



# Language in public space and language policies in Hanoi Old Quarter, Vietnam: a dynamic understanding of the interaction

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## Abstract

This paper explores the interaction between linguistic landscapes and language policies of the Old Quarter in Hanoi, Vietnam to investigate how legislated and de facto language policies come together to create lived monolingualism, multilingualism and hybridity in language displays in public spaces. Our research focuses on language policies as both text and practice and shows how practices in the linguistic landscape manoeuvre and bend around multiple, overlapping and conflicting legislated policies to embrace broader discourses. We conclude that dynamic understandings of multiple language policies at work in the linguistic landscape provide a crucial lens for understanding the roles of national languages, foreign languages and language invisibility.

**Keywords** Language policy · Linguistic landscape · Dynamic language displays · Language invisibility

## Introduction

This paper explores dynamic patterns in language displays in public space, how they contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of language policy (LP) and how such understandings inform the place of language varieties in the Old Quarter in Hanoi, Vietnam. Our study considers LP as both the discourses of legislated texts and de facto language practices (Johnson 2013; Shohamy 2006; Spolsky 2004) to

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delve into how language use in public space connects with multiple legislated LPs. We argue that an exploration into how de facto LP practices interact with multiple legislated LPs is essential for understanding why certain languages are visible and others are not (see also Shohamy 2006).

In this paper, we focus on multiple legislated LPs at play through the lens of one de facto language practice: the language display of public signs, the linguistic landscape (LL). According to Shohamy (2006), a LL “communicates a message, intentional or not, conscious or not, that affects, manipulates or imposes de facto language policy and practice” (p. 110). The de facto policies embedded in public displays of language(s) interact with legislated policies, each vying for power (Johnson 2013: 8). Understanding this interactional process is important for issues about multilingualism and language hybridity (Gorter and Cenoz 2015; Pietikäinen et al. 2011), the prevalence of English in public space in EFL contexts (Bolton 2012; Lanza and Woldemariam 2009), and the place of indigenous languages in today’s world (Gorter et al. 2012).

To achieve the aim of this paper, we start by reviewing the literature on the relationships between LL and LPs before introducing the theoretical foundation underlying the study, the discourse analytic approach. Then we move on to consider multiple LPs at play in Vietnam and their effects on the LL as a series of interacting, overlapping and even conflicting discursive practices.

## Literature on the relationships between LL and LP

The relationships between LL and LP have been the focus of extensive research. Publications in the LL field have noted the substantial contribution that the study of signs in public space can have for unearthing a fuller picture of “practiced language policies” (Bonacina-Pugh 2012). Several important works have explored the direct relationship between explicit legislated LL regulations and real LL practices. For example, Torkington (2009) considered the matches and mismatches between the LL in Algarve, Portugal through local and national advertising LPs. Likewise, Lamarre (2014) explored how a shift in the LL legislation in Quebec from a unilingual policy in French to a policy endorsing bi/multilingualism but favouring French affected the LL there. In these publications, LPs are used as an explanation for how languages should be used and how they should be visually organised. As shown in Lamarre (2014), while strict policies have had a direct effect on language displays, individual agents often find creative ways to redefine their LL. Lamarre provided examples of how language displays can defy LPs by transcending language boundaries to create playful language hybridity by using words that can be pronounced in both French and English. In another study, Manan et al. (2015) reported on how individual agencies in the LL of Kuala Lumpur react to LL legislation in private bi/multilingual signs that promote English in terms of size and positioning in opposition to the advertising LP that prioritises Bahasa Malaysia.

Other works have focused on the indirect ways in which general legislation affects language use on language displays in the LL via its impact on language ideologies. Examples include Macalister’s (2012) study into the effect of past and

current legislated LPs on current LL, Kasanga's (2012) work on Cambodian language policy-in-education, and Hult's (2014) overview of how historical-political considerations about language contexts and language policy-in-education impact on language use in the LL. These studies offer inroads into how general LPs are able to serve as "an ideological backdrop" when considering LL (Hult 2018: 339). An example of LL as an ideological backdrop is illustrated in Hult (2014) where the dominance of English on highway signs in San Antonio is portrayed as a reflection of the ideology of English as the dominant language of America. When exceptions occur, as when LL agents draw on, bend and manoeuvre around written policies, such works create an alternative LL that resemiotises legislated policy discourses (Hult 2018: 339). An example of such resemiotisation is the presence of English in the LL of Cambodia, a language display incompatible with both the current national LP favouring Khmer and the past national LP favouring French. Other forms of resemiotisation have been recorded through language creativity that contravenes legislated LPs. Examples include Pavlenko (2012) who noted the use of bivalent words, read as Ukrainian or Russian, in the LL of Kyiv, Ukraine. In Pavlenko's study, these bivalent words were used to resist the downplaying of Russian as a minority ethnic language in the LP of Ukraine. Lipovsky (2018) provided another example of individual agency in the LL of Belleville, France where there is a popular ideology of favouring French as the long-standing LP of "one nation – one language". In her study, Lipovsky found several shop signs using English-French language hybridity in displays with English syntactic structures.<sup>1</sup>

Taken together, research on the direct and indirect effects of LPs on LL provides valuable insights into the study of multiple and sometimes "intermingling" codes in society (Backhaus 2006: 63). While this research offers insights into the effects of LPs on LL, it does not explicitly consider the confluencing effect of multiple LPs on the LL. The current study explores how the confluences of legislated LPs play out in the LL.

To explore the relationship between LL and LPs, other works have taken into consideration the complexities of the LL and how they connect together to make a whole. Kallen (2010), for example, categorises LL into different frames: the civic frame, the marketplace, the portals, the wall, the detritus zone, the community and the school as examples of potential framings. The visual manifestations of these framing practices exist in what Kallen refers to as a "confluence of systems, within a single visual field" (p. 42), drawing on the implicit complexities embedded in those listed frames. Macalister (2012) has also unpacked some of these complexities in a study of the LL of Timor-Leste. His findings highlight, for example, how similar business types in seemingly the same context exhibit different language displays, adding understandings about the dynamic nature of language displays and how they connect together to make a whole. We consider this sort of conceptualisation as important to look further into the dynamic realisations present in how multiple LPs confluence in the LL.

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<sup>1</sup> For a deeper discussion of other research that focuses on the direct and indirect relationship between LL and LP, see also Hult (2018).

## Theoretical framework: discourse analytic approach

One theoretical framework that has provided insights into how to analyse multiple confluences around LPs is the discourse analytic approach (Barakos and Unger 2016; Hult 2017; Mortimer 2017). We use this approach to consider the interaction of legislated LPs and LL and to explore how different LPs intersect and compete. Through this process, we can come “to rethink the ways that we conceptualise, investigate and analyse texts, contexts and meanings” (Tollefson and Pérez-Milans 2018: 11) as competing, complementary and interacting real-life language practices. This perspective also allows us to consider how confluences at different levels of legislated LPs shape different everyday language choices (Mortimer 2017; Hult 2010) as well as how language choices take shape of legislated LPs. In other words, a discourse analytic approach provides a useful lens to consider multiple LP discourses at play to reflect on the “dynamic and multifaceted nature of language in society” (Hult 2009: 89) by simultaneously taking into consideration both the “structure”, top-down control, as well as the “agency” involved in individual language choices (Johnson 2016). The dynamism within the discourse analytic approach also allows us to consider LP through time (Johnson 2015; Savski 2016). This emphasis on temporality helps to understand the effects of previous LPs, the ways that LPs are enacted in the present, and offers insights into future language planning via an exploration of language in public space.

