Research Article

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"Multilingual islands in the monolingual sea": Foreign languages in the South Korean linguistic landscape

Abstract: The article aims at analyzing data on the South Korean linguistic landscape, with a focus on multilingual practices and different dimensions of language use, sets of norms, and ideological constructs underling particular linguistic choices. It is based on the analysis of a data set of over 800 digital photos of various signs and advertisements as well as necessary metadata gathered in 2018–2020 in four different urban contexts. The data, on the one hand, reflect recent changes favoring multilingualism; on the other hand, they demonstrate pragmatic inequality of other languages than Korean in public use. This inequality, however, is represented differently in certain spatial urban contexts; while commodified English tends to function as a substitution for other foreign languages and as an emblem of "foreignness," agentivity of new ethnically diverse speakers creates "multilingual islands," and that process can at some point challenge the dominance of monolingual ideology.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, Korean, multilingualism, language ideology, urban space

1 Introduction

Language ideologies, i.e., sets of beliefs about languages and the ways they should be used, are "shared bodies of common sense notions about the nature of language in the world" (Rumsey 1990, 346; see also Silverstein 1979, Woolard 1994, Irvine and Gal 2000, Kroskrity 2004), which manifest themselves in many domains of public life. However, their impacts could occasionally be less evident than those of other, more reflected upon, ideological constructs, such as race, gender, or social class. Meanwhile, everyday language use, including all verbal signs incorporated in public spaces (street signs, shop names, advertisements, graffiti, etc.) – the so-called linguistic landscape – is inevitably loaded with ideological meanings. The approach to language that prevails in a given society affects the linguistic practices of its members and, consequently, can be reconstructed and studied on the basis of such practices.

This article analyzes data on South Korean linguistic landscape, focusing on different dimensions of language use and different sets of norms and ideological constructs underlying particular linguistic choices. The data, on the one hand, reflect recent changes, motivated by challenges of globalization and favoring multilingualism; on the other hand, they demonstrate the pragmatic inequality of other languages than Korean in public use. This inequality, however, is represented differently in certain spatial urban contexts, and the present article, by comparing data from several such contexts, aims to shed light on the ways the traditional "Korea as monolingual" approach collides with actual linguistic diversity and agentivity of

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multilingual speakers, making concessions to them in some aspects but keeping strong positions in others and thus creating different language regimes.

The article is structured as follows: In Section 2, traditions of monolingualism and linguistic nationalism in Korea are discussed in the context of the country's historical and political development. Section 3 outlines the theoretical base and research methodology of the study. Then follows the analysis of linguistic landscape data, first in urban South Korea in general in Section 4, and then with the focus on four different urban districts combined into two distinct groups. The first group is called *"Ethnic villages," or "cultural enclaves"* and is represented by the "Chinese" district near Daerim station and the Mongolian/Central Asian/Russian district near Dongdaemun History and Culture Park station in Seoul. The second group titled *"International districts"* includes the city of Ansan, having the highest proportion of non-Korean citizens in the country, and Itaewon, the famous entertainment district of Seoul and, sadly, the recent scene of an enormous tragedy when 159 people died on the night of 29 October 2022 in a crowd crush. In Section 7, we summarize our findings and argue that foreign languages used in public written communication in South Korea are embedded into different frameworks in these four cases. The patterns of their use vary from pragmatically oriented to predominantly symbolic ones, with English functioning as a substitution for other foreign languages and as an emblem of "foreignness" in certain contexts and socio-economic conditions, while multilingual practices of migrants create new – actually diverse – urban spaces.

2 Outlining the scene: monolingualism and linguistic nationalism in Korea

South Korea is often mentioned as an example of a nation that is almost ethnically and linguistically homogeneous (see, e.g., Fisher 2013), alongside Japan, North Korea, Iceland, and several other countries. This image of a monolith national culture, a prototypical national state, is intertwined with historical allusions to the "hermit kingdom," the term widely used to refer to Joseon Korea and its isolationist policies (Oppenheim 2016). Nowadays, this term is usually used in reference to North Korea exclusively, while South Korea has the reputation of being more "open to the world" politically and economically albeit remaining faithful to its ethno-cultural exclusiveness.

Throughout its long history, Korea, being "a shrimp among whales" (Cumings 2005, 9), had to deal with many cases of very powerful, and sometimes forcible, foreign influences: first, for many centuries, from China which determined Korea's transformations into Confucian society (Deuchler 1992); then, in the second half of the nineteenth century, from European countries and the Russian Empire (Deuchler 1977, Kim 1980); then, until the end of the occupation in 1945, from Japan (Myers and Peattie 1984, Robinson 2007); and since then, from the US (Macdonald 1992, Brazinsky 2007). Opposing those influences, the Korean national identity developed a very strong focus on ethnic and linguistic exclusiveness. One of the first traces of pre-modern Korean nationalism can be found in the works of *Silhak* scholars from the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Challenging the dominance of Sinocentric views, proponents of this Confucian social reform movement praised the Korean language, literary tradition, and writing system, calling the latter "a miracle on the earth" (Shin 2000, 11).

Soon after Korea's integration into the global system of modern nations and introduction of the modernist version of nationalism in the late nineteenth century (Em 1999), the Japanese occupation presented new challenges for Korean nationalism. At first, the Japanese colonial administration supported education and media in Korean and even substituted the Sino-Korean writing system of *hanja* in school textbooks with a mixed script using elements of *hanja* and the Korean alphabetic syllabary *hangeul* (Taylor 1980). Although the *hanja* was influenced by the principles of the Japanese writing system, this policy actually promoted *hangeul* and strengthened the position of Korean; moreover, attempts were made to standardize *hangeul* spelling (see Pratt et al. 1999, 158–9). However, in 1928, the Japanese authorities began implementing the assimilation policy in Korea, resulting, by the 1940s, in the total prohibition of teaching Korean and speaking it in public (Caprio

2009). The resistance of Korean nationalists, consequently, emphasized the role of Korean as a national symbol and the staple of the Korean nation. Thus, a commemorative day for *hangeul* was introduced by the Korean Language Society (Pratt et al. 1999, 161), which later became a public holiday in independent South Korea.

Historically, therefore, Korea's orientation toward monolingualism was a reaction to impositions of other languages. In spite of – or perhaps even because of – the long history of strong Chinese influence, and later, the forceful imposition of Japanese, the Korean language became a "critical part of Korean national identity" (Shin 2006, 37), with *hangeul*, as a unique national system of writing, functioning as one of the main national symbols (see Koh 2014, Ch. 4, Harkness 2015). At the same time, while fighting against Japanese colonialism and race-based nationalism, the Korean nationalist elite have been heavily influenced by their logic and conceptual vocabulary (Robinson 1988, Schmid 2002). Consequently, for most of Korea's existence as an independent state, the "one nation, one people, one language" ideology has dominated public discourse. Moreover, the necessity to break with the colonial past and reject everything that had traces of Japanese influence resulted in the post-war demonization and exclusion of Japanese-writing Korean authors (Yi 2018). Strict orientation toward "pure" Korean culture has been determining South Korean language ideology ever since, resulting in a strong monolingual bias (Park 2004, 2009, Lawrence 2019) in a sense that "public monolingualism in the national language is simply taken for granted by its citizens" (May 2014, 372).

