Analysis of Protest Signs in #SécuritéPourTous and #StopAsianHate

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Abstract

In this article, by adopting the multimodal analytical model proposed by Sebba (2013), we compared some signs used in two protests, #SécuritéPourTous and #StopAsianHate, the former launched by the Chinese community in Paris following the assassination of Zhang Chaolin in Aubervilliers (in 90e arrondissement) in Paris and the latter initiated by the Asian community in North America following several hate crimes targeting Asians. By conducting a multimodal analysis, we demonstrate that nothing is randomly placed in protest signs. There is always some extra-linguistic information that the sign makers try to convey. At the same time, the signs can not only tell us about who the sign makers are but also who the addressees of the signs are.

Keywords: *protest sign; Asian community; multimodal analysis; linguistic landscape*

Introduction

Spolsky argued that the term "linguistic landscape" originated from the French term "paysage linguistique" (See, for example: Bourhis and Landry, 2002; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). According to Spolsky (2020, p 4), Landry and Bourhis used the term "linguistic landscape" to "label a statistical factor formed by a number of items in questionnaires used with 2000 francophone students in 11th and 12th grades in fifty Canadian schools in several studies in the early 1990s." Nevertheless, their studies concentrated more on the linguistic attitudes than the signages themselves. It would not be until 2006 when Shohamy and her colleagues published their pioneering paper on multilingual signs (See, for example: Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). The field later quickly expanded into other fields of semiotics.

Recently, multilingual protest signs have attracted much attention in the study of the linguistic landscape. For example, Kasanga (2014) examined the multilingual discourse of protest in the "Arab Spring" revolution and found that signs are powerful tools for conveying cultural and political meaning. Rojo (2014), by looking at the signs used in Arab Spring/ Indignados/Occupy movements in Cairo, Madrid, Athens, L.A., and Santiago de Chile, demonstrated the spatial dynamics of discourse in global protest movements. Shiri (2015) then investigated the language of protest signs in public spaces in Tunisia during the presidential protest. Monje (2017) focused on multilingual "unfixed" signs (including texts on bodies, t-shirt, *etc.*) in Protest in Manila and concluded that such "unfixed" signs are indices of linguistic diversity and ethnolinguistic vitality. Al-Naimat (2019), from a semiotic point of view, analyzed the multilingualism in signs of protest in Jordanian Protest in 2018 with a focus on code choice.

Despite the prosperity of the number of studies focusing on multilingual signs in protests, most of them focused on meaning conveying. They rarely focused on the semiotic makeup of protest signs regarding their structure

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or the relationships between the languages. Part of the reason might be that multilingualism and code-switching attract the most attention in the study of spoken languages. As stated by Gardner-Chloros and Weston (2015, pp 183), "the study of written, and specifically literary, code-switching, has only recently enjoyed a surge of interest." (See also: McClure, 1998; Jonsson, 2010; Sebba, 2013). They believed that this lack of interest might be related to "the sociolinguistic tradition which emphasizes the primacy of spontaneous spoken language, concentrating largely on phonological variation" (Gardner-Chloros and Weston, 2015, p 183).

At the same time, most of the work conducted in linguistic landscape only examined one protest at a time. Nevertheless, a comparison between protests held by similar communities would provide us with more insights into multilingualism in protest signs. This is of particular interest to scholars who seek to examine the notion of diasporic communities in a globalized world, where speakers from the same L1 background use different linguistic resources that they dispose to communicate with members outside their own community. This also allows us to examine the dynamic relationship between their L1 and the local dominant language as no protest sign is made randomly.

In 2016, following the death of the Chinese merchant Zhang Chaolin in Aubervilliers (93e arrondissement) in Paris, France, the local Chinese community launched the protest #SécuritéPourTous to request the presence of more police force in the area to guarantee their security. In 2021, after several hate crimes targeting Asians in the US, the Asian community initiated a mass protest #StopAsianHate in North America, which received much attention and support from other parts of the world. These two movements are comparable in that they were both held by the Asian community and are related to hate crimes. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare the multilingual signs the protestors used in these two movements to see how communities with the same language background use their multilingual competence in creating multilingual signs.

Therefore, in this article, we will first review the relation between multilingualism and code-switching, as well as the currently available analytical models for code-switching analysis. Second, the methodology for the current work will be presented. Following this, by adopting the analytical model proposed by Sebba (2013) for written code-switching, the comparison of the multilingual signs in these two movements will be discussed. Finally, a conclusion, as well as future implications, will be drawn.