In this paper, we draw on the discourse analytic approach to consider how intersecting LPs play out in Hanoi’s Old Quarter as visible and invisible discourses through the use of named languages, monolingualism, bilingualism, and hybridity. We begin our analysis with a quantitative overview of the languages in the LL of the Old Quarter in Hanoi through monolingual, bi/multilingual and hybrid signs. We then introduce a method to represent quantitative data for the analysis of language displays that may be useful for a discourse analytic approach to explore language dynamism in practice. We complete our paper with a discussion of how a discourse analytic approach helps us to see complex relations between structure and agency in LL and LP discourses, with illustrative examples.

In order to explain further the value of this approach, we describe the multiple legislated LPs in Vietnam as a series of inter-related and competing discourses.

## Language policies in Vietnam

To consider the ways in which legislated LPs interact, we explore the discourses of LPs embedded in Vietnam: the National Constitution, the foreign language-in-education policy and political discourses on internationalisation, the advertising LP as well as relics of past legislated LPs of prior French and Chinese rule, as each sends messages about the role of languages in Vietnam.

The National Constitution (1946, 1992, 2013) emphasises the importance of Vietnamese in major areas of life (Nguyen and Hamid 2017), as the national, official and de facto language of the country. It recognises Vietnamese as the language of media and public broadcasting and as the principal language used throughout the

educational system, from kindergarten to higher education (Vietnam National Assembly 2005). The Constitution has been rewritten multiple times (1946, 1992, 2013), but only ever in one language, Vietnamese. In the Constitution, Vietnamese is portrayed as the language of the majority ethnic group, the ‘Kinh People’, who constitute 86% of the population (Phan et al. 2014). Most of the remaining population belong to 53 ethnic groups (Nguyen and Nguyen 2019). The Constitution recognises the ethnic languages spoken in these communities. In the Constitution, these languages are labelled as “*tiếng dân tộc thiểu số*”, i.e. ethnic minority languages. In other countries, these languages are labelled indigenous languages.<sup>2</sup> Some of Vietnam’s indigenous languages have more potential to be displayed in public spaces than others. Sixty two are used in everyday interaction to varying degrees, while 42 are under threat (Nguyen and Nguyen 2019). Among these languages, twenty-six have written scripts (Ly n.d.).

A second set of policy documents encodes the national foreign language-in-education policy. This set of policy documents position foreign languages, particularly English, as useful for the local Vietnamese population. After 1986, the Vietnamese Government created an open-door policy, called “*Đổi Mới*” (innovation). The aim was to boost the economy and international trade to move Vietnam into the 21st century (Kirkpatrick and Liddicoat 2017). To reach this economic goal, the government realised the importance of foreign languages for trade and reinforced the importance of foreign language skills by placing special emphasis on English as the language with the greatest economic value (Nguyen et al. 2018) and as the de facto lingua franca for international transactions (Bui and Nguyen 2016). As part of this process, the government created a series of legal education documents related to the learning of foreign languages by its citizens. In particular, the passing of the national plan of “Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Educational System in the Period 2008–2020” (MOET 2008) aimed at increasing the viability of the future workforce. In this document, the Ministry of Education and Training featured the importance of English learning and teaching along with “other [foreign] languages”, which were left unspecified (Article II.1).

A third relevant LP is a document referred to as the advertising LP (Vietnam National Assembly 2012). This document is once again written in Vietnamese. We reproduce it here with our English translation as each of the Articles in this LP is important for our argument:

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<sup>2</sup> The labelling of ethnic minority languages relates to languages with a long historical presence in Vietnam. It excludes recent languages spoken by minority communities such as Korean spoken in the Korean–Vietnamese community. We use the term “indigenous language” to refer to ethnic minority languages in the constitution document.

*Điều 18. Tiếng nói, chữ viết trong quảng cáo*

1. Trong các sản phẩm quảng cáo phải có nội dung thể hiện bằng tiếng Việt, trừ những trường hợp sau:
  - a) Nhãn hiệu hàng hoá, khẩu hiệu, thương hiệu, tên riêng bằng tiếng nước ngoài hoặc các từ ngữ đã được quốc tế hoá không thể thay thế bằng tiếng Việt;
  - b) Sách, báo, trang thông tin điện tử và các ấn phẩm được phép xuất bản bằng tiếng dân tộc thiểu số Việt Nam, tiếng nước ngoài; chương trình phát thanh, truyền hình bằng tiếng dân tộc thiểu số Việt Nam, tiếng nước ngoài.
  
2. Trong trường hợp sử dụng cả tiếng Việt, tiếng nước ngoài trên cùng một sản phẩm quảng cáo thì khổ chữ nước ngoài không được quá ba phần tư khổ chữ tiếng Việt và phải đặt bên dưới chữ tiếng Việt; khi phát trên đài phát thanh, truyền hình hoặc trên các phương tiện nghe nhìn, phải đọc tiếng Việt trước tiếng nước ngoài.

*Article 18.- Voice and writing in advertisements*

1. Advertising products must be in Vietnamese, except for the following cases:
  - a) *Trademarks, slogans, proper names in foreign languages or internationalised words that cannot be replaced in Vietnamese;*
  - b) *Books, newspapers, websites and publications permitted in ethnic minority languages of Vietnam and foreign languages; Radio and television programs in ethnic minority languages of Vietnam and foreign languages.*
  
2. *In cases where both Vietnamese and foreign languages are used on the same advertising product, the foreign words must not exceed 3/4 of the size of the Vietnamese characters and must be placed under the Vietnamese characters; When broadcast on radio or television or by audio-visual means, the Vietnamese must be read before foreign languages.*

Overall, Article 18 specifies the acceptable spoken and written forms of named languages in advertisements. Article 18.1 focuses on the accepted form of languages other than Vietnamese, drawing attention to the accepted use of foreign languages in specific contexts. Article 18.1a refers to the language of trademarks, slogans, proper names as well as some “internationalised” words where there is no accepted Vietnamese equivalent. The implied message is that foreign languages are only acceptable in highly specified contexts. The wording in Article 18.1b considers the accepted publication of materials such as books in languages other than Vietnamese. Article 18.1b refers to foreign languages and minority language use, grouping them together. By implication, this suggests that Vietnamese indigenous languages are to be treated as different from, and unequal to, Vietnamese.