However, recent decades have brought globalization and a sharp increase in migration to South Korea. According to Yi and Jung (2015), the number of foreign-origin residents in the country underwent a sevenfold increase in less than 15 years, which accounted for 3.6% of the total Korean population in 2014 (and these figures do not include numerous illegal labor migrants). Growing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity resulted in gradual changes in attitudes toward multilingualism, which has become associated with new transnational elites (Lo and Kim 2012). English, being a global language, has turned into a marker of prestige and economic success, deepening existing social inequality insofar as mastering the English language demands expensive extra curricula education (Song 2011, Lee 2020). In this sense, English in South Korea serves as a tool to maintain social class reproduction (Kim et al. 2018, Choi 2021), similar to the ways Chinese and later Japanese were used to distinguish the social elite from lower classes. The high prestige of English, therefore, does not necessarily result in an easing of monolingual norms and wider use of other languages, since the bilingualism of elites has very little to do with societal multilingualism. The same is true about attitudes to multiculturalism: analysis of Korean English-as-a-Foreign-Language high-school textbooks (Lee 2011) shows that, despite their official declarations of commitment to the values of multiculturalism, their authors favorably portray only rich western countries while discriminating against Asian and African countries/peoples.

Therefore, it can be said that both on practical and ideological levels, monolingualism retains a strong position in Korea (Park J. 2009, 2010, Song 2010, Park and Abelmann 2004). It is true that Koreans favor some elements of "foreign" languages as fashionable and desirable – they are keen to learn foreign languages, especially English; however, they are not always ready to deal with them in their everyday lives, in their own country. This conclusion is confirmed by the study on Koreans' attitudes toward foreign languages based on analysis of big data from social media platforms (Kim 2022). When analyzing words that co-occur with the two Korean keywords meaning "foreign language(s)" and "signage in foreign language(s)," it was discovered that positive feelings were expressed with 2.5 times less frequency in the latter case (33.09 vs 12.86%). Moreover, there were some differences between the categorematic words used most frequently in those two contexts: both foreign languages and signage in foreign languages were associated with something "new" but "difficult"; only "foreign languages," however, was represented as a desirable object (via verbs "to want" and "to recommend") while foreign signage co-occurred with the Korean word meaning "exotic," "non-Korean." It may seem that there is a tendency for Korean speakers to express more social approval to learning foreign languages than facing those languages in their everyday life, in the streets of their towns and cities. Another interesting evidence of the prominence of "nationalistic language attitudes in Korea" (Kim 2022, 123) is the study of user-generated comments on news sites on the matter of use of monolingual English signage in public buildings (Kim 2021). It revealed that almost 91% of the commenters expressed rather negative opinions on the practice.

Such ambivalent feelings of Korean speakers toward multilingualism, as well the roles of English and other foreign languages in creating and supporting hierarchies and power relations among Korean citizens and new-coming migrants, make South Korean local multilingual practices an extremely interesting case for

analysis. This article focuses on one particular aspect of such practices – the written use of different languages in the public space that is usually referred to as the "linguistic landscape."

Studies on linguistic landscape started in South Korea quite early (e.g., Lee 1979, Shin 1983); however, they were conducted in the field of geography, not linguistics, and were focused on commercial signboards, brand names, and place names, including church names, in different areas as markers of their socio-economic status. The collocation "language landscape" (언어경관) was used in these studies, but rather as a common language expression. It was introduced as a term later when the field of linguistic landscape studies started to develop fast in Western sociolinguistics, first in the domain of language policy and planning and later with more focus on actual language use (Van Mensel et al. 2016). More recent studies investigate the usage of Korean or foreign words and linguistic characteristics of messages seen on signboards as a medium, and most attention is paid to the use of English (Lawrence 2012, Forrest 2014, Tan and Tan 2015) and various translanguaging practices, not necessary limited to written language use (Lawrence 2019, Je 2019). Another important aspect of linguistic landscape studies in South Korea, especially those in line with the initiatives of the National Institute of Korean Language (Kim et al. 2006), is their orientation to practical measures in an attempt to promote proper language usage and "purify" the Korean language creating a more "beautiful" scene (Cho 2015). Some authors compare Korean and Japanese language policies in regard to linguistic landscape (Yang 2012, 2015). There are also attempts to evaluate linguistic landscapes in terms of language rights of minorities and accessibility of public signage for them (Kim 2020).

Only a few of the reviewed studies focus on particular urban areas and aim at revealing the relations between multilingual language use and the issues of ideology and socio-economic and political values ascribed to different languages and writing systems in South Korea. Park and Yang (2015) investigated one shopping district in Seoul and discovered that English was used in 68% of all the signs; it was preferred in youth-populated domains such as coffee shops and cosmetic stores to index a sense of modernity. Korean, on the other hand, was used in medical domains to address specific and practical needs as well as in food domains to index a sense of authenticity. The study in the city of Daegu (Lee 2012) revealed the significant difference, in terms of linguistic landscape, between two city districts, one with younger population, and another where more than 85% of people were over 60. Signboards in the first area were, evidently, targeting multilingual audience and used, alongside Korean and English, also Japanese and other languages. The very informative research by Ding et al. (2020) is based on the data from several areas in Seoul and aims at revealing the impact of geopolitics and geo-economics on Seoul's linguistic landscape. It shows, among other interesting findings, how political relations with China, Japan, and USA, both nowadays and in the past, are reflected in using or avoiding Chinese, Japanese, and English in public places. The article's focus, however, is not on different urban localities and attitudes to multilingualism and language diversity which is in the focus of our study, but rather on Korea's political and economic relations with those three powerful countries.

In this article, we try to approach South Korean linguistic landscapes as embedded both in local semiotic spaces and in general ideological trends and compare different regimes of multilingual practices visually represented in certain urban spaces differing significantly in terms of socio-economic development and ethnic composition.

3 Studying linguistic landscape: method and data

Multilingualism in urban spaces is mainly studied as an oral practice. Nevertheless, linguistic landscape studies can serve as a good explorative method for studying multilingualism: due to the spatiality of language, any communication happens in a specific place; "spaces become places through language, through being named and through being signed" (Nash 2016, 384). Moreover, the recent research on linguistic landscape (e.g., Backhaus 2006, Shohamy et al. 2010, Blommaert 2013) sheds some light on the reflection of power relations between different ethnic groups in urban public space; depending on their status, some groups and their languages can be underrepresented in linguistic landscapes. It is also important to bear in mind that multilingual practices exist in a certain ideological context, and not only official language policy but

speakers' linguistic stereotypes and attitudes can also influence and modify those practices. By placing a certain verbal sign in public space, any actor becomes involved in creating, maintaining, and transforming the social order. As Blommaert and Maly put it, "public space is also an instrument of power, discipline and regulation: it organizes the social dynamics deployed in that space" (2016, 192).

Any sign placed in public space can be seen, in the same way as verbal interaction, as an act of communication – even if this communication does not happen face-to-face. Every sign is a creation intended to express a particular meaning; however, this meaning is not necessarily limited to the literal sense of the words and sentences used. Public signs, therefore, can and should be analyzed in relation to different aspects of communicative acts – i.e., who speaks to whom, when, where, how, why, etc., according to the model suggested by Hymes (1974, 53–62). The only difference is that speakers, or rather writers and their readers, usually are not present in the picture and should be reconstructed by researchers on the base of the broader context. Important indicators are the types of signs, the places where they are found, and the materials used. For example, street signs are normally regulated by city administrations, placed in public spaces, and made according to certain templates, including colors and scripts. Therefore, violations of these norms, such as when we see a street sign put on a wall inside a bar or placed beside a street but made in totally different manner than all other street signs, signal that some other actors are involved and the function of the sign is not to provide directions but something else. Having this in mind, we will describe how foreign languages are represented in South Korean linguistic landscape, and what the differences of their use in different places can reveal about possible directions of changes in Koreans' attitudes to multilingualism.

