

What Wrong Signage Says about Japanese Multilingualism:  
A New Approach to the Study of the Linguistic Landscape in Japan

Stefano Lo Cigno



## **Abstract**

In recent years Japan has been experiencing a rapid internationalization. This is reflected both in the attitudes of its people, as well as in the more and more multilingually-oriented linguistic landscape. However, I considered the still-vast quantity of problems in the signage from both the official and the public domains an obstacle that hinders Japan from successfully developing its visible multilingualism, as well as a cause of an unfavorable international image. This study asks to what degree Japan is proceeding towards a successful multilingual environment. To answer that question, it analyzes public signage (with particular attention to the domain of restaurants) both at a quantitative and qualitative level, and considers also the points of view of both Japanese and non-Japanese.

The study of the linguistic landscape has recently lost a part of its former attractiveness due to the lack of researches that aim to suggest concrete solutions to problematic multilingual matters based on objective observations. In particular, concerning Japan, previous researches have mostly focused on the quantitative aspect of the linguistic landscape, analyzing the contact between languages and considering the growth of multilingual signage due to the recent spike in foreigners visiting (or residing in) the country. In addition, the few existing studies dealing with wrong scripts on official billboards, warning notices or shops' names have mainly contributed to enlarging the perception of an unsuccessful attempt by Japanese authorities and private parties to internationalize their country due to the lack of an in-depth analysis of reasons and impressions behind such off-putting signage.

To demonstrate the degree of progress of Japan's visible multilingualism, first I show the increasingly internationalized attitude towards foreign languages among Japanese

people reflected in the public domain of the linguistic landscape (Chapter 1); then, considering the example of Italian restaurant names, the dissertation points out different usages at a syntactic and lexicosemantic level in the commercial names found in Italy, which are the main reasons which make Italian signs produced in Japan look linguistically strange or wrong (Chapter 2); successively, it demonstrates that such signage persists in the urban space because a portion of enterprise producers, while trying to convey a sort of meaning, still do not pay the necessary attention to linguistic correctness (Chapter 3). Eventually, a survey conducted on tourists and foreign residents shows clearly the mostly adverse perceptions of Japan's visible multilingualism (Chapter 4). The study also evidences the crucial existence of a gap between the intentions and reasons of Japanese people and what non-Japanese actually perceive and think about such multilingual signage: as long as this gap exists and is ignored by authorities, it will be difficult for Japan to achieve a successful multilingualism.

This study, while suggesting concrete solutions, also contributes to the academic rediscovery of the study of linguistic landscapes, which in recent years has seen a stagnation. The results herein obtained with a dual approach that not only considers quantitative issues but also qualitative ones demonstrate anew the value of studying linguistic landscapes and elevates its significance as an effective way of researching matters of multilingualism.

## Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
<i>1 Japan's Advancing Multilingualism: The Case of Commercial Businesses' Names and Attitudes Towards Foreign Languages</i> .....	13
1.1 <i>Social Background and Brief Literature of the Linguistic Landscape</i> .....	13
1.2 <i>Quantitative Survey in a Kyoto Commercial District</i> .....	20
1.3 <i>Japanese Consciousness Towards Foreign Languages</i> .....	27
1.3.1 <i>Previous Studies and Problems</i> .....	27
1.3.2 <i>The Survey: Methodology and Results</i> .....	28
1.4 <i>Conclusion</i> .....	35
<i>2 Identifying Linguistic Incorrectness: A Comparative Analysis of the Differences in Naming Italian Restaurants in Italy and Japan</i> .....	37
2.1 <i>Background of the Research</i> .....	38
2.2 <i>Syntactic and Lexicosemantic Features of Food-Related Enterprises' Names in Italy</i> .....	40
2.3 <i>Syntactic and Lexicosemantic Features of the "Japanese Style" of Italian Naming</i> .....	48
2.4 <i>Suggestions for Naming Patterns: Use of Dialects</i> .....	55
2.5 <i>Conclusion</i> .....	58
<i>3 The Persistence of Linguistic Incorrectness: Choices and Reasons Behind the Naming of Public Signs</i> .....	61
3.1 <i>How the Image of a Language is Reflected in the Public Domain</i> .....	62
3.2 <i>The Image of Italy in Japanese Society</i> .....	66
3.3 <i>Italian in the Public Signs of Japan: The Role of Iconographic Elements</i> .....	69
3.4 <i>What is Hidden Behind a Name: Reasons for the Choice of Italian</i> .....	76
3.5 <i>Conclusion</i> .....	83
<i>4 Japan's Linguistic Landscape from Non-Japanese Viewpoints</i> .....	85
4.1 <i>Backgrounds and Brief Theoretical Preliminaries</i> .....	86