Article 18.2 refers to bi/multilingual language use. This article elicits a set of language hierarchies in the production of spoken and written advertising texts. In spoken text, Vietnamese is to be read first. In written documents, Vietnamese is promoted over other languages through its visual display in larger font and in a position above other languages on a sign. The only named language mentioned in this article is Vietnamese. From a discourse analytic perspective, English is not prioritised as *the* only foreign language in advertisements. Article 18.2 gives no recognition to the visible presence of indigenous languages in bilingual advertising. The lack of mention implies that indigenous languages have little economic value in Vietnamese society. Article 18.2 also makes no explicit mention of any forms of hybridity, forms of languages that contain elements not identified as single named language categories. Yet in Vietnam, people often mix Vietnamese with English in their spoken interaction, a topic of some concern in academic (Phan et al. 2014) as well as political discourses. Some representatives of the National Assembly have proposed that the national government establish a much stricter regulatory system for written language use in public space to sustain the purity of Vietnamese (The Voice of Vietnam 2016). None of this discussion is represented in current legislation. An absence of mention suggests that hybridity is not to be promoted.

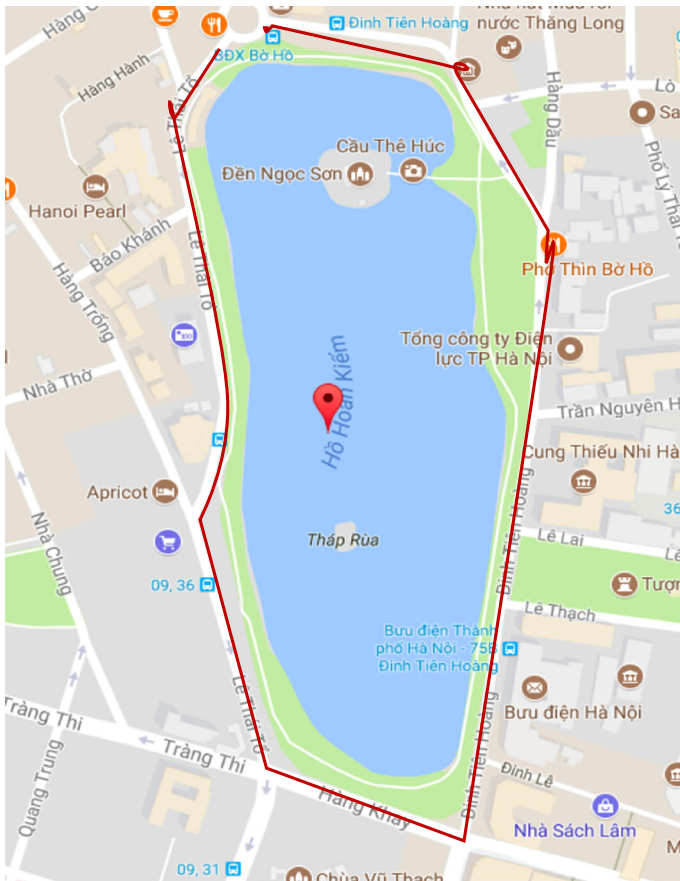
In addition to current LPs, historical legislated LPs have played a role in language use. Traces of these may still be seen through remnants in the LL. Potential examples include Chinese from their occupation of Vietnam from 111 BC to 939 AD and French as France occupied Vietnam for nearly a century from 1861 to 1945 (Lo Bianco 2001; Nguyen 2006). There was also a period (1975–1991) where the Soviet Union provided military and civilian support. During this time, Russian was emphasised in foreign language education (Nguyen 2011).

In the next section, we introduce the research setting, discuss how we went about to collect the data, and introduce a methodology for exploring how multiple language policy texts are played out in practices in the LL of Hanoi Old Quarter, Vietnam.

## The methodology

### Setting: Hanoi Old Quarter

Hanoi Old Quarter, located in the heart of Vietnam's capital city, is a busy commercial centre. Commercial activities thrive with shop owners selling goods to various sorts of clientele in the area. These include approximately 100,000 Vietnamese residents, who work, live and/or study there as well as some 800,000 local and international tourists per year (Lam 2015). To cater for the tourists, the area has undergone considerable urbanisation and modernisation (Turner 2009). The area is now home to travel agencies, international hotels and tourism services. It is also home to retail outlets selling foreign luxury products such as cosmetics and handbags. Other tourist-related businesses in the area sell local goods: groceries, traditional local crafts and products such as silk, paintings and handicrafts. The Old Quarter is also close to the centre of national government in Ba Đình Square, an area



**Figure 1** The research setting

that houses the national assembly building, the state council building and the communist party offices. While the national government agencies are not part of the Old Quarter, its close proximity has the potential to impact on its LL.

The Old Quarter covers an area of 40 plus streets. In this paper, we restrict our analysis of the LL to three streets: Hàng Khay Street, Lê Thái Tổ Street and Đinh Tiên Hoàng Street<sup>3</sup> (marked red in Figure 1 above). These three streets encircle Hoàn Kiếm Lake, a popular tourist destination frequented by Vietnamese tourists and international travelers. On these three streets, there is a potpourri of commercial and government establishments. This diversity of businesses offers up the opportunity to unveil how different LPs are enacted and to show how LPs come together to create a LL catering to local and international tourism.

<sup>3</sup> Some works refer to this area as the French Quarter. However, given the complexity in the historical developments of this area, we refer to be more broadly as “the Old Quarter”, a term often used in tourist maps of the area.



## Data collection and analysis

To consider the intersection between LP and LL discourses, the researchers captured photos of all signs in the three mentioned streets using the camera on an iPhone 6 Plus. We paid particular attention to how to count signs as there are different options available. Cenoz and Gorter (2006) take the business as the unit of analysis and do not focus on the language variation within a single business. In contrast, Backhaus (2006) considers information units as important and takes as his unit of analysis “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (p. 55), regardless of its size. We have taken the latter approach because it allows consideration of multiple information units within a single business, written in different forms that may deliver different information to different target audiences. The selection of multiple information units from a single business also allows us to consider various ways in which a language hierarchy (Backhaus 2006), the notion that one language is given more emphasis to the other, is enacted in public space.

Another issue when counting signs is which signs to include and exclude. Based on research emphasis, different researchers have made certain types of exclusions. For example, Backhaus (2006) focused on multilingual signs, and did not count monolingual signs in Japanese. Alsaif and Starks (2018) included all signs but counted only one token of each type to avoid multiple tokens of similarly manufactured signs. In this paper, we have counted all instances of static signs in all languages, whether repeated or not. Another issue is mobile signs (Jaworski 2010, 2014). In the Old Quarter, there are signs on buses, cars and people. Because we were not able to provide a systematic analysis of such signs at any specific moment in time, we excluded mobile signs from our analyses.

A third consideration is what counts as language on the signs selected for analysis. Some researchers exclude trademarks (see Edelman (2009) and Tufi and Blackwood (2010) for a discussion on this issue). We chose not to exclude trademarks because these are included as an accepted form in the advertising LP and provide important insights into how LPs are manifested in public space. In terms of the language used in the trademarks, we draw on the language in the sign itself rather than the language where the product was designed or manufactured (see Tufi and Blackwood (2010) for a discussion). For example, we consider the trademark “Lacoste” to be a French trademark regardless of where the producers of the trademark or the name of the product originates. We also chose to consider trademarks and related slogans as part of message of the sign (Edelman 2009). For example, if we have a sign with the “Lacoste” brand name on top and the slogan “Life is a beautiful sport” underneath, we considered it as a French and English sign.