Linguistic landscape studies bring into focus the fact that language management is not limited to official language policy; the efforts of local actors involved in language planning on the micro-level are also very important (Liddicoat and Baldauf 2008). The concept of authorship in linguistic landscapes (Malinowski 2009) helps us to realize that most public signs in modern cities are created not by governmental officials but by the commercial sector, with individual citizens contributing to the process as well. The type of audience should also be taken into account: some messages are directed to the general public while others target particular groups. Moreover, linguistic aspects should be considered: authors and readers can be speakers of different languages. In the case of Korea, they are either native speakers of the national language – Korean – or migrants with different mother tongues who may be also fluent in other languages than their native ones. If the actor responsible for creating a sign belongs to the same group as their targeted audience, we are dealing with in-group communication; otherwise, it is out-group communication. The growing level of cosmopolitanism in modern global cities promotes "the idea of being open to change through intercultural interaction" (Sobré-Denton and Bardhan 2013, 12).

Purposes accomplished by different public signs are, certainly, very diverse. In terms of their language choice, however, the important division can be made between pragmatic and symbolic reasons. Pragmatic reasons of choosing a certain language or several languages for a message demand conveying practical information in the most efficient way – if, for example, bank managers suppose their ATMs will be used by foreigners with limited or no knowledge of the national language, they may wish to make the ATMs provide services in several languages. Symbolic or emblematic language choice does not aim at exchanging factual information; it implies rather than informs directly. Thus, multilingual "Welcome!" signs in a hotel lobby not only express the staff's good feelings toward their clients from different countries but also tell them that their linguistic differences are recognized and respected. In this sense, linguistic items may obtain "indexical functions independent of their denotational meanings, transforming identities and becoming emblematic of spatial stratification" (Heller et al. 2014, 450). Symbolic language choices often deal with images, ideas, and stereotypes; for example, if a French name such as *Paris baguette* is chosen for a Korean bakery franchise, it invokes the popular and appealing image of Parisian lifestyle and French cuisine. However, communicative acts, whether predominantly pragmatic or predominantly symbolic, can be evaluated in terms of their efficiency, and some messages fail to convey the desired factual or symbolic meaning. This sometimes happens when they are aimed at one audience and attract another.

For the purpose of this study, the analysis of data was implemented in line with an ethnographic approach that focuses on the agency and audience design described above. The data were gathered separately by two co-authors between September 2018 and August 2020 in four different urban districts: 1. Daerim-dong, the

"Chinese" district near Daerim station in Seoul; 2. the Mongolian/Central Asian/Russian district near the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park station in Seoul; 3. Wongok-dong in Ansan; and 4. the Itaewon international district of Seoul. These areas were chosen for several reasons. First of all, they are usually mentioned as "non-Korean places" in any discussions on ethnic and linguistic diversity in the country. At the same time, those districts differ significantly in terms of socio-economic indicators (real estate and rent prices, number and predominant types of business enterprises, prices charged at restaurants, bars, and cafes, ratio of residents/visitors, etc.) and ethnic composition. While the former three are predominantly working-class areas, the latter, Itaewon, is more expensive; it is also an extremely popular destination for visitors and has quite active night life. Ethnically, the first two districts are more homogeneous (although, as will be shown, in the case of the Mongolian district there is rather regional and cultural than ethnic homogeneity). The second two exemplify for Koreans the very notion of international, or foreign, district where people of extremely diverse origin can be found both among residents and visitors. Moreover, those two districts have an official status of international area recognized by the authorities.

The process of collecting data included the following: 1. Regular observations in the studied areas and keeping a filed diary; 2. Making photographs of the streets, buildings, and insides of the premises whenever there were signs containing other languages than Korean; 3. Writing down the metadata regarding the signs (place and time; type of the sign; type of the premises; content; position; relation to other signs; number of languages and graphic systems; etc.); 4. Checking the content of the signs in languages unfamiliar for the researchers via internet search and consultations with their speakers; 5. Exchanging the data between the co-authors and its mutual evaluation. It should be noted here that in this way the co-authors, one of whom is an insider, a native Korean speaker, and another an outsider, a foreigner, could combine their two different perspectives and thus discover more in the data.

The data selected for further analysis included 807 digital photos most of which contained several, and sometimes dozens, various signs and advertisements. Photos taken non-systematically in other areas all over South Korea between 2018 and 2020 were used as well for representing a more general context for the study. The focus of the study was not on quantitative analysis of the signs and numbers of languages in them but rather on qualitative analysis (Backhaus 2007) of particular "non-monolingual in Korean" signs and their semiotic value. Some generalizations about frequencies of different language use, therefore, are based on the researchers' ethnographic observations and their evaluations of the data collected by each other.

4 South Korean linguistic landscape: general context

On the surface, modern urban South Korea, and especially its capital, Seoul, does not look monolingual; English and Latin script are almost everywhere (Lee 2016). City authorities have aimed to make navigation easier for foreign tourists, and, as a result, most street signs, direction signs, maps, and subway schemes are bilingual, written in both Korean and English. Moreover, the Korean linguistic landscape is shaped mainly by the business sector, where numerous shops, cafes, bars, firms, buildings, shopping malls, cinemas, etc., use foreign (mainly English) words in their names and advertisements. For example, on a street billboard promoting sales prices for smartphones (Figure 1), there is a picture of a person speaking into a phone and exclaiming in English "Really??? Sure?" – evidently referring to unbelievably low prices. However, all practical information about the models, monthly payments, etc., are given exclusively in Korean. The advertisement is directed toward Korean-speaking people; at the same time, it uses emotional exclamations in English, implying, among other things, that potential customers are modern and smart enough to be fluent in English. Similar implications can be found in many brands' attempts to be creative with English words in their names and slogans. For example, some franchise stores named "CU" add such English words as "nice to," "happy to," or "again" to the brand name in their signboards, turning them into meaningful phrases ("Nice to see you," etc.). To appreciate the pun, their customers should not only know how these phrases and the English letters "c" and "u" sound but also be acquainted with popular abbreviations used in computer-mediated
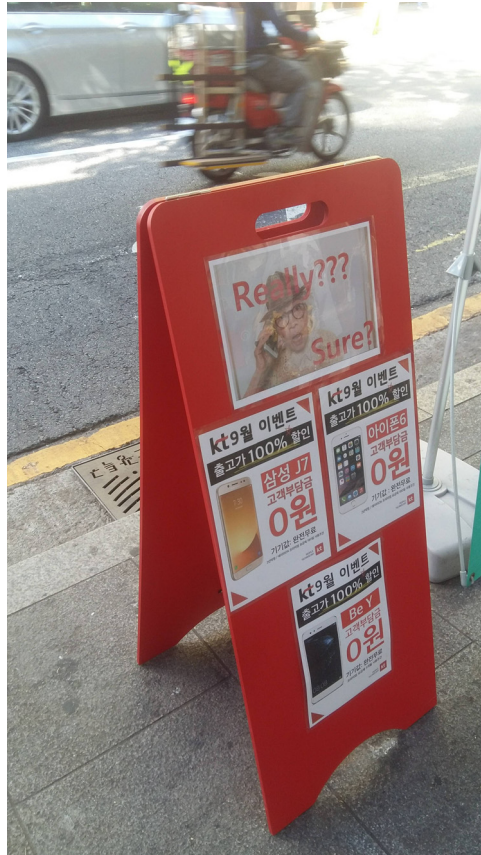
Figure 1: Street billboard promoting sale prices for smartphones, Yongin.

communication (for more examples of bilingual creativity in South Korean linguistic landscape, see Kim (2022) and other studies on English in Korean linguistic landscape mentioned in Section 2).