<i>4.2 Methodology of the Survey</i> .....	<i>88</i>
<i>4.3 Results</i> .....	<i>90</i>
<i>4.4 Discussion of Official Signs</i> .....	<i>93</i>
<i>4.5 Discussion of Public Signs</i> .....	<i>95</i>
<i>4.6 Analysis of the Open Questions</i> .....	<i>97</i>
<i>4.7 Conclusion</i> .....	<i>104</i>
<i>5 Conclusion</i> .....	<i>107</i>
<i>References</i> .....	<i>114</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i> .....	<i>122</i>

## ***Introduction***

Language and society coexist in a continuum where the one continuously affects the other. Dittmar (1976: 238) argues that “speech behavior and social behavior are in a state of constant interaction”. It can then be affirmed that the condition of language reflects the condition of society. This is why, when approaching social issues, the research of linguistic matters becomes fundamental: the study of the correlation between language and society forms a relevant part of sociolinguistic research. In relation to this, it has been stated that sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure to observe any changes that occur (Gumperz, 1971: 223).

The present study focuses on the issue of multilingualism, a concept which entails in an indissoluble way both social and linguistic matters. Among the many forms of multilingualism this dissertation examines in particular the case of multilingual signage, which often functions as an index of the varieties, ideologies, hierarchies, and policies concerning languages that can be seen in the public space of a city or a country (Coulmas, 2009; Landry and Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy and Gorter, 2009; Spolsky, 2009; Spolsky and Cooper, 1991; Pütz, 2020).

Given this premise, the central issue of this study concerns Japan’s multilingualism as it can be observed in signs displayed in the urban space, in order to assess whether Japan is actually moving towards a multilingual environment. As Taylor and Leech (2012) affirm, the language choices in the public space are an index of the identity of a country. In this sense, the correct linguistic realization of these signs must be considered one of the fundamental parameters to evaluate whether a country’s visible multilingual environment is being successfully developed or not. The analysis proceeds by answering

the following questions: how is Japanese consciousness towards foreign language reflected in the linguistic landscape? What are the linguistic aspects which should be given importance when judging a sign as "wrong"? What are the reasons for the presence of wrong signs? What are the opinions of non-Japanese about multilingual signage? The answer to these questions will show that Japan is not yet successfully moving towards a visible multilingual environment and will provide steps needed for future improvement of the signage, as well as suggest a new approach to the study of the linguistic landscapes that can contribute to the development of the field.

In the context of this study, the notion of “visible multilingual environment” refers to the multilingualism that can be observed in the public space. However, even if a foreign language is used in signs, it does not necessarily imply that those who created them have enough knowledge and fluency of that language. It includes therefore multilingual signs produced by people with various backgrounds for a variety of purposes such as conveying official messages or instructions, evoking images of a certain country, or suggesting foreign concepts; as Backhaus (2007: 1) affirms, “the city is not only a place of talk, but also a place of writing and reading”. As for the notion of “linguistic landscapes”, this thesis follows the definition proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25): “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration”. Other definitions of linguistic landscape have been proposed since,<sup>1</sup> but the definition by Landry and Bourhis, aside

---

<sup>1</sup> For instance, Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Barni (2010: xiv) state that the notion of ‘linguistic landscapes’ is something which refers to “linguistic objects that mark the public space [...], includes any written sign found outside private homes, from road signs to names of streets, shops and schools. The study of linguistic landscapes focuses on analyzing these items according to the



from having been the first concise one, is the most widely accepted by researchers who thematize the construction of the linguistic public space.

In recent years, the evolution of Japan's multilingualism has attracted the attention of sociolinguists for its peculiarity and due to the historical background of the country. As Okato (2007) states, most Japanese people live with the consciousness of being distinctly "Japanese". The reason for this might simply be explained by the fact that Japan has often been perceived by the Japanese as a monoracial and monolingual country. The common language of the country, Japanese, has certainly played a significant role in creating such a perception regarding Japan and the Japanese people. However, except for the two-century *sakoku* period of official national seclusion (1639-1854), Japan has always been in contact with the rest of the world, and these relations have increased exponentially in the decades since that seclusion. The data from the Statistics Bureau of Japan show that foreign residents have been increasing, while the Japanese population has been steadily decreasing in recent years<sup>2</sup>. This non-native population has inevitably brought about changes and influenced Japanese society. According to research by Yasuda (2012), as Japan has historically been unwilling to accept large numbers of immigrants, the construction of systematic policies for the social integration of foreigners is still far from being accomplished. This aspect of Japanese society is reflected in matters of language.

---

language utilized, their relative saliency, syntactic or semantic aspects." Van Mensel, Vandenbroucke, and Blackwood (2017:424) refer to the linguistic landscapes as a conglomerate of traces of human societal activity, thus providing us with an empirical barometer to map and interpret both short- and long-term changes in language and society.