For our data analysis, we started by counting the languages on the signs. We first categorised the signs by labelling them based on the concept of named languages, those that can be identified and enumerated (Mühlhäusler 2000). From this perspective, we are able to label the languages on the signs and categorise them as monolingual, bilingual or multilingual with one, two, or more than two named languages respectively. When we were unable to identify all forms of languages as consisting of separate named languages, we labelled such signs as ‘hybridity’. This quantitative analysis provided a baseline for how different LP discourses are

enacted in situ and allowed us to provide a basic description of signs that were frequent and infrequent in the LL. In this vein, we take on Blackwood's recommendation about the need to consider the quantitative approach as "a prerequisite" (Blackwood 2015: 40) to understanding the overall LL picture of a certain public space before any qualitative exploration. Our approach also builds on Hult's (2017: 119) comment on the need for future quantitative work using the discourse analytic approach.

We supplemented this with a second quantitative analysis to enable us to focus on the dynamic nature of frequently occurring language displays in different types of businesses in our research setting. In this part of our analysis, we divided language displays into 3 categories based on how they conformed to the written messages of the various legislated LPs. Our first category is "signs conforming to legislated LPs". Conforming signs include monolingual signs in named languages referred to in one or more of the LPs as well as bi/multilingual signs that prioritise Vietnamese over other languages in positioning and in a font size in ways that conform to Article 18.2 of the advertising LP.

Our second category "signs partially conforming to legislated LP" refers to signs that partially conform to the literal message of the LPs. This category includes those that prioritise Vietnamese without adhering to the strict requirements of Article 18.2. For instance, a sign may follow the advertising LP by applying the size rule but not the positioning rule or the positioning rule but not the size rule<sup>4</sup> or by positioning larger Vietnamese letters on the left and smaller English on the right. Such displays would promote Vietnamese over English but in ways different from the advertising LP. Our third category of language displays is "signs not conforming to legislated LPs". These signs do not conform to any legislated LP discourses. There are two potential types of these signs: those that prioritise other languages over Vietnamese in size and position, and all instances of language hybridity. We analyse the former category through language displays and illustrate the latter more infrequent hybridity cases with an example.

Using these categories, we describe the different types of businesses in our research setting. In each case, we used a bubble method to draw visual displays representing the various business types (e.g. bank), distinguishing government business types from other business types by writing the former in bigger font. We added this detail to provide insights into whether government and commercial practices affected the patterns of language displays. In each bubble, we noted the number of examples by providing a number after the name of the business, e.g. watch shop (3). When there was only one example, there was no number provided. Finally, we used colour-coding to help us explore the fixed and dynamic patterns in the dataset. When a business type displayed signs in only one way (e.g. all school bag shops displayed their signs in Vietnamese (V)), we presented it in a light colour bubble in the language display. When the signs in a given business type were

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<sup>4</sup> Scollon and Scollon (2003: 125) have signaled that size is more important than position because sizing gives readers more salient information. This is called the "size overruling order" (Pavlenko 2009: 252). The advertising LP mentions size before positioning and from a discourse-analytic approach, this implies that size may be viewed as more important in the Vietnamese context as well.

displayed in more than one way (e.g. different watch shops displayed their signs in V and in E), we coded this more varied language display with a dark bubble.

To complete our analysis, we approached our data from a qualitative perspective by providing an analysis of two selected examples where single businesses (one government and one commercial) displayed more than one sign in more than one way (V, E, V–E and/or E–V). These examples show how the same single businesses use multiple language displays to comply, play around and even subvert different LPs. These examples were our endeavour to look at the nature of the text from a discourse analytic perspective. These examples throw light on Lou's (2012) claim about the need to consider how multilingual signs evoke different messages to multiple audiences and how this relates to the different LPs at play.

In the next section, we provide a quantitative overview of the overall LL in our research setting. We then go deeper into the language displays of different business types to unveil the dynamism in the discursive practices embedded in varied LPs to consider the interplay between various LPs and how they play out in the LL. We use this information to argue for a more dynamic approach into the exploration of the relationship between LLs and LPs.

## Findings

### Quantitative overview

Table 1 details the languages on 225 signs<sup>5</sup> in our research setting. As indicated in Table 1, 128 signs contain monolingual messages, 88 bilingual messages and 2 multilingual messages. We recorded 7 instances of hybridity, where the status of at least one of the languages on the sign is not easily classifiable. Overall, more than half of the signs are monolingual and most of the monolingual signs display two forms of monolingualism: Vietnamese (65) and English (54). These two forms of monolingualism affirm the importance of different LPs. The presence of monolingual Vietnamese signs affirms the status of Vietnamese in the National Constitution and the presence of monolingual English signs affirms the status of English in the foreign language-in-education policy. The presence of English also aligns with embedded ideologies about the primary role of English as the language of trade in the political discourses on internationalisation. Yet there are also scattered examples of monolingual signs with foreign languages other than English (Italian, Korean, German, French, Chinese). The signs using Italian and Korean occur outside expensive restaurants and the sign in German appears outside of a specialty beer shop. The use of these foreign languages appears to evoke connotations of exoticness in the Old Quarter as it does in other contexts worldwide (Tufi and Blackwood 2010), perhaps encouraged by political discourses in the policy on internationalisation. These signs also convey a sense of luxury, a feature signifying “economically advantaged spaces” through the selling of high-end products (Stroud and Mpendukana 2009: 367).

<sup>5</sup> The bolded instances will be used for further analysis.

**Table 1** Languages on signs in the dataset

Types	Language(s)
Monolingual (128)	Vietnamese (65) English (54) Minority Languages (0) Italian (1) Korean (1) German (1) French (4) Traditional Chinese (2)
Bilingual (88)	Vietnamese and English (78) <sup>a</sup> Korean and Vietnamese (1) English and French (4) English and Japanese (1) Italian and English (1) German and English (1) English and Dutch (2)
Multilingual (2)	Vietnamese, English and French (1) Italian, English and French (1)
Hybridity	7
<i>Total</i>	225

<sup>a</sup>The listing of the languages in the bilingual and multilingual signs in Table 1 does not necessarily reflect any language hierarchy on the signs

The French and Chinese signs are somewhat complex to analyse. Both French and Chinese had a historical role in Vietnam. The French presence was relatively recent, leaving few clues about the temporality of the language use. While some signs using French advertise high-end products in ways similar to other foreign languages used, others advertise a range of products with different functions (e.g. basic necessities such as coffee or information related to medical products from France). These varied linguistic messages suggest that French displays create connotations of exoticness that are associated with current political discourses on internationalisation and sometimes but not always with luxury. The two Chinese signs are more temporally indexed. The Chinese characters were written using traditional Chinese characters; one sign was written from top to bottom and the other from right to left, both forms of orthographic conventions associated with the past rather than the present (Lou 2016). The sign in a script written from top to bottom in an ancient form of Chinese occurred on a pagoda near Hoàn Kiếm Lake, a relic of a past LP. The other Chinese sign signified good wishes for the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. Traditional Chinese characters continue to have special significance in present-day Vietnam as they are associated with Buddhism and Chinese Lunar New Year culture, which had its beginnings in Vietnam during the

Chinese rule (McLeod and Nguyen 2001). These signs illustrate how a past legislated LP is able to leave a current mark in the LL.