Unlike pragmatically oriented bilingual signs provided by city officials, most commercial multilingual signs have a symbolic function and aim at Korean speakers rather than foreigners, who sometimes can be puzzled by names such as "Angel-in-us" (chain café). Informative signs tend to have semantically equivalent texts in two or more languages; in symbolically loaded signs, there is no such equivalency. In other words, the overwhelming majority of multilingual signs in Seoul belong to in-group communication: they are addressed by Korean speakers who "are appropriating English" (van Vlack 2011, 574) to other Korean speakers and are not primarily meant as a part of interaction between different ethnic groups; cosmopolitanism here is rather "aesthetic" (Curtin 2014, 159) and does not presuppose actual interpersonal dialogue. It, therefore, lacks some crucial "prominent values" listed by Sobré-Denton and Nilanjana Bardhan (2013, 35–7) and presents only macro level (at the nexus of the global–local) but not micro level (at the nexus of the Self–Other) of inter-cultural communication.

Some attempts to include non-Korean speakers in the potential audience are made by business owners in the areas popular among tourists, such as Insadong and Myeongdong, where information is provided some-times in English, Chinese, and Japanese (see Lee 2019). However, such attempts can be at risk of failure. A typical example is a restaurant menu in which English words such as "lunch & dinner," "seasonal," and "chicken & snack" are used to title its different sections – in spite of the fact that all of the dishes and corresponding prices are listed only in Korean. If this is a symbolic inclusion of non-Korean speakers, it is a pragmatic failure where communication becomes miscommunication. In such cases, one can presume, for Korean speakers, "English is actually functioning as a status marker, and is in actual fact, symbolic rather than information-giving in nature" (Tan and Tan 2015, 76).

Foreign-language speakers, in their turn, can also become actors responsible for creating linguistic landscapes, albeit mostly in very particular urban areas, where new language regimes are created as a result – influencing, in their turn, Korean-speaking actors. Such areas can be divided into those dominated by some specific ethnic/regional groups – the so-called "ethnic villages" (Kim and Kang 2007) and those with greater ethnolinguistic diversity, known among Koreans as "foreign" or "international" districts. In what follows, we will describe the main features of linguistic landscapes found in two Seoul "ethnic" districts and in two "international" districts, one in Ansan and one in Seoul, to show that the tendencies in language use discovered there are not as unidirectional as one could expect.

5 "Ethnic villages," or "cultural enclaves": locality and in-group communication

5.1 Daerim-dong

Daerim-dong in the Yeongdeungpo-gu district is the largest enclave of Chinese migrants in Seoul. The Chinese community includes at least three different groups of people. First, there are the Chinese descendants who had moved to Korea at the end of the nineteenth century (so-called old Huaqiao migrants). Two groups of newcomers consist, on the one hand, of the so-called *xin yimin*, represented mostly by Han Chinese, and, on the other hand, of ethnic Koreans from China, called *Joseon-jok*, or *Chaoxianzu* in Chinese (Song 2017). New migrants from China, mainly from the northeastern provinces of Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Liaoning, started to arrive in Seoul in 1992 due to the normalization of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China. Many of them used to work in the Guro Industrial Complex and live in the area nearby. Eventually, after redevelopment was undertaken in Guro-dong, Chinese residents started to move to the neighboring and more affordable Daerim-dong, gradually transforming it into a culturally specific district, with many small businesses catering to people seeking Chinese products and tastes (Tan 2020).

According to statistics on the website "Seoul Open Data Plaza" (http://data.seoul.go.kr), in 2020, Chinese immigrants (i.e., "new immigrants," foreign nationalities with Korean residence permits – so-called "alien cards") accounted for 63.3% of the total number of registered foreigners in Seoul, and a significant part of them were living in the Yeongdeungpo-gu district and, specifically, in Daerim-dong. However, the area lacks the official status of a "Chinatown" district granted to Incheon in 1884 (Moon et al. 2014). In the 2000s, due to prejudices of Koreans against Chinese migrants, including those of ethnic Korean origins (Seol and Skrentny 2009), Daerim-dong had a rather bad reputation among Seoul citizens; later it became more popular, and nowadays its cafés and restaurants attract many visitors and tourists. Both Korean and Mandarin can be heard in the streets and Chinese pop music plays alongside with K-pop in the shops and restaurants.

Daerim-dong citizens tend to be bilingual: Joseon-jok in China usually retained Korean as their mother tongue and acquired some knowledge of Mandarin, usually developing dual identities (Choi 2001). Han Chinese, after arriving in Korea, tend to learn at least some limited Korean. This bilingual and bicultural nature of the district is recognized by its local authorities, as is evident from the brass plate in the pavement designating the place as belonging to Daerim Central Market (Figure 2). The name is given in both Korean and Chinese, and the images of a pig and a panda, as well as anthropomorphic Chinese characters designating Daerim, probably aim at representing appreciation and mutual understanding. Most other official signs in the area also tend to be written in both Korean and Chinese, and the information they present is more or less equal in both languages. English, apart from the standard street signs, is used only sporadically and in a rather peculiar way. Thus, local authorities resort to English in some "no smoking" signs, but their texts in Korean and Chinese also contain information about penalties for smoking (and, in Korean text, even the phone numbers of services supporting those who decide to give up smoking), while English use is limited to a simple cautionary message. Even more peculiar is the sign regulating norms and rules of garbage disposal (Figure 3): the texts in Korean and Chinese convey the same information, and the Chinese version is even more visible

Figure 2: Brass plate in the pavement, Daerim-dong.

Figure 3: Sign regulating norms and rules of garbage disposal, Daerim-dong.

since it is centered and uses a bigger script. Meanwhile, English is represented via the four-times-repeated exclamation "NO!" – aiming, evidently, at drawing attention and reinforcing the prohibitive message for Korean and Chinese speakers but not at addressing English speakers.

The use of English by business actors in Daerim area is also limited and mostly emblematic – there are usually popular brand names (iPhone, LGU, Galaxy Note, etc.), technical terms (5G), and, in some rare cases, advertising slogans, e.g., "sweet and delicious icecream" (sic). Everything else is in Korean and/or Chinese. Reversing the pattern of total Korean dominance typical for the "general" Korean context described earlier, Chinese can even take the role of dominant language. This is the case, for example, in an advertisement for a second-hand car dealership (Figure 4): all relevant information is given in Chinese, and only the name of the

Figure 4: Advertisement for a second-hand car dealership, Daerim-dong.

company preceding the Chinese text – Dawon Motors (=Dawon cars) – is written in Korean. The adjacent advertisement for a dermatologic clinic is monolingual (Korean only). The two texts coexist in the same space parallel to each other; their respective choices of colors (bright red and yellow vs soft pink and blue) parallel their language choice (bilingual with predominance of Chinese vs Korean only). We can assume that they target different audiences; at the same time, since many ethnically Chinese local dwellers are bilingual in Chinese and Korean, the choice of "Korean only" in the second sign does not necessary mean that Chinese speakers are excluded the same way Korean monolinguals are excluded by the first sign they would not be able to understand. It should be noted here as well that the characters used for writing in Chinese in Daerim-dong belong to the simplified version of Chinese orthography and not to the traditional one which is still in use in Korea and is known as *hanja*. Nowadays, some extremely rare examples of *hanja* can be found in linguistic landscapes in some brand names and sometimes in advertisements; overall, its function of "a prestigious form of writing among South Koreans" has been replaced by English (Song 2015, 481). The use of simplified Chinese characters in Daerim-dong signals the targeting of mainland Chinese audience rather than Korean speakers.