Literature Review

Taxonomies of signs

One important question to think about is whether protest signs are homogeneous? Are they a simple sub-category of signs in general? Or are they a cover term for several different types of signs? To answer this question, we need to know what different types of signs are. How can we classify them? In fact, there does not exist only one way to classify the signs. Based on earlier work with his colleagues on hundreds of signs in Jerusalem (Spolsky and Cooper, 1991), Spolsky proposed

several ways to classify signs (2020, pp 9-10).

First, we could classify signs based on their forms. By form, Spolsky mainly means the place where these signs appear, thus the medium of the signs. He then distinguishes among eight sub-categories: written with a marker or brush on any surface, typed or written on paper, printed on a poster, painted on a board, painted on glass or plastic, painted on a ceramic tile, engraved or cut out on bronze of metal and chiseled or embossed on stone. The protest signs we discuss here correspond to the first four forms. However, we do notice that there might be some overlap between these eight sub-categories, especially the first two. For example, when written on paper, it could also be regarded as a possible type of written with a marker or brush on any surface.

Second, we can also classify the signs based on the number and choice of languages and script. Since there could be a discrepancy between the number of languages that appeared on the signs and the number of languages spoken by a community, by taking this classification, we could identify the gap between the linguistic landscape and the sociolinguistic repertoire of the community, if any. This classification seems highly relevant if we want to examine the multilingualism presented in those signs.

Third, we could also classify the signs by their content and function. Spolsky also identified eight sub-categories for this classification: street signs, advertising signs, warning notices and prohibitions, building signs stating ownership or function, informative, commemorative plaques, labels on objects, and graffiti. This classification seems less relevant for protest signs, though, since protest signs are already a specific sub-type of signs.

Lastly, it is also possible to classify sign ownership or the intended reader. For this classification, Spolsky et al. proposed to use the preference model developed by Jackendoff (1983), which states three rules for sign-making. They labeled these three rules as sign writer's skill, presumed reader, and symbolic value. This classification is crucial in understanding the dynamic relationship between the sign makers and the intended readers. On the one hand, protest signs are owned by the protestors.

In most cases, we can identify, if not the individual, the owner group. On the other hand, protest signs are used in protests for a purpose. There will always be some intended readers. The protest signs could probably be viewed as a means that conveys specific messages from the protestor(s) to the intended readers. For this reason, they can be viewed as semiotics in linguistic landscapes.

Coming back to our earlier question, it is much clearer now that protest signs are not cover terms of a sub-category of signs since signs could be classified in so many ways depending on the perspective that one takes. What adds more difficulty to the analysis of protest signs is that there is no fixed format. It is primarily decided by the sign makers. This makes the relationship among the sign makers, the encoded message, and the intended reader even more complex.

Analytical models for multilingualism in the linguistic landscape

Once we figure out what types of signs there are, it is important to know

what are available analytical models that we can use to conduct our analysis. According to Sebba (2013, p 99), over the past decades, two models have been proposed for the sociolinguistic study of code-switching in spoken language: the Markedness Model proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993) and the Conversation Analysis Model (Auer, 1984, 1995, 1998, 2010; Wei, 1998, 2005). Myers-Scotton's model focused more on the identity and code choice dimension in code-switching and examined the effect of code-switching on talk in interaction. By modeling Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, this model proposed the negotiation principle. As stated by Myers-Scotton:

> Choose the form of your conversational contribution such that it indexes the set of rights and obligations which you wish to be in force between the speaker and addressee for the current exchange. (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p 113).

However, Auer (1998) argued that the "conversation-external knowledge about language use" required by Myers-Scotton's model might not be necessary. He also believed that the empirical studies did not reveal the correlation between languages and speech activities predicted by the markedness model. Instead, Auer (1984) proposed the Conversation Analysis Model, arguing that situation is created by talk in interaction:

> [Based on Blom & Gumperz, 1972] one would either have to conclude that (in the situational case) code-switching is without social meaning because it is a necessary consequence of certain situational parameters, or that (in the metaphorical case) it is dependent on an (almost) one-to-one-relationship between language choice and situational parameters which can be purposefully violated. (Auer, 1984, p 4).