Another language with links to the past and the present that could have been in the LL but was not is Russian. Even though there existed a period in quite recent history where Russian was privileged in the formal language education system, this LP discourse is invisible in this LL. From a discourse analytic perspective, these invisible practices provide indications of the current importance of languages. Another invisible practice is Vietnam's indigenous languages. This is a more important invisibility, as indigenous communities and their languages are promoted in the National Constitution. Indigenous languages have taken a prominent place in public space in the international scene (Edelman 2014) where such languages are commonly seen as a form of social unification (Gorter et al. 2012). They are increasingly seen as a way to attract tourists to pay to visit and use indigenous services (Coupland and Garrett 2010; Moriarty 2015). Vietnam's indigenous languages are used for neither practice in this LL.

When we turn to bilingual and multilingual signs, a similar picture emerges to what is present in the monolingual signs. The predominant bilingual signs are those in Vietnamese and English. This type of bilingual sign reaffirms LP discourses that prioritise Vietnamese and English and affirms the interaction between them. Vietnamese appears only twice on other bi/multilingual signs, once in a sign with Korean and once in a sign with English and French. In contrast, there are ten bi/multilingual signs that use English with other foreign language(s). This practice lends support to the importance of English as a foreign language. The invisibility of indigenous languages on bilingual or multilingual signs is also noteworthy as it reaffirms ideologies that indigenous languages are not useful for economic purposes. Their purpose may be seen as one concerned only with cultural maintenance (as implied in Article 18.1b). Such de facto language practices send a message incongruent to the National Constitution where these languages are recognised as important.

Overall, this first layer of analysis provides evidence that some LPs are more visibly enacted than others and that not all LPs are equally enabled by the "heteroglossic and ... even contradictory" nature (Johnson 2015: 168) of different LP discourses in question.

## Language displays

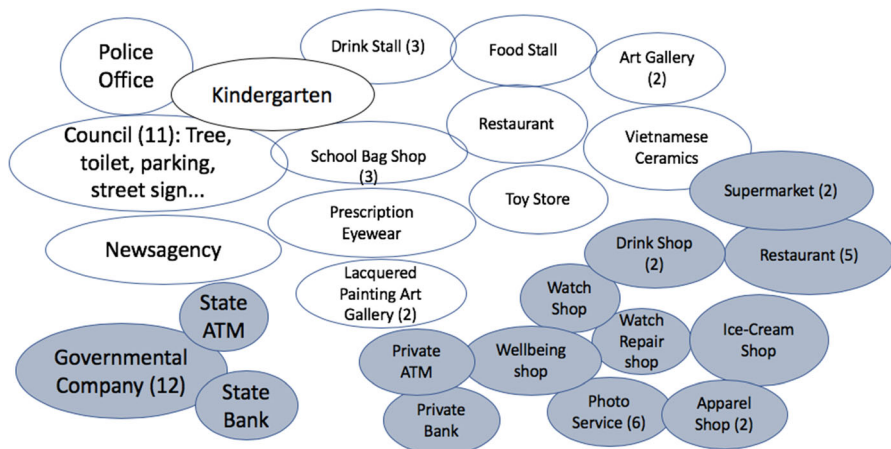
Our second layer of analysis provides insights into the dynamic nature of the language displays of the 52 business types in the Old Quarter that we encountered in the research setting. Because there are limited occurrences of languages other than English and Vietnamese (see Table 1), we focus on language displays that use Vietnamese, English and their combined display in this analysis of the data. We start with those businesses that conform to one or more LPs.

## Signs conforming to legislated LPs: monolingual Vietnamese, monolingual English and conforming V–E displays

There were three types of conforming displays that occurred in the dataset.

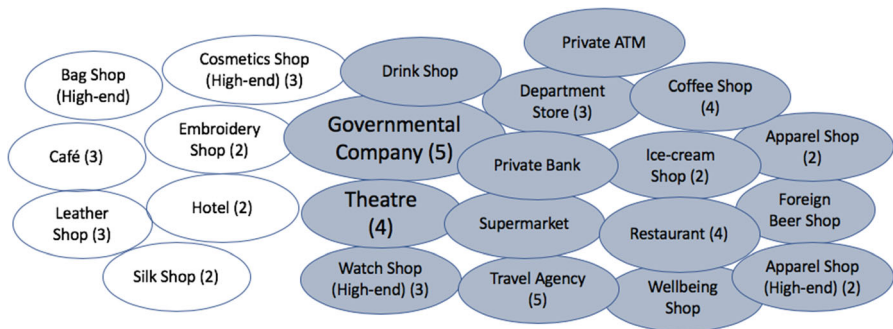
**Type 1: monolingual Vietnamese (V) display** A monolingual Vietnamese (V) display conforms with the National Constitution. As can be seen in Figure 2, thirteen business types use V-display as their only language display. These business types, coded in light bubbles, include signs posted by government organisations (e.g. signs on trees in the park, signs on toilets as well as street and parking signs) and signs that label the business as government-owned. Examples of government-owned business types include a police office, a government-run Vietnamese news agency, and a kindergarten. There are also businesses with a V-display in the commercial sector. Examples include a shop selling prescription eyewear and three shops selling school bags for Vietnamese children. One likely reason for these V-displays is their target audiences. Yet not all commercial business types with a V-display can be explained in this way. There are business types that cater to both tourists and locals (food and drink stalls, toy stores) with an exclusive V-display.

Other business types exhibit more dynamic patterns, where some business types use a V-display and other businesses of the same type use other forms of language display. These business types are presented in dark bubbles in Figure 2. Business types that exhibit dynamic patterns include government-owned enterprises such as governmental companies, state banks and ATMs as well as commercial business types. This is made possible by businesses having the option of conforming to different LPs.



**Figure 2** Business types using monolingual Vietnamese

**Type 2: monolingual English (E) display** A monolingual English (E) display conforms to legislated foreign language-in-education policy and political discourse on internationalisation. There are seven business types that have an exclusively E-display (see light bubbles in Figure 3). These include business types advertising goods and services connected with globalisation and high-end expensive western products (i.e. cosmetics, leather, handbags, etc.). Businesses with exclusively E-display portray themselves as sites of luxury, a feature also noted in research contexts worldwide (Stroud and Mpendukana 2009; Torkington 2009; Jaworski and Yeung 2010). Other exclusive E-display items are associated with western concepts such as advertised specials in restaurants. Other commercial business types do not have a fixed pattern but instead have a degree of dynamism in their displays, with signs displaying in English in some instances but not all. Such English signs on government buildings are relatively infrequent, and always in dark bubbles. Examples include government-owned theatres and governmental companies that cater primarily for international markets. In other words, this type of display appears to be affected to some extent by the type of service offered.