Chinese, therefore, becomes the important marker for the area. It distinguishes it from neighboring Seoul districts, thus creating its ethnic identity, along with Chinese food and colors and products associated with China, and at the same time localizing it in the city space. The aforementioned English slogan advertising ice cream was placed on the refrigerator with the product, and similar refrigerators with Korean and English inscriptions can be found anywhere in South Korea. However, in this particular case, there is also a hand-written bilingual sign reading "ice-cream" in Korean and "sell ice-cream" in Chinese, marking it as a part of Daerim's unique "ethnically loaded" area.

5.2 "Mongolian city"

The district around the subway station Dongdaemun History and Culture Park is known nowadays as "Mongolian City," or "Little Mongolia" among Seoul citizens. The ten-story Newkumho Tower (commonly known as "Mongol Tower") with sign boards in Cyrillic characters is easily spotted outside subway Exit 15. Inside the building, there are around 50 businesses catering to Mongolians and Central Asians living in or visiting Korea, including travel agencies, Mongolian restaurants, foreign exchange kiosks, etc. More such shops are located in the streets around the tower. However, before Mongolians inhabited the area, Russians had been living there, having begun to arrive in Korea after diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Korea and the USSR in 1990. Trans-border small-scale trading became an important economic niche in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its state-governed economy (Holzlehner 2014). People made a living by reselling foreign products at a profit due to the imbalance between demand and supply in their home countries. Russian merchants traded at Dongdaemun Market, and soon the area around it became the center of gravity for most expatriates from post-Soviet regions, including many ethnic Koreans from Central Asia. A significant number of those people were native speakers of Russian or Central Asian languages since their families had been living outside of Korea for generations (see Kim 2020). Mongolian merchants joined the area later in the 1990s, and when, in the 2000s, many Russians moved their businesses to China on the wave of the China boom, Mongolians filled the gap alongside migrants from post-Soviet Central Asian countries (Lee and Lee 2013).

As a result of these economic developments, a rather interesting ethnically diverse enclave emerged, and nowadays in the area, there are numerous retail and wholesale trading and logistics businesses dealing with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, all kinds of businesses that cater to the needs of expatriates from those countries can be found there, and many foreigners residing in other areas of Seoul and even outside the city come to Little Mongolia regularly to buy products unavailable in other places and receive services in languages they know better than Korean.

In terms of language use, unlike Daerim-dong, with its mostly bilingual (Korean and Chinese) linguistic landscape, "Mongolian City" does not have one unified foreign language to challenge the dominance of Korean. Instead, there are several linguistic writing systems competing in the public spaces: Mongolian, Russian, English, Chinese, and Turkic languages of Central Asia – Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Kazakh – are all in wide use there; so alongside *hangeul*, one can see Latin and Cyrillic letters and Chinese characters. The area's orientation, not to one particular ethnic group but rather to the vast region of Northern Asia, is evident in advertisements of money transfer services written in Mongolian, Russian, and Uzbek, under the headlines in English, and in karaoke café leaflet stating the availability of songs in many languages including Ukrainian, Armenian, and Tatar. The most telling illustration of this new hybrid identity can be found in the signboard of café "Fusion" (Figure 5). Its name, referring to the supposed hybrid nature of its cuisine, is written in English and Korean (as well as in Russian in the window) and is supplemented by the description "Russian-Asian food," written in Russian and English, and, most interestingly, pictures of 13 national flags. Twelve smaller flags are those of all nine members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), two of its former members, Georgia (until 2008) and Ukraine (until 2018), and the flag of the CIS itself. The big red flag on the left belongs to the past: it used to be known all over the world as a symbol of the Soviet Union. The resulting image appeals to those identifying themselves with the post-Soviet cultural space.

Many multilingual signs in the area present very little information in Korean. One can assume that the main local actors responsible for creating them are non-Korean business owners and individuals directing their advertisements and announcements toward target people from the same groups. Moreover, sometimes their texts can contain no indicators that they belong to Korean urban landscape, as in the case of signs on the door to a shop owned by Russian immigrants. The shop name ("Baby") is in English; on the signboard, however, it is supplemented by Russian words meaning "goods for kids and pregnant women," and a handwritten note in Russian reads "socks, stockings etc." (Figure 6).

Russian is a highly visible foreign language in the area, despite the fact that other ethnic groups outnumber ethnic Russians there, both demographically and economically (Lee and Lee 2013). In many cases, Russian is used as a lingua franca by migrants from other countries. Some of them are native speakers of

Figure 5: Signboard of café "Fusion," Mongolian city.

Russian; others acquired it in their home countries where it is still widely in use and occasionally retains its former high prestige (Hogan-Brun and Melnyk 2012). An interesting example of such unequal distribution of symbolic power is represented by the advertising for a cargo company providing logistic services to Uzbekistan (Figure 7). The company's name and address are written in English; the description of services and the slogan ("Reliability and safety of your parcels") are given in Russian; the names of the destination cities in Uzbekistan are listed in Uzbek, with some minor misspellings (such as the mixing letters "x" and "h"). In other words, Russian is perceived as a more powerful and persuasive language, suitable to be used in commercials and even in communication between non-native Russian speakers.

Significantly, the only evidence of local authorities' attempts to resort to languages other than Korean and English is the use of Russian. The bilingual sign (Figure 8) states that parking in the area is not free and the parking fee is 5,000 won per 30 min. The Russian text is printed in smaller letters than the Korean text and contains a grammatical mistake (*30 minuta* instead of *30 minut*). This recognition of Russian presence on the part of the district authorities confirms that this language plays an important role in the area despite lacking official status. However, this district is not officially designated as multilingual, and its existence as such depends mostly on the private sector and minority speakers themselves. The situation in so-called international districts is different in many respects. Moreover, in Ansan and Itaewon, no single ethnic or cultural group prevails (see below), and, as one may expect, linguistic diversity is higher. However, as we will see, there are significant differences between the linguistic landscapes of these two urban areas.

Figure 6: Signs on the door to a shop owned by Russian immigrants, Mongolian city.

6 "International districts": attempts at multilingualism

6.1 Ansan

Ansan is an industrial city in the southwestern part of the Gyeonggi province, with close proximity and good transport connection to Seoul. It was formed in 1986 via an urbanization project in which several towns of Hwaseong County became incorporated into one conglomeration. In the 1990s, the area had a very high demand for manual labor force, attracting thousands of foreign workers from different regions of Asia and post-Soviet countries. In the following decades, the number of foreign residents living in Ansan has increased every year (Park S. 2010).

According to Ansan City authorities (Life in Ansan 2019), in 2019, foreigners residing in the city accounted for 12.1% of its 713,000 citizens – a much higher proportion than in any other Korean city. Foreign residents of Ansan originate from 110 countries including China, Uzbekistan, Russia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal, and Ukraine. Ansan's administration actively promotes it as an international city, and in February 2020, it joined the Intercultural Cities programme (https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities), which aims to support cities all over the world in positively managing diversity and realizing their advantages. The Foreign Residents Support Center was established in Ansan in 2005. The counselling and published materials are provided in 11 languages there. Along with city officials, NGOs, such as "Borderless Village," founded in 2006, also offer support to and promote the rights of migrant laborers, refugees, overseas-born ethnic Koreans, foreign spouses of Korean citizens, children of mixed marriages, and other underprivileged minorities (Yun 2011).