<sup>2</sup> The native Japanese population has decreased from 125,956,588 in May 2008 to 123,774,676 in September 2019. The number of foreigners living in Japan has increased in the same period from 2,217,426 to 2,829,416.

Source: <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en> (E-stat, Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan)

Moreover, the increase in the number of foreign tourists who crowd the hotels and guest houses all over the country and the nearing of the Tokyo Olympic Games of 2020,<sup>3</sup> has forced Japan to try to work out its language policies. As a matter of fact, linguistic landscape observation shows that Japan has indeed been increasing its multilingual signage, not only at the public level but also at the private level, as demonstrated by the vast number of shops' advertising and nameboards which feature foreign languages. These are the reasons why in recent years the study of Japan's urban space has attracted more and more academic attention.

Many previous studies have examined the use of multilingual signs in Japan's linguistic landscape. Along with the pioneering work of Masai (1972), in more recent times there are the studies of Backhaus (2007, 2011), who analyzed the presence of foreign languages in Tokyo's urban space; McGregor (2003), who tabulated the languages of shop signs in different areas of Tokyo; Someya (2009), who reported on the territorial differences in the signage of Tokyo; Satojima *et al.* (2009), who analyzed the presence of Romanized Japanese in the signs of the Tokyo Metro subway system. To date, however, the research has been mainly focused on the quantitative aspects and on the graphic appearance of signs, the latter concerning the simultaneous presence of Latin characters and kanji, hiragana, or katakana<sup>4</sup>. This trend, which can also be seen in studies on countries other than Japan<sup>5</sup>, has caused a deadlock in the development of the field, as the research has largely failed to go beyond the mere quantitative aspects and to develop into

---

<sup>3</sup> Delayed to summer 2021 due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

<sup>4</sup> The issue of wrong signs in Japan has already been pointed out (Hyde, 2002; Vedovelli and Casini, 2014; Barrs, 2015). However, no study exists which analyzes in detail why these errors still occur and what steps should be taken to improve the situation.

<sup>5</sup> For more details about these studies, see references.

a broader field of enquiry. What is lacking, in this respect, is a study that gives more importance to the linguistically qualitative aspects of signs. Such a study will thus offer the possibility of using the analysis of the linguistic landscape as an evaluative method of the degree of multilingualism in a given country.

The present study not only evaluates qualitatively the public space of Japan and suggests some possible improvements, but also provides a new general approach that can help the study of linguistic landscapes go beyond quantitative surveys and develop a wider scope of sociolinguistic research. In order to achieve these goals, the following methodology was applied: starting from the traditional quantitative and linguistic analyses, which are fundamental to laying the groundwork for the study, I conducted several qualitative surveys (questionnaires and interviews) which provided important inputs for the evaluation of the multilingual environment. These were done both from the point of view of insiders (Japanese) and of outsiders (non-Japanese). This methodology played an essential role in providing a global evaluation of Japan's multilingualism, as it adds the motivations, impressions and opinions of interviewees to the formal observations of the researcher.

As the situation in the field and previous studies demonstrate, it is true that Japan is making efforts to develop its visible multilingual environment, but to what extent can it be said that multilingual signs achieve their purposes? In principle, it must be argued that there exists a crucial difference between two types of signs. The first is the official signs produced by governments, local institutions or other institutions that target all people who live in the community. They are intended to precisely convey linguistic messages that function as road indications, prohibitions, rules, alerts in case of emergency, fares, etc. In this case, to evaluate if such signs are successfully or effectively produced, it would be

sufficient to check their visibility in the public space, their linguistic correctness (do the messages intended by the producers correctly reach the readers?), and the amount of information that they convey (do they provide as much information as Japanese signs convey?). These constitute criteria for judging how successful or effective the official signs are.

The second type is the unofficial multilingual signage produced by, for example, owners of shops, restaurants, beauty centers, etc. In this case, the criteria of success are more complex because unofficial signs aim to convey not only linguistics meanings, as in the case of restaurants' menus written only in French or Italian, but also positive images of foreign languages, a sense of coolness or internationalization, personal feelings, or business concepts, and so forth. Unofficial signs target native Japanese speakers for the most part, but traveling or resident foreigners are also their potential targets regardless of the intention of signs' creators; if the signs are given negative evaluations by foreigners, they cannot be successful in that they may damage the international image of Japan. For judging how successfully unofficial signs work, therefore, the foreigners' understanding or acceptance of such uses of signs and their covert messages constitutes another important criterion in addition to the linguistic correctness, visibility, and information quantity. As a matter of fact, as will be shown in detail in Chapter 4, such signs contain several problems. Although most Japanese seem to have no problem with this situation, it is possible that non-Japanese do not share the same perceptions. If many multilingual signs do not reach all targeted population including non-native speakers who need assistance or guidance in Japan, or decrease the image of the country, it is legitimate to conclude that Japan is not successfully achieving its goals. Analyzing this aspect will contribute to clarifying the degree to which Japan's multilingualism has developed, as

well as illuminating the aspects which should still be improved to achieve an effective multilingual environment.