**Figure 3** Business types using monolingual English

**Type 3: conforming V–E display** The third type of conforming display concerns business types that have bilingual signs that conform fully to Article 18.2 of the advertising LP. In the conforming V–E display, Vietnamese is presented above other languages and in front at least 4/3 bigger than other languages. There is only one instance of a business type with a consistent V–E display, a sign on a single drink machine. All other business types (e.g. a drink shop or various restaurants) which display conforming V–E signs exhibit more dynamic patterns. Examples of business types that have conforming V–E displays in some instances but not all include government-owned business types (e.g. a state bank, a government-owned theatre) as well as commercial businesses (e.g. a sunglasses shop). These are displayed in dark bubbles in Figure 4.



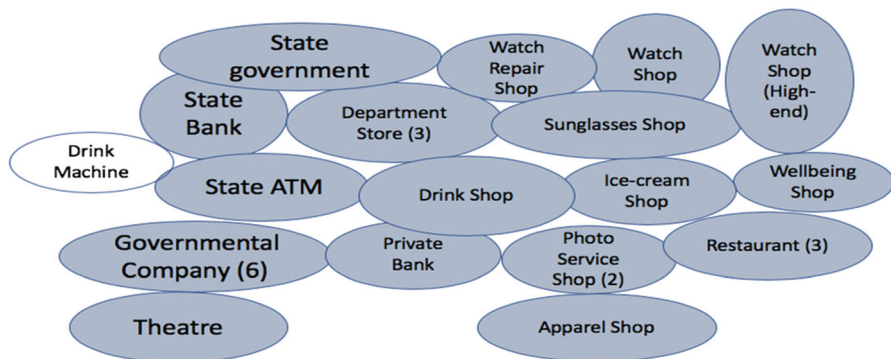


Figure 4 Business types using conforming Vietnamese–English

**Signs partially conforming to legislated LP: V–E display**

In the displays illustrated thus far, governmental and commercial businesses have used three language displays (V, E and V–E), all conforming to different legislated LPs. A second type of language preference is one that only partially conforms with a LP. In these instances, the observed language preferences conform to the intent but not the letter of the advertising LP. These displays prioritise Vietnamese over English, but in ways not specified in the law. In partially-conforming displays, we found 15 signs that conform to Article 18.2 of the advertising LP in the font size but manoeuvre around the positioning of the text in various ways. Of the business types with partially conforming V–E displays, three prioritise Vietnamese by displaying Vietnamese in font bigger than the English. However, they do not conform to the positioning rule of Article 18.2 because Vietnamese is positioned on the left and English on the right. Signs of this type include one governmental company, a camera shop and a high-end sunglasses shop. Twelve business types in Figure 5 invert the legislated top–bottom positioning in other ways. These have bilingual signs with a smaller English text above the larger Vietnamese text. These business types include shops for sunglasses (high-end), drinks, noodles, coffee, as well as a restaurant, a state bank and a private bank. This V–E display appeals to Vietnamese clientele but also attempt to bend and manoeuvre around the policies to target the vast number of

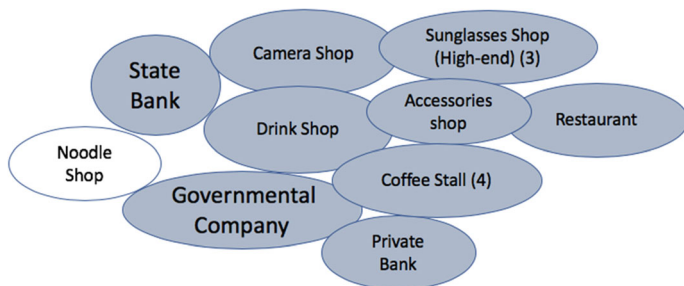


Figure 5 Business types using partially conforming V–E signs

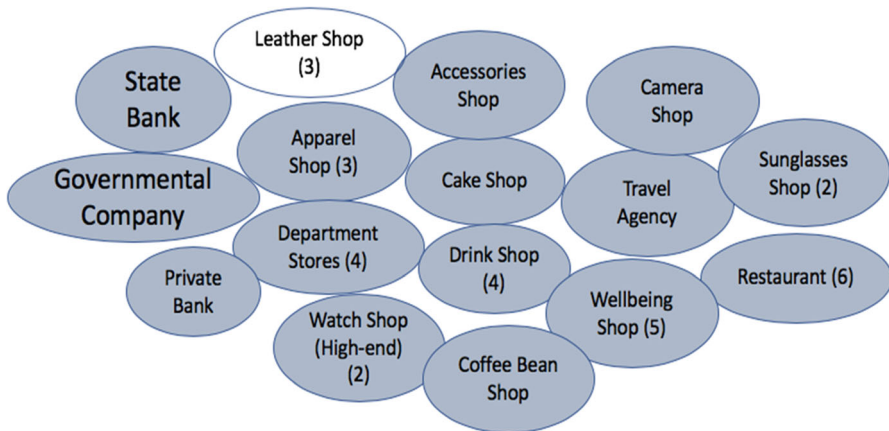


international tourists who use English as a lingua franca in the Old Quarter. The use of English as a lingua franca has been reported in other tourist hotspots such as Europe (Schlick 2003).

Overall, most business types with partially conforming language displays show a dynamic pattern with businesses of the same type elsewhere in the research setting displaying different types of language displays.

### Signs not conforming to legislated LPs: E–V display

Other business types bend and manoeuvre around LPs even further. These businesses use an E–V display that presents English in larger font and in a position on the sign that creates a visual hierarchy that promotes English over Vietnamese. This type of language display draws on political discourse on internationalisation and language-in-education policy in ways that violate the criteria stipulated in Article 18.2 of the advertising LP and violate the message in the National Constitution. These displays occur in both government and commercial business types. There is only one business type (a leather shop) that is consistent in its non-conforming E–V display. Most business types with an E–V display show a degree of dynamism (see Figure 6). These business types include a state bank, a government company and commercial businesses. Many of these businesses appear to sell high-end products, e.g., the shops that sell watches and sunglasses.



**Figure 6** Business types using E–V signs not conforming to legislated LPs

Overall, the various language displays show that few business types have one single type of language display, either government-owned or commercial businesses. While most of the dynamism involved in the displays thus far reflects the fact that different businesses display different types of signs, there are 30 instances in the research setting where single businesses use more than one type of language display. In other words, the overall dynamic pattern in the LL is also

present in the language displays of single businesses. Examples include 6 government businesses and 24 commercial establishments.<sup>6</sup> In our next layer of analysis, we provide examples of signs on two of these businesses: the government-owned Gallery of Hanoi Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism and a foreign owned bank to engage with their embedded discursive processes. We also consider one case of hybridity in our data to show how this informs understandings of languages in interaction. We start with the gallery.

### Single businesses with dynamic language displays

As noted earlier, most government businesses have V-displays, and these cater mostly to locals. However, there are exceptions. A government owned gallery designed to open up opportunities for trade with western countries is one of these. It had three different types of language displays: two monolingual displays (V and E) and a bilingual V–E display. The three signs conform to various degrees with three LPs: the National Constitution prioritising Vietnamese (V-display), the foreign language-in-education policy and political discourses on internationalisation prioritising English (E-display) and the advertising LP promoting Vietnamese over other languages (V–E display). These displays have different discursive functions.