Many foreign residents of Ansan live in Wongok-dong, also known as "Borderless Village." The area includes the "Ansan multicultural village special zone," where nearly two-thirds of the population of 16,500

Figure 7: Advertising for a cargo company providing logistic services to Uzbekistan, Mongolian city.

is non-Korean. Nearly a quarter of the zone's almost 1,400 commercial establishments, mainly restaurants, are owned by foreigners, and many more provide them with jobs and services (Life in Ansan 2019). There are numerous ethnic shops and restaurants catering to every taste, and signs in many different languages and writing systems can be seen everywhere.

Official signage in Wongok-dong is often multilingual, with many messages from the Korean authorities written in English, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, and sometimes in other languages as well. There are also many cases of pure symbolic use of language, such as the word "hello" written in 18 different languages on the backdrop of an open-air public performance scene. However, in many other cases, pragmatic communication overtakes the symbolic gesture. Accordingly, for example, the very detailed instructions on Covid-19 spread prevention measures can be found in the streets in five different languages, Korean, Russian, Chinese, English, and Vietnamese. Some of the translations contain mistakes; nevertheless, this shows that city officials put a lot of effort into reaching the ethnic diverse residents of Ansan.

Local businesses in Wongok-dong add even more linguistic diversity to the scene. Some of them provide information in several languages; others, especially small ethnic restaurants, resort to the language of their ethnic group, sometimes with some basic translation into English but not to Korean. All of them coexist in a very close proximity to each other, as can be seen on the photograph of the entrance to the building occupied by two restaurants – one Thai and one Indonesian – and a dental clinic (Figure 9). The clinic uses English, Chinese, and Korean in its signboard. The name of the Thai restaurant "Suwan restaurant" is written in Thai. Above the name, the Korean sentence has "tae kuk yo ri" or "Thai cuisine" inserted between "Suwan" and "restaurant." In English no name is given, but there is a reference to the type of ethnic cuisine: "a restaurant for Thai." The second restaurant does not give any explanations and simply states its Indonesian name. One of its reviewers on Google Maps, writing in Korean, complains that it was difficult to order food in the restaurant

Figure 8: Parking sign, Mongolian city.

because there was no Korean menu; another Korean reviewer, who enjoyed the food and low prices, mentions that it had a menu in English. All other reviews for this restaurant are from Indonesian speakers, evidently its main target group.

For local businesses, targeting members of the same ethnic groups and addressing them in their native language in the process of in-group communication, as we have seen in the previous section, is a typical strategy widely represented in the linguistic landscapes of so-called "ethnic villages." However, in Ansan, and specifically in Wongok-dong district, there are many attempts at another type of communication, which can be called "linguistic inclusiveness." It attempts to embrace as many potential clients as possible by appealing to them in their own languages. Even national brands such as Shinhan Bank place multilingual signs (using Chinese and Vietnamese in addition to usual Korean and English) above their offices in Ansan. Many local businesses, especially money exchange services and mobile phones shops, use even more languages and combine both linguistic and visual symbolic means to attract non-Korean customers. The corner shop (Figure 10) features advertisements in Chinese (with some English insertions) and Russian (hand-written) in its windows and expands its audience by adding images of Uzbek and Vietnamese flags to those of China, Russia, and South Korea. In some cases, the linguistic inclusiveness has become quite global: the number of images of different national flags placed on a stall with baseball caps (Figure 11) exceeds 70 (with only the Korean flag depicted repeatedly). The bilingual text in the middle is an example of translanguaging between Korean and English on one sign: "Foreign visitors are welcome (Korean). Come and experience Ansan (English)." True to its image of a multicultural space, Ansan international district is linguistically diverse, with multiple languages visible in the linguistic landscape. Another international district, the famous Itaewon, well known even outside South Korea, looks very different in comparison.

Figure 9: Signs at the entrance to the building, Ansan.

6.2 Itaewon

The Seoul district of Itaewon is situated in a close proximity to the US military base and is known as "Western Town," famous for its shops and restaurants providing foreign goods and food (Park 2010). In 1997, the Seoul administration declared it a special tourist zone – the very first of its kind, and the Itaewon Global Village Festival was started under the auspices of the Itaewon Special Tourism Zone Association (Yoo 2012). Itaewon is situated in the middle of Yongsan-gu, which borders the northern part of the Hangang River. It is also close to Seoul Station, Myeong-dong, and Namsan Mountain. The formation of this site is tightly intertwined with modern Korean history and the impact foreign countries have had on it. Some military-related facilities had previously existed in the Yongsan area in Joseon Kingdom (Park 2013). During the Japanese colonial period, the area was used as headquarters of the Japanese army. After 1945, US Forces took over the place (Schober 2014), and as a result, Itaewon turned into an entertainment district for the US military: American-style clubs and illegal brothels emerged and started to attract clients from all over the city, resulting in the increase of crime rates (on the matter of the US military's impact on the surrounding areas, see Gillem 2007, Ch. 3). Later housing complexes for foreigners were built in Yongsan, increasing the number of foreign residents in the area. After the 1960s, a large number of foreign embassies moved into Itaewon district, and luxury apartment buildings were erected. Redevelopment projects in the 1980s and 1990s moved Itaewon further upscale, and when the US base went into lockdown in 2001, in the aftermath of 9/11, businesses in the area had to adapt to the situation and attract new clients. That was how, overcoming its rather questionable reputation, in the twenty-first century, Itaewon became quite trendy as a place with a true international spirit (Park 2013, Kim 2014, Lee 2015) – a place where people from different cultures can freely mix and communicate with each other, with this

Figure 10: Corner shop, Ansan.

image further popularized by the pop-song "Itaewon Freedom" (2011) and later by the TV drama "Itaewon Class" (2020, available worldwide on Netflix) set there.

Despite the fact that Itaewon is historically associated with the American, and overall "western" influence on Korean culture, nowadays it represents much more than that. "Asian" components of the new globalized world are highly visible there: there are many Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Turkish, Lebanese, Indian, and Pakistani restaurants in the area, as well as shops with halal food. Moreover, the main Seoul mosque, the Islamic Central Masjid of Seoul, is situated there, making Itaewon an important gathering point for Muslim residents of the city (see Song 2014). Other faiths, including Judaism and different versions of Christianity, also are represented in the area. The street parallel to the so-called Muslim street is known as "Homo Hill" and is popular among Seoul's LGBTQ+ community. Itaewon, therefore, is, on the one hand, a place designed for all kinds of foreigners – tourists from abroad, local foreign residents, members of particular ethnic, religious, or gender groups, and foreigners in a broader sense, i.e., everyone who is not Korean. On the other hand, it is an attraction for Koreans interested in other cultures and flavors, willing to experience "foreignness" without actually leaving Korea. For such people, Itaewon is "a quasicarnivalesque territory of make-believe that lies outside of the social, geographical, and temporal parameters of 'Korea proper'" (Schober 2016, 110). There are both Korean and foreign owners in Itaewon, and most of them appear to attract both groups of customers. Itaewon, in this sense, is a symbol of inclusiveness; in the aforementioned TV drama, it is depicted as a place where people differing from social, ethnic, or gender majorities (e.g., a former criminal, a child of a mix-raced marriage, or a transgender) can cease to be outcasts.

