected in November 2016 from social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, and the online news outlets Rappler, Philstar, and Inquirer.net.

| <b>Tagalog</b>   | <b>English Translation</b>   |
|--|--|
| 1. Marcos, hindi bayani/Hindi bayani si Marcos   | 1. Marcos is not a hero  |
| 2. Ingat kayo sa mga diktador  | 2. Beware of dictators   |
| 3. Putang ina mo, Marcos! Nag-aaral dapat ako  | 3. You're a son of a bitch, Marcos! I should be at home studying   |
| 4. Laban muna bago landi   | 4. Fight for the country first before we flirt   |
| 5. Pakihanap si Allan Peter [Cayetano]   | 5. Please find Allan Peter [Cayetano, President Duterte's running mate]  |
| 6. Baron, sana yung libingan na lang inihian mo (hindi si Ping)  | 6. Baron, you should have peed on [Marcos'] burial plot (not on Ping)  |
| 7. Marcos, taksil sa bayan   | 7. Marcos is a traitor to the country  |
| 8. Hukay./ #Hukayin  | 8. Unbury [Marcos]. #Unbury  |
| 9. Marcos, berdugo ng obrero   | 9. Marcos is the executioner of workers  |
| 10. Labanan ang pasismo ng estado  | 10. Oppose state fascism   |
| 11. Marcos hindi bayani. Labanan ang pasismo ng estado. Ipagpatuloy ang pakikibaka para sa kalayaan at demokrasya. Itigil and Oplan Bayanihan! | 11. Marcos is not a hero. Oppose state fascism. Continue the fight for freedom and democracy. Suspend Project Bayanihan!         |
| 12. KKB [Kanya-kanyang bayad] kami dito, mga ka-DDS [Duterte Die-Hard Supporters.]   | 12. To our fellow Duterte Die-Hard supporters, we pay for our own way here.  |
| 13. M-agnanakaw<br>A-yaw namin<br>R-<br>C-<br>O-<br>S-<br>Basta!   | 13. M- thief<br>A- we do not want<br>R-<br>C-<br>O-<br>S-<br>Whatever!   |
| 14. Walang hustisya! Tatahimik ka na lang ba?  | 14. There is no justice! Will you just keep quiet?   |
| 15. Digong, tuta ni Marcos   | 15. Digong [President Duterte], a Marcos lackey/stooge. [Actual translation of "tuta" is "puppy"]                                |
| 16. Ang pagtahimik ay pagpayag sa panggagahasa sa bayan  | 16. Silence means tacit approval of rape and plunder of the country  |
| 17. Tangina mo, Marcos!  | 17. You son of a bitch, Marcos!  |
| 18. Marcos ako, huwag tularan  | 18. I am a Marcos. Do not imitate  |
| 19. Huwag payagang muling umiral and dilim.  | 19. Do not allow darkness to exert its hold over us once again.  |
| 20. Huwag magpakabulag.  | 20. Don't be willfully blind.  |
| 21. Busina para sa hustisya.   | 21. Honk your horn for justice.  |
| 22. Lumaban....'86, Lalaban....2016 Para sa Pilipinas, Layas, mga Marcos, Hukayin & itapon   | 22. We fought in '86; we will fight in [20]16 for the Philippines. Get lost, Marcoses! Exhume [Marcos' corpse] and throw it away |
| 23. Pilipinas, ginagago na naman tayo.   | 23. Philippines, they're taking us for fools again.  |
| 24. Berdugo, hindi bayani.   | 24. Executioner, not a hero.   |
| 25. Diktador, hindi bayani.  | 25. Dictator, not a hero.  |

| Tagalog  | English Translation   |
|--|---|
| 26. Marcos, duwag.   | 26. Marcos is a coward.   |
| 27. Marcos, magnanakaw hanggang sa huli.                   | 27. Marcos is a thief to the very end.                                      |
| 28. Taksil, hindi bayani.                                  | 28. [Marcos is] a traitor, not a hero.                                      |
| 29. Mga bayani, buwis buhay. Marcos, buwis natin nilustay. | 29. Our heroes sacrificed their lives. Marcos embezzled the nation's money. |

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**English**

1. Andres Bonifacio: Temperamental brat
2. Marcos is no hero/Marcos is not a hero/Not a hero
3. Marcos the man of steal
4. Factboys 100, not fuckbois
5. I'm here for free! #Marcosnotahero
6. Be the Lumos Maxima in this country full of Imperio, Crucio, and Avada Kedavra
7. Stop making martial law happen, it's not gonna happen!!!
8. No to Macoy, Yes to Chicken Joy
9. Mr Marcos, Tell Satan the President says hi
10. You can never oblivate us!
11. Sandro, you can't sit with us!! On Wedsnedays [sic] we wear black
12. Down with this sort of thingie
13. No! Justice first for all! #NeverAgain
14. No honor for dictator/No honor for tyrant
15. Meeple Power, Tabletop gamers against Marcos
16. Don't insult Rizal. Marcos is not a hero.
17. True heroes fought Martial Law [on a t-shirt]
18. #NotoMarcosBurialinLNMB
19. #NeverForget, #NeverAgain
20. Let's revolt in versus injustice
21. Scholasticians against Marcos
22. Fire is catching. If we burn you, burn with us.
23. Rally today, review tomorrow.
24. #BeBrave, Resist dictators
25. Stop historical revisionism!
26. Stop extrajudicial killings!
27. Silence aids the oppressor
28. Pro-country, pro-justice, pro-truth
29. Fantastic thieves and where to send them.
30. Fighting the Marcoses like my father before me.