However, Sebba (2013, p 99) pointed out that the markedness model would only be suitable for "more conversation-like and interactive written genres," such as emails (Goldbarg, 2009), while the conversational analysis model by Auer (1984) is restricted to "more conversation-like interactive written data" and is not helpful for "non-interactive data."

He further argued that the reason why the existing models may not be suitable for written texts is that they were not initially designed for written texts:

> The majority of studies of written mixed-language discourse to date, to the extent that they try to classify code-switching and account for what motivates individual switches, have applied one of the three models above-those associated with Gumperz, Myers-Scotton or Auer. However, none of these models were developed originally to deal with written texts, and researchers often face difficulties when trying to apply them to a different modality. (Sebba, 2013, p 99).

Blommaert (2013, pp 445-449) suggested that there are five sets of resources required for "writing adequately": technological/infrastructural resources,

graphic resources, linguistic resources, semantic, pragmatic, and metapragmatic resources, as well as social and cultural resources; while in oral production, some of these resources are absent or impossible to be present. It is the multi-dimensional characteristics of written texts that distinguish them from spoken forms, which further appeals for a different analytical model.

Therefore, Sebba (2013) proposed a multimodal analysis model for written code-switching, including units of analysis, language-spatial relationship, language-content relationships, language mixing type, and parallel VS complementary texts.

For the units of analysis, Sebba mainly distinguishes between "grammatical units," "genre-specific units," and "visual/spatial units." As signs are static, unlike spoken language, which appeals to the prosodic cues to convey emotions or meaning, signs appeal more to the visual effects. This distinction between different units allows us to examine both visual and written components of a sign. It further offers the possibility to decode the intention of the sign makers by choosing one unit over the other or how the composition of two or more units converges in their meaning-making.

"Language-spatial relationships" refer to "the spatial relationship between units containing a specific language or mixture of languages:" either symmetric or asymmetric, though other kinds of relationships could also exist (Sebba, 2013, p 105). This corresponds more to the classification of signs based on language choice.

"Language-content relationships" could be equivalent text, disjoint text, or overlapping text. By "equivalent text," Sebba means that texts "have similar content in two or more language;" "disjoint texts" are texts that "have different content;" "overlapping texts" are those that "some of the content is repeated in the other language, while some is not." (Sebba, 2013, p 106). This would allow us to see what is the most important message that the sign makers try to convey in the chosen language.

Sebba believed that there are two possible types for the mixing type: mixed units and language-neutral units. "Mixed units are units that contain elements from two or more languages." (Sebba, 2013, p 107). "Language-neutral units" are units "that consist of items that cannot be assigned exclusively to one language but belong equally to both (or all) the languages involved in the text."

'Parallel' texts and 'Complementary' texts would be general categories covering all the above features. "Parallel texts" are texts "where language-spatial relationships are symmetrical, language-content relationships are equivalent, and the linguistic mixing type is exclusively monolingual." (Sebba, 2013, p 109). "Complementary texts" are then texts that have "asymmetrical language-spatial relationships and disjoint language-content relationships."

Compared to previous models, this model concentrates more on the semiotic makeup of written texts by taking visual information into consideration. It corresponds more to the general classification of signs proposed by Spolsky. However, different sub-categories are not mutually exclusive. There could be overlaps in between. Thus, it allows us to examine semiotics in linguistic landscapes more thoroughly.

Methodology

The photos we used for the current work came from the Internet and were taken by anonymous photographers. For #SécuritéPourTous, most of the photos came from the official Facebook account of the protest: https://www.facebook.com/SecuritepourT/. For #StopAsianHate, all photos were taken from a Chinese social media app named RED (a quasi-equivalence of Instagram in the Chinese version). For the analysis of the photos, we will adopt the multimodal analysis framework proposed by Sebba (2013).

Multilingual protest signs in #SécuritéPourTous

In *Figure 1*, we see a protestor holding a protest sign printed on a paper glued to a board. The overall background color of the sign is black. According to Sebba's model, this protest sign is composed of both grammatical and visual units.

Figure 1 Protestor holding a poster

For the grammatical units on this sign, two languages are present: one Chinese character, *我* ('I'), and one sentence in French, *Je veux sortir en toute sécurité* ('I want to go out in all security'). The French sentence was written in yellow and the Chinese character in white. According to Sebba's model, this would be an example of overlapping text as part of the French sentence (the subject pronoun) was repeated in the other language. The Chinese character also overlapped the French subject pronoun in its spatial distribution so that visually it looks like the French subject *je* is part of the Chinese character. At the same time, the texts in these two languages also resemble each other in their font. This also expressed the idea that the Chinese and the French people should act like one and that this need for security is for everyone, not just the Chinese community.