While all three signs in the gallery convey information signaling that the business is an art gallery, they do so in very different ways. The sign using a V-display states the name of the government body on the top of the sign as “Sở văn hoá, thể thao và du lịch Hà Nội” (Hanoi Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism) and lists the name of exhibition centre as “Trung tâm thông tin triển lãm Hà Nội” (Hanoi Centre of Exhibition Information) associated with the Department at the centre of this sign (image in the upper-left in Figure 7). This Vietnamese message signals the status of the business as a government entity, in ways reminiscent of the street and council signage with their V-display. The sign using E-display (image in the upper-right in Figure 7) promotes the artistic productions sold by the business, and the use of English here aligns well with the use of English for internationalisation (Bui and Nguyen 2016), and ideologies of luxury and quality reminiscent of the businesses with E-displays that sell luxury goods in the Old Quarter. The third sign (lower image in Figure 7) is a bilingual sign using a V–E display. This sign employs complementary multilingual writing (Reh 2004: 14). While the Vietnamese on the left of the sign states “Tranh & Tượng” (Paintings & Sculpture), the English on the right of the sign provides details about the type of business “Fine Arts Exhibition”. The name of the business “Atena” is positioned between the two sides of the language display with the left-hand side of the “A” serving to separate the two languages. This sign partially conforms with the advertising LP in terms of font size, but manoeuvres around the positioning restriction by creating a language display that is left–right. This is an example of individual agency at work. The “A” in “Atena” would not have been able to separate English from Vietnamese in this creative way if Vietnamese were positioned on the top of the sign and English

<sup>6</sup> Other exceptions include a gold trading centre, a post office, an electric company, a puppetry theatre and a news agency.

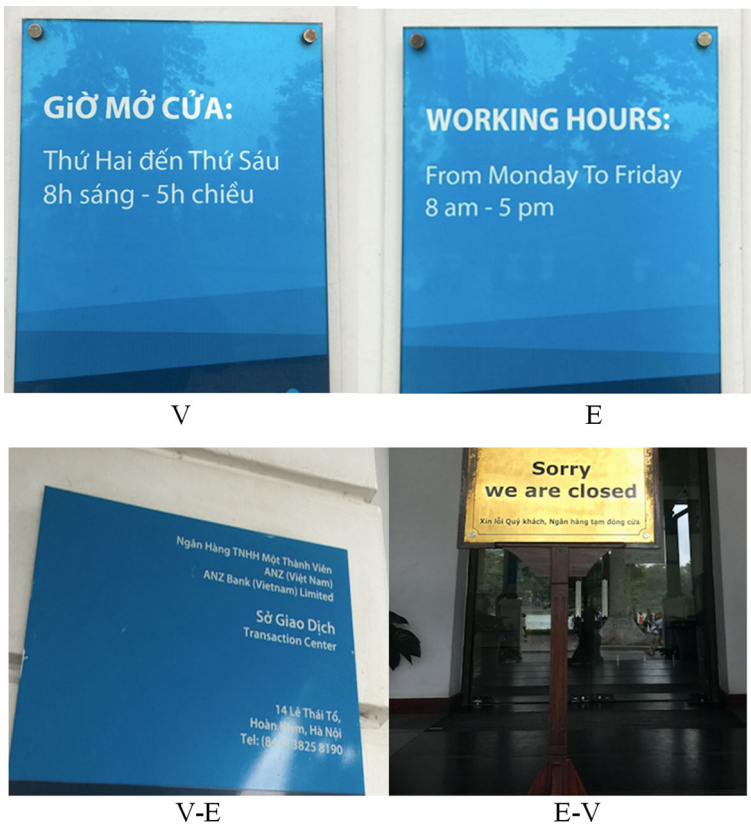


**Figure 7** The Gallery Centre uses 3 language displays

underneath. Overall, this example presents patterns observed in the V-displays, E-displays and non-conforming V–E displays observed in the research setting.

Our second illustrative example is four signs on a private bank (V, E, V–E, E–V) notifying clientele about their services. The four signs reflect four LPs: the National Constitution prioritising Vietnamese (V-display), the foreign language-in-education policy and political discourses on internationalisation prioritising English (E-display), the advertising LP promoting Vietnamese over other languages (V–E sign), and a de facto LP that does not conform to any legislated LPs (E–V sign).

The two monolingual signs (V-display and E-display) are located left and right of the main gate of the bank, a subtle reminder of an advertising LP that promotes Vietnamese. Both separate signs denote the same information (see the upper images in Figure 8). This type of duplicating multilingual writing (Reh 2004: 8) suggests that the signs are catering their product to different audiences. Potential clientele at the bank includes international tourists as well as international companies working in the Old Quarter and possibly local customers who have international transactions. Monolingual signs in English and Vietnamese address the diversity of their clientele. Yet the use of English on the bank signs differs from those in the gallery. There is no indication that English indexes luxury. The use of E-display here appears to be solely for commodification purposes.



**Figure 8** ANZ bank uses all 4 language displays

The V–E and E–V displays (the lower images in Figure 8) convey other types of messages. While at one level, one might argue that any bilingual sign may exist for pragmatic reasons to reduce the number of signs, the bilingual E–V and V–E signs on the bank provide glimpses into intentions behind the messages. From these signs, one can see that it is not simply the case that one sign obeys the advertising LP while the other does not, as the V–E sign does not adhere to the font specifications in Article 18.2. One possible interpretation that we can draw from the similar font size of Vietnamese and English in the V–E display is that the similarity in font size serves as an index of the equivalency in the content of the messages. If this is indeed the case, this provides a potential explanation for the reluctance of some businesses to present Vietnamese in larger font in their bilingual signs. The final sign on this business, the E–V display, is non-conforming in its font size and in its positioning of English over Vietnamese, but it is also non-conforming in other ways. The sign contains an apology to its customers for having to close its business. Apologies are speech acts that are culturally rich, and the use of the English apology may be seen to be more face-saving than the equivalent Vietnamese act.

## Dynamism in language hybridity

A final type of dynamism is present in those signs that contain hybridity. As discussed in the section on LPs in Vietnam, the practice of hybridity has received much negative press (Phan et al. 2014) perhaps because it does not follow any legislated LPs. This may also explain why it is rare in the research setting. We recorded seven signs that contain hybridity, almost all containing non-separated displays of English and Vietnamese. These signs appear in different types of businesses, including an ice-cream stall, two watch shops, a décor company, a department store, a bread shop and a restaurant. The hybridity comes in many forms: phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, discursual and combinations thereof. We provide an example where a business uses English in the first part of the trademark (MasterChef Vietnam) and two types of hybridity (syntactic and lexical) in the latter part of the trademark.