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| 'Taglish'  | English Translation   |
|--|---|
| 1. Beshies against bardagulan  | 1. Bestfriends against street fighting  |
| 2. Diktador not a hero/Diktador hindi hero   | 2. Dictator, not a hero   |
| 3. No to Marcos burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani   | 3. No to Marcos burial in the Cemetery of Heroes  |
| 4. Fuck you po, Marcos #NeverAgain   | 4. Fuck you, Marcos. #NeverAgain  |
| 5. Nawawalang tuta [picture of Senator Alan Cayetano.]<br>If found, please call 8888!!   | 5. Lost puppy [picture of Senator Alan Cayetano.]<br>If found, please call 8888!!   |
| 6. It's a Match! Made in HELL [pictures of former president<br>Marcos and President Duterte] Ang tinde. Send a message,<br>keep protesting | 6. It's a Match! Made in HELL [pictures of former president<br>Marcos and President Duterte] Amazing shamelessness.<br>Send a message. Keep protesting. |
| 7. [on a shirt]: Libing a lie #HukayinsiMarcos<br>#Marcosnotahero  | 7. [on a shirt]: Libing [burying] a lie #Hukayinsimarcos<br>#Marcosnotahero   |
| 8. Lokohan 2016  | 8. Fooling in 2016  |

| <b>'Taglish'</b>   | <b>English Translation</b>   |
|--|--|
| 9. Magnanakaw AF [ass fuck]!   | 9. Thief AF [ass fuck]!  |
| 10. Galawang Marcos (Pakyu)  | 10. Move like a Marcos (Fuck you)  |
| 11. Nagresearch na ako, sabi ng research ko pakyu po.  | 11. I already conducted my research, and according to it, fuck you.  |
| 12. Make busina for hustisya   | 12. Honk for justice   |
| 13. Let's make baka! Don't be takot!   | 13. Let us engage! Don't be afraid!  |
| 14. Sa Ex ko lang ako mag mo-move on   | 14. I will only move on with my ex-boyfriend/girlfriend.   |
| 15. Babalikan mo ba Ex mo na gumago at umabuso sa yo? Di ba #YouDeserveBetter?   | 15. Will you go back to your ex-boyfriend/girlfriend who screwed you over? Don't you think #YouDeserveBetter?                              |
| 16. Pag nahukay si Marcos, magda-diet na ako (Hukayin nyo na pls.)   | 16. I will go on a diet when you exhume Marcos. (Please hurry up and exhume him.)  |
| 17. Marcos hukayin, not a hero   | 17. Exhume Marcos' body, not a hero  |
| 18. Apologies, not apologists. Marcos magnanakaw   | 18. Apologies, not apologists. Marcos is a thief.  |
| 19. Justice, hindi just-tiis   | 19. We need justice, not just-put up with it.  |
| 20. Bumagsak man grades ko, wag lang bayan ko.   | 20. I don't mind failing grades, but my country I cannot allow to fail.  |
| 21. Make potpot to show your poot.   | 21. Honk to show your anger.   |
| 22. Make some ingay to unbury the bangkay.   | 22. Make some noise to unbury the dead.  |
| 23. Hatol ng kasaysayan, Marcos not a hero   | 23. History has judged Marcos—not a hero.  |
| 24. Buwis mo. Sapatos ni Imelda, mukha ni Imee, tuition ni Sandro. #Magnanakaw   | 24. Here is where your taxes go: Imelda's shoes, Imee's face [enhancements], Sandro's tuition fees. #Thief                                 |
| 25. Imee: Personal life funded \$, Princeton, Wedding in Ilocos, Phil Airlines to pick up breastmilk #MarcosMagnanakaw | 25. Imee: Personal life funded \$, Princeton, Wedding in Ilocos, Phil Airlines to pick up breastmilk #MarcosMagnanakaw (Marcos is a thief) |
| 26. Pakyu, Marcos!   | 26. Fuck you, Marcos.  |
| 27. Botox ni Imee, Tuition ni Sandro, Pera ng bayan  | 27. Imee's botox and Sandro's tuition fees are the country's money   |
| 28. Di porket Christmas season na ay naka-sale din ang hustisya.   | 28. Just because it's the Christmas season doesn't mean justice is also on sale.   |
| 29. Marcos burial sa LNMB? Unlike!   | 29. Marcos burial at LNMB? Unlike!   |

| <b>Ilocano</b>       | <b>English Translation</b>  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Ukinam, Marcos    | 1. You're a cunt, Marcos.   |
| 2. Nakababain ka.    | 2. You're an embarrassment. |
| 3. Lastog ka, Marcos | 3. You're arrogant, Marcos. |

| <b>'Gayspeak'</b>               | <b>English Translation</b>                           |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Witchikels bayani si Marcos. | 1. No way is Marcos a hero.                          |
| 2. Marcos hero? Wag ako, gurl.  | 2. Is Marcos a hero? Don't try to win me over, girl. |
| 3. Marcos, don't me.            | 3. Marcos, don't try to convince me. Not me.         |
| 4. Marcos is so not fetch.      | 4. We do not approve of Marcos.                      |
| 5. Mumshies against Marcos.     | 5. Mothers against Marcos.                           |
| 6. Whatever, Marcos.            | 6. Whatever, Marcos.                                 |
| 7. Stay woke.                   | 7. Stay aware of what's happening in the world.      |
| 8. My gahd I hate Marcos.       | 8. My God I hate Marcos.                             |

**Emojis and other miscellany**

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1.



2. Marcos



3. 2 cruel 2 be 4gotten

4. Philippine flag