Even though both the language of the protesting community (the Chinese) and the official local language (the French) are used on this sign, the French language still occupies the dominant position. Based on the spatial prominence and length of the script, the French sentence could be viewed as the carrying sentence while the Chinese character is the embedded part. This seems to correspond to the actual language situation of these two languages in society: French is the country's official language, while Chinese is a minority language spoken by the particular community.

As for the visual units, the choice of the picture is particularly interesting. The overall black tone and the moon in the picture suggest the time of the tragedy. The red sky reminds us of the blood of the victim. People in the picture come from all ethnic groups, genders, ages, and social classes doing different activities. This diversity in the background suggests that the need for security is for everyone, not just the Chinese community, which allows this protest sign to reach a

greater audience. The dark-haired girl among all people is more prominent, suggesting that the request is that even the most vulnerable group such as kids could go out at night without needing to worry about their safety.

When it comes to the protest sign as a whole, it seems that the picture is the dominant part, while the script is more like the inscription to the picture. However, the inscription is carefully planned. The slogan of the protest is *#SécuritéPourTous* ('security for all'). Here, in the sentence, the sign maker chose the subject 'I'. The contrast between the singular 'I' in this sign and the plural 'All' is interesting. It seems that the protestor wants everyone to react, placing an accent on requiring the local enforcement to provide bottom-up security for everyone in the community instead of top-down security that does not necessarily reach every individual. This seems to corroborate with the actual situation of the moment, since after the tragedy of Zhang Chaolin, the local police kept saying that they would enhance the security of the area. However, the situation was not ameliorated with several successive malicious attacks on Chinese merchants in the same area, which finally formed the driving force of this protest. By placing the accent on the singular 'I', the protestors expressed their dissatisfaction toward the current situation.

Figure 2 presents a printed notice of the protest on an office desk to be distributed to different shops. The protest sign is a printed poster that is an informative notice to the public of the time and place of the protest event. On the top of the sign is the slogan of the protest *sécurité pour tous* in red and blue, together with the white background, reminding us of the color of the French national flag.

Figure 2 Printed notice of the protest

Below the slogan, we see a big hand palm facing outwards with the inscription, *stop,* underneath. As for the word "stop" in the center of this sign, it is questionable whether we should consider it French or English since it is an integrated loanword that French borrowed from English. However, we notice that the visual unit of this sign is the same as the officer uses for traffic signing gestures: a hand with a palm facing outwards. This would perhaps explain why they chose to use the loanword "stop" instead of the French word "*arrêt*" since the stop signs in France also use the English loanword "stop." By making this choice, the protestor might want to convey that the hate crimes have to be stopped as enforced by stop signs that it is not something optional.

Following this, there is a big red rectangle, in which are three French words: *violence* ('violence'), *aggression* ('assault'), and *insécurité* ('insecurity'). This resembles the stamp mark used in many official documents. It has the

connotation of being official. It suggests that the sign makers might try to establish the official status of this event. They might want the public to know that this is an official protest of the community seeking the attention of the local government. This could also be corroborated by the picture in the heart shape on the right corner. It has the same color and form as the symbol used in a governmental document.

Then we see two lines of Chinese *大家要安全！9.4 大游行通知* ('Everyone wants to be safe! 9.4 grand protest notice'). This is the only Chinese script on this sign, which specifically addresses the Chinese readers to call their attention that this is a formal notice of the protest, though the Chinese script does not say the place of the event or the detailed time but only the date.

On the bottom of the sign, the concrete time and place of the protest were indicated in French, allowing access to those who could read French. This suggests that the sign makers may want to attract more attention of French speakers to have them participate in the event.

Overall, this would be an example of overlapping text where the Chinese content has some overlap with the French content. Even though both languages are present in this sign, French is definitely the dominant language. What is worth pointing out is that almost all the important information was given in French. The Chinese script only described what kind of event this would be. We could deduce that this protest sign might address more French speakers than Chinese speakers. In fact, one of the protest organizers told us that the purpose of organizing this protest was to try to have an official conversation with the local government and get more attention via French mass media. Since the aimed medium was French mass media, it would not be surprising to see French as the dominant language in that protest sign with all important information written in French.