However, the analysis of the data on Itaewon linguistic landscape reveals that this image of a global superdiverse urban space does not include actual linguistic superdiversity. It is true that the area is not monolingual, and many languages are indeed spoken there. Most of them, though, receive little to no visual

Figure 11: Stall selling baseball caps, Ansan.

representation. The vast majority of shops and restaurants in Itaewon use only two languages in their sign-boards and advertisements: Korean and English (Lawrence 2012). Other languages are used merely symboli-cally, mostly as a part of business names, as in the case of Vietnamese café named "Pho House," referring to a famous Vietnamese dish, and the Uzbek restaurant "Lazzat" ("flavor" in Uzbek). Another Vietnamese restau-rant has the name "Toi Toi" or "My My" (Figure 12) but its slogan – "Feel the real Vietnam" – is written in English. Ironically, an invitation to feel something real and authentic is made by means of another – global – language. In other cases, names are written in two languages, in English and in the ethnically relevant one: for example, "Egyptian restaurant Ali Baba" is written in larger letters in English than in Arabic. Also, many Muslim shops and restaurants place the word "halal" in Arabic on their signboards, but an almost equal number of them write "halal" in English. The American franchise "The halal guys" has a restaurant in Itaewon as well, and its name is written in English and transliterated into *hangeul* (in smaller letters) but without any written Arabic.

More examples of pure emblematic use of singular foreign words can be found in menus of Itaewon restaurants. Some of them make use of names of dishes in their original language and then translate them and add descriptions of their ingredients and flavors in English and Korean. This strategy is typical for French and Italian restaurants as well as for some Thai and Chinese ones. There is an interesting combination of foreign words and their translations, revealing how "exotic" linguistic items can be made into commodities. The Chinese diner's name "Chaofan" (Figure 13) means "fried rice" in Chinese, a dish popular both in China and in Korea. The name itself is written three times: in Chinese and in English and Korean transliterations. There are also translations: the English words "fried rice" and Korean name of the same dish are written in scripts that are stylized to look more like Chinese characters – a rather popular strategy among Chinese restaurants in Korea. Similar examples of such "writing system mimicry" (Sutherland 2015) can be found all over the world. Another example of creative language use, although with the focus not on the Chinese graphic system but on

Figure 12: Vietnamese restaurant, Itaewon.

the language itself, is represented in the menu of a noodle house (Figure 14). The Chinese phrase "Have you eaten yet?" is transliterated in English alongside its Korean analogue, written in *hangeul*. In both Korea and China, the question is traditionally used as a greeting.

These cases of foreign-language use can be seen as instances of the process of language commodification (Heller 2010). Foreign words are used symbolically, to attract attention and make hints about the "exotic" nature of goods and services provided. At the same time, for pragmatic communication, Korean and/or English is/are used. This means that English can supplement, or even sometimes substitute, Korean as a dominant language, thereby preventing wider representation of other languages in Itaewon linguistic landscape.

Alongside ethnic shops and cafes commodifying their languages, there are other cases when English is used exclusively, and other – non-linguistic – means are used to advertise the specific nature of their products. For example, in a Jordan diner named "Jordan Falafel" (Figure 15), a reference to the Middle East is made via the image of a camel on its signboard. Texts on billboards and an open/closed sign are written in English, with no traces of Arabic. Then, there is a Spanish bar called "Spain Club" with the description "wine resto bar" and a Spanish flag on the building façade, but not a single word in Spanish. There is a Thai restaurant (Figure 16) called "Buddha's Belly" in English, and its name is transliterated into *hangeul* although not translated into Korean, such that it has no meaning for Korean speakers who do not understand English. In fact, the only reference to Thailand is the English description "Thai cuisine." Tigers are depicted on the billboard as a general symbol of Asia rather than a specific country (when referring to Thailand, elephants, as the country's official symbol, would be more appropriate). English, therefore, is used as a substitution for all other foreign, i.e., non-Korean, languages; the very idea of exotic ethnic identity is represented via one particular language, a symbol of the globalized world. Confusing the meanings of the words "national" and "international" is revealing in this sense: similar shops selling imported food products and situated on the same street are named "International Mart" and "National Food Mart," respectively. Another one is simply named "Foreign Food."

Figure 13: Chinese diner, Itaewon.

Figure 14: Menu of a noodle house, Itaewon.

Figure 15: Jordan diner, Itaewon.

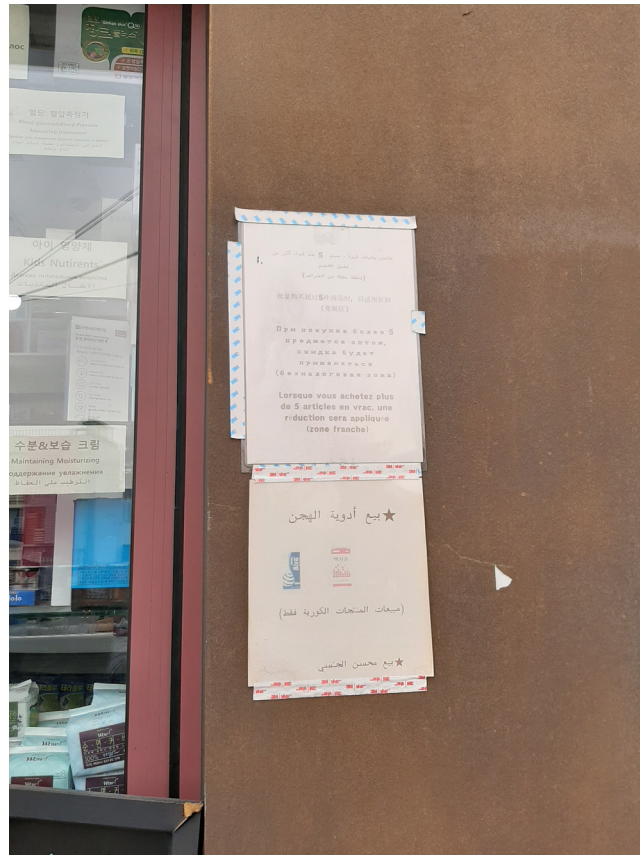**Figure 16:** Thai restaurant, Itaewon.

Figure 17: Drugstore, Itaewon.

It should be noted that this image of "foreignness," i.e., a global (cosmopolitan, international, non-Korean) identity, is supported by local non-Korean actors. Their choice of everything English and foreign rather than ethnic and culturally specific, at least in some cases, may be conscious. The most striking example is a halal food restaurant, named by its Pakistani owner "Foreign Restaurant." All elements of the linguistic landscape there, including a job offer note on the door inviting Malaysian and Egyptian waitresses and Arabic chefs to apply, are written exclusively in English. Evidently, embracing global "foreign" identity rather than maintaining an ethnically specific one is a successful business strategy in the Itaewon district appealing to middle-class cosmopolitan-oriented customers. In this sense, the district differs both from "ethnic villages," with their focus on in-group communication, and from Ansan, with its attempts to address as many people as possible in their own languages. In Itaewon, foreigners are expected to speak, or at least read and write, English. There are rare exceptions to this unspoken rule – some sex shops and tattoo salons targeting tourists from China and Japan, for example, add short Chinese and Japanese phrases to their English/Korean advertisements; and there is a small drugstore (Figure 17) where all products are marked in four languages, Korean, English, Russian, and Arabic, and some announcements use Chinese and French as well. The overwhelming majority of businesses, however, adhere to a bilingual "English/Korean only" policy, refraining from actual linguistic diversity.