Figure 9 is the sign of a bread shop chain owned by the 2014 Masterchef Vietnam winner, Minh Nhật, who has publicly aspired to create a chain of stores throughout Vietnam and Australia (Phuong 2015). The English brand name “Masterchef Vietnam” in the top-left corner of the sign conforms to political discourses that promote English as the language of internationalisation and Article 18.1 that permits a foreign language in brand names. However, no written LPs allow for hybridity in brand names such as that used in the brand name presented in the middle of the sign: “Bánh Mì by Minh Nhật”. This brand name has two different levels of hybridity in it. First, the brand, with its predominantly Vietnamese message, “Bánh Mì by Minh Nhật”, has an English syntactic structure “something by someone”. Its equivalent passive “Bánh Mì bởi Minh Nhật” sounds awkward in Vietnamese. The unmarked expression in Vietnamese would be “Bánh Mì Minh Nhật”, but this Vietnamese expression does not signify the importance of a product made in ways that the English expression does. The second layer of hybridity is the choice of the English preposition “by” located between two Vietnamese expressions. The melded use of Vietnamese and English allows the message to engage with local and international audiences, a strategic example of the use of language to reach new markets (see

**Figure 9** Special use of English grammar in Vietnamese



also, O'Connor and Zentz 2016). The creativity of this hybridity might draw more attention from the readers, spreading an awareness of the trademark through language play. This creative way of using wordplay for a brand name has been reported elsewhere (Lamarre 2014; Lipovsky 2018; Pavlenko 2012). In Lipovsky's (2018) study, for example, she remarks on how shop owners playfully use language displays that combine the local language (French in Belleville) with the global language, English. The creative use of French and English is similar to the use of English and Vietnamese in the brand name in our study (see Figure 9). In both our study and Lipovsky's, two languages are melded together by English syntactic structures, blurring the boundaries between the two languages. Examples of such blurring provide vivid illustrations of how LL actors, who do not have the power to change the legislated LPs, serve as agents to "appropriate" it, via their creative language practices (Levinson et al. 2009: 768).

## Discussion

In this paper, we have explored the dynamic interplay between the legislated LPs and de facto LPs as manifested through discourses in the LL of Hanoi's Old Quarter. The findings show complementary, overlapping and conflicting intersections of LPs at work. Through these intersections, we are able to see how LL actors *appropriate* multiple LPs (Levinson et al. 2009) to serve their individual purposes. In other words, vis-à-vis individual agencies, we are able to see the ways people resemiotise policy discourses (Hult 2018) in the LL.

To begin, we start with the de facto LP represented via LL practices that have a strong match with legislated LPs, in other words, where structure appears to preside over agency. These matches play out through discourses around monolingualism. Yet the multiplicity of LPs in Vietnam means that more than one monolingual norm is available, creating opportunities for personal choices as agency in language displays. Monolingual Vietnamese practices occur on both government and commercial signs, a consequence of a nationalist legislated policy and the everyday desires of its citizens to communicate in a language that connects with Vietnamese identity. Other LPs provide an enhanced place for foreign languages, and in particular English. The privileging of English over other foreign languages in the foreign language-in-education policy and political discourses on internationalisation plays out in monolingual English signs.

The legislated LPs have little to say about foreign languages other than English and this absence of explicit mention manifests itself in the overall relative invisibility of signs in the Old Quarter in foreign languages other than English.<sup>7</sup> Those signs that do occur tend to take on the connotations of economic success and luxury, in ways similar to those assigned to English. This dynamic interplay among foreign languages is also evident in further layers of visibility and invisibility with other languages that are associated with the past (Chinese, Russian and French). When connections with the past remain important, traces of these

<sup>7</sup> In other neighbourhoods with a strong ethnic presence, different layers of internationalisation might be present.



languages appear in the LL. There are sporadic examples of Chinese relics of past LPs on the present LL but there are no such traces of Russian in the LL. Other languages, such as French, have a presence associated more with current political discourses on internationalisation rather than with past LPs.

Important languages mentioned in legislated LPs but invisible in the LL are Vietnam's indigenous languages. These are represented in the National Constitution as a form of communication for Vietnam's indigenous communities. However, they are not named in the Constitution, rendering them individually invisible. They are also rendered invisible in the advertising LP as they are not tied to commercialisation of place. In other words, there is no LP to market Vietnam's rich and diverse indigenous products or peoples and no perceived need to display these languages through the LL in the Old Quarter. This absence presents a space for an engaged language policy (Davis and Phyak 2017) in tourist hubs like the Old Quarter. One potential way of creating engaged language policy is to rethink discourses in the various legislated LPs regarding Vietnam's indigenous languages in the National Constitution, giving recognition to indigenous languages by naming specific languages in the text document rather than grouping all indigenous languages together. Another way would be to change the wording in the advertising LP to promote the presence of Vietnamese and indigenous languages in public signs. This would raise awareness amongst businesses about the possibility of using these languages in signs to promote products, businesses and Vietnam. The use of indigenous language signs in economically successful businesses would have the run on effect of raising awareness of the potential economic advantages of indigenous languages (Moriarty 2015). This act could also have positive follow-on consequences affecting how the indigenous communities in Vietnam perceive themselves and their languages (for an example of this potential, see Pietikäinen et al. 2011).

A final point relates again to agency observed in bilingual and multilingual signs. Bilingual and multilingual signs provide insights into how legislated and de facto LPs interact. Partially conforming and non-conforming signs create models for new language practices to go beyond the boundaries of existing legislated LPs. Such signs provide fruitful insights into the ideologies embedded in language use as some instances of agency that reflect LPs on the ground appear to go unnoticed (such as bilingual signs not containing Vietnamese), whereas others are the subject of public comment, such as hybridity. Even though both forms are relatively infrequent in the LL, such signs are worth exploring because they provide "rich local meaning in context" (Hult and Kelly-Holmes 2018: 1) and show agentive strategies in the LL. These strategies are likely to continue to emerge as businesses try to find innovative ways to sell their goods to an increasing diverse global market.

An approach to LPs in interaction undergirds the discourse analytic approach that sees multiple discourses as interacting, intersecting and competing. Through our data analysis, one prominent consistent pattern emerges: language dynamism predominates across businesses, governmental and commercial. The dynamism creates discursive flows that embrace named languages, monolingualism, bilingualism, multilingualism and hybridity. An approach that embraces discourse flows is needed to understand how linguistic practices are constructed by multiple LPs,

and how this *multiple* allows LL a space to bend and manoeuvre in interesting dynamic ways to target multiple complex audiences and convey different subtle messages.

## Concluding remarks

This paper shows multiple LPs at work in the LL, and how the confluences of legislated LPs open up opportunities for different types of de facto language displays. These multiple confluences are illustrated through important named languages and forms of monolingualism and bilingualism present in various language displays in one LL, and how they draw on different LPs. This paper adds to these understandings of LPs by introducing a method for quantitatively presenting the dynamic discursive processes involved in the study of LL to help explore how languages are enacted in the LL, how they follow the structure of the legislation and how they bend around it. This paper also provides insights into how new forms of displays that do not exist in current LPs can be taken into future language planning considerations.

The focus of this paper was on the richness of the messages embedded in the intersecting LPs and the language practices in the Old Quarter in Hanoi, Vietnam. This paper is a necessary step in the process of language planning: the documenting of existing practices. It opens up ways of understanding different LP discourses as well as the interaction of agency and structure embedded in the everyday LP in practice. These insights need to be supplemented with additional research that engages with how people see their languages. Some local businesses may have had reasons for their choices that we did not consider here (see Malinowski (2009) for a discussion), and locals and tourists may have read messages in the signs that were not intended by the producers of the messages. To truly understand the whole, we need to consider how all of these interplays fit together as a confluence of interacting systems.

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