Figure 3 presents a group of protestors holding a big banner as a protest sign. The sign was printed on a soft fabric. As with two previous protest signs, both Chinese and French are present on this sign. On the top, we have Chinese characters saying *我要安全* ('I want security'); on the bottom, the French phrase *Sécurité pour tous* ('Security for all'), which is the same as the protest slogan. The spatial relationship of the two languages is not symmetric. The Chinese text has a much bigger font size and comes first. The French text is more like a subscript to the Chinese text. Unlike earlier examples, this protest sign might be directed more toward the Chinese speakers than the French speakers.

Figure 3 Protest sign printed on a big banner

The choice of color is also interesting here. The sign maker only used a red script on white background. On the one hand, the red resembles the blood that would remind the reader of the

tragedy; on the other hand, the red appears the most with warning or prohibition signs which would catch the reader's immediate attention. In addition, red is often associated with the Chinese culture that it is often used for important events.

As for the content of the text, since it is also possible to translate the Chinese phrase as *sécurité pour moi* ('security for me'), this protest sign could also be viewed as an example of overlapping text, where the Chinese and the French content differ only in one word. As we saw with *Figure 1*, the Chinese content uses the singular 'me' while the French content uses the plural 'all'. So why do they choose two different pronouns in different languages?

One of the explanations might be the same as in the first example that the protestors require bottom-up security. In the first example, both languages use the singular pronoun. However, the protest sign in *Figure 3* only uses the singular pronoun in Chinese but the plural pronoun in French. Therefore, this does not seem to be the reason.

Another possible explanation is that the French content is not a translation of the Chinese content even though they resemble each other greatly in their syntactic or lexical structure. The French content might be nothing else but the slogan of the protest. The Chinese content is the real message that the sign maker tries to convey to its reader. However, it should also be pointed out that the French '*tous*' might also convey that everybody should have security while the 'me' in Chinese means that each member of the Chinese community may be targeted. This would call for unity and the support of all French citizens against hate crimes, like in the slogan: '*Tous pour un, un pour tous'* (all for one, one for all) (Dumas, 1844).

Overall, for the multilingual protest signs used in #SécuritéPourTous, overlapping texts seem to be the most common types. Very often, we see different spatial relationships between the Chinese texts and the French texts, demonstrating the different status of these two languages in local communities. A comparison of the different messages in these two languages also allows us to see how sign makers use the visual and linguistic resources at their disposal to express their identities and to address the intended addressees.

Multilingual protest signs in #StopAsianHate

More multilingual protest signs could be found for the protest #StopAsianHate. Partially, this might be because this protest has wider influence than #SécuritéPourTous. While the #SécuritéPourTous occurs only in France, the #StopAsianHate has spread worldwide.

Figure 4 presents a protest sign written on a paper glued to a board. According to Sebba's model, *Figure 4* is an example of disjoint texts, where the English text has completely different content from the Chinese text. On this protest sign, both English and Chinese are present. On the top of the sign reads Protect Asian Lives with three exclamation points; on the bottom of the sign, we can see *不做沉默的哑裔* ('Do not be a silent Asian'). However, the English text is in the dominant position with a much bigger font size compared to Chinese text. The spatial relationship between the two texts is therefore asymmetric.

Figure 4 Protest sign written on a board

What is interesting about this sign is that from the content, we can see that the English text addresses non-Chinese as a request for them to protect the Asian community, while the Chinese text appeals for the Asian community to act. We can see this protest sign has two different groups of intended readers. The color contrast is carefully planned: The English red text echoes with the Chinese text in color.

Meanwhile, it is worth pointing out that the choice of word in Chinese is wisely chosen. Here we have *哑裔 ya yi* ('silent Asian'), which is a homophone to *亚裔 ya yi* ('Asian'). Acoustically speaking, the two words only differ in the tones in the first character: *哑裔 ya yi* ('silent Asian') starts with the third tone while *亚裔 ya yi* ('Asian') starts with the fourth tone in Chinese. Visually speaking, the first character in both words only differs in one radical. *哑* in *哑裔 ya yi* ('silent Asian') has 口 as its radical, which signifies the mouth in Chinese. By substituting *亚裔 ya yi* ('Asian') with *哑裔 ya yi* ('silent Asian'), the sign maker also invites the Chinese community to challenge the stereotype against the Asian of being silent or passive.