7 Conclusions: multidirectional changes and challenges of multilingualism

The analysis of the South Korean linguistic landscape given in this article reveals several patterns of language use, depending on the specific urban context. Foreign languages used in public written communication are

embedded into different frameworks in these contexts, and patterns of their use vary from a pragmatic orientation to predominantly symbolic ones and from in-group to out-group communication but not necessarily in the same direction between different districts. On the one hand, our data show that multilingual signs tend not to be part of symbolic, interethnic communication; on the contrary, they are used for pragmatic, in-group interaction, whether for brand names for nation-wide chain stores or for handwritten notes in a small local shop in one of the so-called "ethnic villages." The difference between such cases is that the former belongs to communication between members of Korean speaking majority while the latter relates to interaction between members of minority groups. Functionally, most multilingual signs found in the so-called "ethnic villages" are very similar to other typical Korean advertisements in that they target the members of the same ethnic and linguistic groups as those of their authors. This is multilingualism "for local needs" rather than an example of true urban superdiversity in Blommaert's sense (2013). However, these minorities, as our data show, are not necessarily ethnically and linguistically homogeneous. The case of the area around Dongdaemun History and Culture Park station reveal how such minority groups can be symbolically constructed on the basis of regional and cultural – post-Soviet, in a broad sense – identity. Consequently, Russian, still being an important part of this identity, tends to dominate the scene, functioning as a lingua franca. English is also visibly present in both of the studied "ethnic" areas; however, its use is connected with symbolic/international association rather than pragmatic/local aspects of linguistic landscapes. On the other hand, in the context of commodification and aesthetic cosmopolitanism found in Itaewon, foreign languages other than English are turned into pure symbols, the same way as stereotyped images and colors, while English becomes dominant both pragmatically, as a lingua franca for diverse foreigners and globalized Koreans, and symbolically, as a representation of foreignness and cosmopolitanism.

The comparison of data from two "international" districts reveals crucial differences. Despite the fact that both studied areas, Wongok-dong in Ansan and Itaewon in Seoul have the reputation of being foreigner-oriented districts, and their respective linguistic landscapes differ sharply. Wongok-dong's linguistic landscape exhibits "true" multilingualism that is not limited to symbolic functions and is driven by non-Korean actors, while the linguistic landscape of Itaewon, despite being famous as the most non-traditional and free place in Korea, turns out to be closer to the traditional monolingual ideology. On the surface, Itaewon looks very different from other Seoul districts insofar as it is evidently non-Korean. However, in most contexts, English functions as a substitute for other foreign languages, an emblem of "foreignness," and other foreign languages are used mostly as symbolic ethnic/cultural markers. Instead of embracing different linguistic identities, Itaewon positions itself as "foreign," i.e., non-Korean. Importantly, this sub-ethnic "foreign" identity is constructed simultaneously by actors from both the outside and inside – by the Korean-speaking majority *and* foreign residents of Seoul who resort to English as the only language other than Korean to be used in public space. This "Other = English" micro-level language ideology is simply another face of the same monolingual ideology "Koreans only speak Korean" with an addition: "foreigners all speak English." It means that when challenged by linguistic and cultural diversity, linguistic nationalism, even undergoing slow transformations, resorts to monolingual techniques of constructing new – global – images of the city and its residents.

The linguistic landscape in Itaewon does not address particular groups of foreigners but rather an abstract English-speaking "Foreigner" who may be European, American, Asian, African, Muslim, Jewish, gay, or transgender – anything but "traditional Korean". In this sense, it is indeed a "no man's land," a place where Koreans can go to feel global, to experience "non-Koreanness." One can say that Daerim-dong exists mainly as a place for Chinese migrants, Mongolian city – for people from Mongolia and post-Soviet countries – and that Ansan exists for all kinds of foreigners. Meanwhile Itaewon is certainly used by all those groups of people but maybe its existence is even more important for Koreans, as they need it as a place to experience otherness, "non-Koreanness." One can assume that as a result, it has been shaped by the monolingual ideology that prevails in South Korean society. It is manifested in the total dominance of English over every other foreign language in the area. The "One country, one nation, one language" approach demands the existence of the only other language that can incorporate and symbolize everything beyond. And, as it happened, this language, for South Korea, is English. Even expat residents and business owners in Itaewon comply with this "bilingual mono-lingualism" using English not only as a lingua franca for pragmatic reasons but also as a symbolic resource and sometimes naming themselves simply "foreigners," the way Koreans prefer to see them.

Non-Korean residents of Ansan, however, demonstrate a different strategy: they make their languages visible in the city space, and their linguistic agency is not restricted by the role of "a foreigner" ascribed to them by language majority. Evidently, we deal here with non-privileged "cosmopolitanism from below," "poor people's cosmopolitanism" (Curtin 2014, 159–60), and that is where the socio-economic differences between Itaewon and three other – predominantly working-class – districts become more important than the conceptualization of them as "ethnic" or "international" by Korean government and native speakers of Korean.

At the same time, there is another important aspect of using foreign languages in localized linguistic landscapes. Even if they belong to in-group communication and are not aimed for Korean native speakers, the very fact of their presence in public space contributes to creating more diverse and inclusive language regime normalizing and even legitimizing minority language use (cf. changing attitudes toward public use of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and other languages of labor migrants from Central Asia in Russia in Baranova and Fedorova 2020). Signs are out in the open for all to see, and being placed in the city space, they change it by the mere fact of their existence. A given sign might be created by someone for the benefit of the people from the same minority group and at the same time it may attract attention from a much wider audience. And closer encounters with other languages and cultures gradually help people to switch from resistance to acceptance (Shaules 2007).

Multilingual islands dispersed in the monolingual sea of South Korea, therefore, may look similar from a distance but when seen in proximity, they present very different ways of being multilingual and cosmopolitan. One can wonder then, which model of multilingualism, "monophonic" or "polyphonic," will prevail. On the one hand, the younger generation, as some studies reveal (Campbell 2015, Park and Yang 2015, Lee 2012) is less keen on nationalistic approach and fancies multilingual practices, and brands and products aimed at them tend to use other languages and writing systems than Korean. On the other hand, there is an evident dominance of English in such attempts to appeal to Korean youth consistent with the well-established tendency to associate the use of English insertions in Korean advertisements as symbols of modernity (Lee 2006, Ahn and La Ferle 2008). Starting from the early 1990s, popular singers made it typical to "mix" Korean with English in their songs (Um 2013), and nowadays most world-famous Korean hits including 2012 "Gangnam Style" contain English words and phrases (Dong and Cho 2016) performing "liquid culture – a world culture of diluted hybridities" (Tan 2015, 87). There are evidences, at the same time, that at least some young Koreans, despite being fluent in English, find this globalized version of Korean culture and the "fetishizing" (Kim et al. 2018) of English in South Korea problematic and even disturbing, upholding "narratives of Western superiority and white supremacy" (Bacon and Kim 2018). The choice, however, is again between Korean as a symbol of everything national and traditional and English as a symbol of all the global and modern. Other languages, multilingual practices, and localized diversities seem not to be in the focus of such discussions. Further linguistic landscape studies in other areas of South Korea as well as an analysis of metalinguistic discourses will show if this somewhat restricted monolingual view is gradually being changed by growing linguistic diversity.

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