In addition, the emotional effect is strong in this protest sign compared to the previous protest signs. On the one hand, the sign makers used three exclamation points to express a forceful emotion indicating their anger against whoever assaulted the Asian community. We notice that the Chinese text has no exclamation point. This suggests that this strong emotion addressed more the non-Asian community. On the other hand, the sign makers chose an imperative sentence instead of a regular statement. By employing imperative, the sign makers give a direct command. It is emotionally more robust than a statement. In combination with the three exclamation points, we definitely sense the anger of the sign makers.

Figure 5 presents a protest sign handwritten on paper. On this sign, both English and Chinese are present. On the top, we see the English sentence *Racism is shameful*; on the bottom, we see the Chinese sentence *歧視是無恥的行為* ('Racism is shameful'). According to Sebba's model, this is an example of equivalent text where the Chinese text is the same as the English text. The spatial relationship between Chinese and English is symmetric: each language occupies an equal space in the sign. We do not see one language dominating the other language visually.

Figure 5 Woman holding a protest sign written on a paper in her hand

One particularity of this protest sign is the choice of font. As we all know, the Chinese writing system is not Romanized. Different from English, Chinese characters are ideograms. However, the font used for English text resembles the font used for Chinese text in this sign. This choice might not be random. According to Meletis (2021, p 7), the use of typographic mimicry by those "who wish to signal themselves and their culture to people who are not members of it." Therefore, by choosing two fonts that resemble each other, the sign makers might want to express the idea that despite differences, the Chinese community and the non-Chinese community should stand as one against the malicious assaults and that racism should be our common enemy.

Another relevant point of this protest sign is the Chinese writing system the sign makers used. In Chinese writing systems, there are two types of characters: traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese. The biggest difference between the two is that the traditional Chinese characters have more strokes than simplified Chinese characters. For example, the traditional Chinese *歧視是無恥的行為* ('Racism is shameful') on this sign would look like *歧视是无耻的行为* ('Racism is shameful') in simplified Chinese. Hence, visually speaking, the traditional Chinese look more complicated. Due to various socio-historical reasons, the simplified Chinese writing system is mainly used in Mainland China, and the traditional Chinese writing system is adopted by people of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. The writing system used by oversea immigrants depends on where they originate. In *Figure 5*, we see that the Chinese text was written in traditional Chinese. This does tell us the probable origin of the sign makers.

But what about the intended readers? Does this mean that the Chinese text in this protest sign only addresses people from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau? Probably not. Even though most Chinese mainlanders could not write in the traditional system, they somehow can read a large portion of the traditional Chinese due to the similarity between the two. Therefore, using traditional Chinese on this sign does not necessarily exclude readers who use the simplified system from the intended readers' group.

Figure 6 presents two protest signs that have similar content but different presentations. Both signs were written on a poster board. In *Figure 6 (a),* the sign was divided into two sections along the diagonal. On the left upper section, the background was painted red with the English text *stop hate* written on it. On the right lower section, we can see the Chinese text *停止仇视亚裔 (*'stop Asian hate'). In this sign, both Chinese and English are present. The spatial relationship between the two is symmetric. They are of the same font size. Neither of them is dominant over the other. Both languages have equal status on this sign. However, according to Sebba's model, this would be an example of overlapping text. The

English text only says 'hate' in general, while the Chinese text specifies 'Asian hate'.

Figure 6 Comparison of two signs with similar content

(a)

(b)

In *Figure 6 (b),* the blue sign also has both Chinese and English present. However, unlike the sign in *6 (a),* the spatial relationship between the two languages is not symmetric. English text *stop Asian hate* is much bigger in font size and comes first. It occupies the majority of space in this sign. The Chinese text *停止仇恨* ('stop hate'), in contrast, is much smaller in size and looks almost like a subscript to the English text. However, like the sign in *6 (a)*, 6 *(b)* is also an example of overlapping text. Contrary to *6 (a)*, in *6 (b)*, the English specifies the 'Asian hate' while the Chinese text does not.

Interestingly, when we compare them these two signs have precisely the same content written in the reverse language. That is to say, the English text in *6 (a)* is an equivalent text to the Chinese text in *6 (b)*; the Chinese text in *6 (a)* is equivalent to the English text in *6 (b)*. So, it would be reasonable to ask why the word 'Asian' would be omitted in one language of each sign. Why would we send different messages to two different groups of intended readers? For *6 (a)*, it seems that the message that they try to convey to the English readers is to stop hate no matter what kind. The sign makers might refer to all types of hate crimes. For *6 (b)*, it seems that the sign makers intend to refer to the specific hate crime that motivated this protest.

Figure 7 presents a protest sign handwritten on a board. In the center of the sign, we see a square mimicking the poster with English text *Asian is not a virus, racism is*. Behind the poster, a red dragon is surrounding the poster. Around this poster picture, we see texts written in different languages, all meaning 'together' in a circle: Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian, Filipino, Japanese, English.

On the left, we also see a heart shape pattern below the Vietnamese text and left of the Chinese text.

Figure 7 Presence of several Asian languages on the sign

On this protest sign, several languages are present. The English text in the center occupies the dominant position. Therefore, the spatial relationship between the English text and all other languages is asymmetric. However, setting the English text aside, the spatial relationship among all other languages is symmetric. Each language occupies the same space, and no language is more prominent than others. According to Sebba's model, this protest sign is complex in its language-content relationship. Between the English text and texts in other languages, this would be an example of disjoint text, where the English text is entirely different from the texts in other languages. However, the language-content relationship among all other languages is equivalent. They are similar in content.

Several points are worth discussing here. First, the *mise-en-abyme* design of this protest sign gives rise to the most prominent message that this poster tries to convey. By placing the English text on a pseudo-poster, this protest sign designates its primary intended readers as English readers. By indicating the fact that Asians are not a virus, but racism is, the analogy calls the intended readers to stop Asian hate but to fight together against racism. By stating the fact, it also challenges the rumor that Asians spread the virus[1].

Second, the texts written in other languages all meaning 'together' appeal to the Asian communities to unite. The circle that they form in shape also reinforces the idea of solidarity. By placing a heart shape, the sign makers emphasize the opposite of hate, which echoes the theme 'stop Asian hate'. The use of multiple languages here also conveys the idea that we all unite in meaning even though we are different in cultures and languages. No one is fundamentally different from others. We are equal.

Third, the use of the red dragon is also carefully chosen. In Asian culture, the dragon usually signifies the source of power, strength, and courage. By choosing the dragon as the support of the pseudo-poster, the sign makers not only encourage all Asian communities to react but also convey the message that as the Asian community, we are determined to defend our rights. It also shows to the intended readers that we are powerful and brave and will stand up and fight.

Lastly, the design of the pseudo-poster is also significant. Beneath the English text, we see some water-like

[1] As the pandemic was first reported in mainland China with a rapid spread to the rest of the world shortly afterwards, it led to the rumor that Asian countries were the source of the virus, even though the rumor was disclaimed later by scientists. The out-of-control situation around the world still made many believe that being Asians is being virus.

patterns represented by several parallel lines. This resembles the rise of the sun coming out of the water in the morning. The rise of the sun signifies the beginning of a new day where everything starts to wake up and is full of life. By using this design, the sign conveys that the determination of the community is like the rising of the sun, full of energy, and will not fall.

Discussion

Presence of multilingualism in protest signs

When we talk about multilingualism in protest signs, the focus is automatically placed on the role of multilingualism. What distinguishes multilingual protest signs from monolingual protest signs is that the former could reach a broader reader group since the language used in monolingual signs might not be part of the linguistic repertoire of all readers. However, this is not the only purpose of using multiple languages in sign making. By comparing the text content in each of the languages used in multilingual signs, on the one hand, it allows us to see the repertoire of the sign makers and to compare the language used in signs with the repertoire of the local community; on the other hand, it also allows us to see the intended reader group.

Sebba's model is of most importance as it allows us to classify these multilingual signs based on their content. As demonstrated by the previous sections, an examination of the language content in each of these multilingual signs, we discovered that overlapping texts, where part of the content in one language is repeated in another language while part of it is not, are the most popular types in multilingual sign making. However, this choice is not random. It is undoubtedly not due to the linguistic limitation of sign makers in any of the languages used. By examining the spatial relationship between the texts, we further discovered that very often, this relationship is asymmetric. As we observed, there is often one language that is more prominent compared to other languages on the signs. However, what does all this mean?

As demonstrated by our examples, if the text written in a certain language occupies a more dominant position on the sign, it is the most important message the sign makers want to convey. Hence, the most intended reader group might be the readers in that language. Does this language have to be the dominant language in the community? Not necessarily. It depends on to whom sign makers intend the message.

Meanwhile, it is also important to understand why overlapping texts are the most popular type. While equivalent texts are literal translations and disjoint texts share no exact similar content at all, by using the former, the sign makers attempt to convey the same message to the intended reader groups. In contrast, by choosing the latter, the sign makers want to communicate completely different messages to different reader groups. These two types of signs seem to be at the two ends of the extreme. Using equivalent texts seems to be a good choice if we want to make informative signs, such as road signs. In the case of disjoint text, if one wants to communicate completely different messages to different reader groups, why not make two monolingual signs? However, the overlapping texts allow some flexibility in individualizing messages in each language but at the same

time converging in some common message that is very often the theme of the protest.

This is also why knowing the taxonomies of signs is of interest since it allows us to understand better the function and particularity of each type of signs. The multilingualism presented in protest signs is not a random choice but a meaningful semiotic makeup that is carefully planned by sign makers.

Use of visual design

The visual design of how a protest sign is composed is also crucial. The visual design that we refer to here does not only include the spatial relationship between different components but also the pictures that the sign makers used. Since we already know the different spatial relationships can tell us which text is the most important and which reader group is the most intended, the picture used by sign makers can also assist in meaning conveying. This is also why Sebba's model seems so crucial in analyzing linguistic landscape compared to previous models. It is simply because it enables us to examine the visual units of signs, an aspect lacking from other models.

This is particularly the case for *Figure 7*, where the sign makers used the red dragon as part of the protest sign. As the picture contains information that is more culturally encoded, like the text, the picture also has its specific reader group. To understand the connotation of being powerful and courageous conveyed by the red dragon, one needs to be familiar with the Asian culture. However, this does not mean that to understand the connotation of a certain picture, one must be a member of the community. That is to say, one does not need to be Asian to understand that the red dragon is associated with power and courage in Asian culture. That individual only needs to have this knowledge. Indeed, a picture is less restricted by language itself but more by cultural knowledge. Therefore, pictures sometimes can convey a message beyond the language barriers.

However, the use of pictures could also be tricky. While Asian culture greatly values the red dragon, it could be the case that in a non-Asian culture, the red dragon is viewed as demonic. In this case, it would seem confusing to see the red dragon on the protest sign for someone to whom the red dragon means something negative. For this reason, it would be safe to use a picture that might not cause such confusion. Therefore, the successful meaning conveying made by the picture does not only depend on the cultural understanding of the reader group but also the sign maker's cultural knowledge of the possible connotation of such picture in other cultures.

Emotional effects

The emotions that a protest sign could convey are also worth discussing here. While in oral data, emotions could be expressed by intonation, stress, or other acoustic cues, written data is often much less vivid compared to oral data. However, as we see in *Figure 4*, sometimes linguistic choice could also express very different emotions.

For example, the choice of sentence type could convey very different emotions. Questions could indicate doubt, uncertainty, or irony; imperative could express request, warning, or anger; statement could be relatively neutral

and informative, *etc*. Therefore, the choice of sentence type could tell us much about the emotion that the sign makers try to express. For this reason, the emotional analysis should also be part of the analysis of the linguistic landscape. However, this emotion decoding requires specific context. It is more subtle and implicit compared to oral data. This also demonstrates the strength of Sebba's model in that it looks not only at the grammatical units but also other units that are particular to written text.

Conclusion

In this article, we compared some signs used in two protests #SécuritéPourTous and #StopAsianHate, the former launched by the Chinese community in Paris following the assassination of Zhang Chaolin in Aubervilliers (in 93e arrondissement) in Paris in 2016 and the latter in 2021 initiated by the Asian community in North America following several hate crimes targeting Asians.

By adopting the multimodal analytical model proposed by Sebba (2013), we demonstrated that on the one hand, the overlapping text might be the most popular type of text used in multilingual protest signs in that it allows the most flexibility in meaning conveying; on the other hand, sign makers also use visual design, both spatial relationship between texts and pictures, to communicate with the intended reader group(s). Meanwhile, we also proposed that the emotional effects that the protest sign express should also be included in the analysis of the linguistic landscape. We also confirmed the importance of Sebba's model to the field of linguistic landscape in that it includes units for analysis that were lacking from previous models.

For future studies, it might be interesting to compare protest signs in a cross-community way to see how communities differ in their sign-making. It would also be beneficial to conduct a diachronic study on the same community to see how the strategies used by the members of the same community evolve through time.

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