In order to verify Japan's developing of its multilingual environment, I demonstrate the possible existence of a sociolinguistic gap, a wide divergence between intentions and perceptions, i.e., between the Japanese writers of multilingual signs and the non-Japanese who read them. Such gap is caused by several factors, but the most relevant one is the fact that in the public space of Japan there is still a great amount of linguistically wrong signs, both at the official and unofficial level. At this point it must be explained in detail what classification of signage adopted: I followed Fishman's concept of domain, identified as a higher order generalization from congruent situations (1965, 1972). According to Fishman, proper usage dictates that (in a multilinguistic context) only one of the theoretically co-available languages or varieties will be chosen by particular classes of interlocutors on particular kinds of occasions to discuss particular kinds of topics (Fishman, 1972: 437). I relied then on the setting proposed by Fishman and set the following three domains where multilingual signs should be analyzed, in terms of location, topic or participants: the official domain, which indicates the regulated signage provided by authorities and official institutions (toponyms, signs on public transport, official documents, etc.); the public domain, which includes the partially unregulated signage visible in the public space (shops' names, products' names, buildings' names, etc.); the private domain, which refers to the totally unregulated signs from the privacy of the participants (signs on private properties or inside buildings or houses).

The persistence of problems mostly seen in the public domain is due mainly to the prioritizing of sociosymbolic values<sup>6</sup>. This reason in particular should be considered

---

<sup>6</sup> The sociosymbolic value of language is the social meaning the language conveys in a given

critical in hindering Japan from successfully developing its multilingual environment because wrong signs are simply “wrong” for foreigners, who do not necessarily share the same sociosymbolic values of a language embraced by Japanese. While scientific studies are scarce, it is important to notice that the issue of wrong signage (concerning mainly Asian linguistic landscape<sup>7</sup>) is recognized as an important issue in online information data, as recent articles such like “Why does *Engrish* happen in Japan?” (Baseel, 2014) or “Why English translation needs the native touch” (Kopp, 2020) demonstrate. The latter, in particular, states as follows:

*“it is hardly unusual to find strangely worded or even unintelligible English on the signs, menus, websites and documents [...] in a country like Japan, famous for tight quality control and attention to detail [...] why do many organizations persist in using poor English?”*

Now that the territory and the background of the research of this dissertation are set, it is time to present and explain the structure. The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 answers the question, ‘How is Japanese consciousness towards foreign language reflected in the linguistic landscape?’ First it presents updated results gleaned from a field survey conducted in a commercial district of Kyoto about the presence of foreign languages used in the names of shops. Next, the results of a questionnaire show the consciousness reflected in the values that Japanese people attribute to foreign languages.

---

society (Hess-Lüttich, 2009). For Japanese society, the French language, for instance, is a symbol of refinement, beauty and high-class style (Haarmann, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Wey and Fei (2003), Zhang and Xu (2015) or Zhang (2016).

Owing to the results of both surveys I verify that Japan is moving towards a more and more multilingual-oriented society. This chapter points out how the language market<sup>8</sup> (Edelman and Gorter, 2010) is structured by observing the public space of a high-profile international Japanese city like Kyoto. At the same time, it highlights the importance given to Italian by Japanese society.

Chapter 2 answers the question, ‘What are the linguistic aspects which should be given importance when judging a sign as strange or "wrong"?’ and analyzes the linguistic errors of Italian names as they still commonly appear in the Japanese linguistic landscape from a syntactic and a semantic point of view. Throughout the chapter I compare different naming patterns and lexicon choices within the ones adopted by Italians and the “Japanese way” of Italian restaurant naming. These differences are considered the causes of the sense of “wrongness” of the signs. Eventually, as a possible suggestion for avoiding syntactic and semantic difficulties and for up-to-date Italian restaurant names, the use of dialects is considered. Given the different and often unnatural naming patterns, the analysis suggests that linguistic correctness, as well as a meticulous similarity to the original (authentic) Italian configurations, is not a priority of the restaurants’ owners: This means that other reasons must lie behind the persistence of bizarre signs in the public space.

In order to verify why such signs persist, in Chapter 3 I try to answer the question, ‘What are the reasons for the presence of wrong signs?’. To achieve this goal, first I point out a fundamental problem in the previous literature: This is the view that sees multilingual signs from the public domain of Japan as mere symbols, used only for their exterior appearance and not conveying any linguistic meaning. I analyze public signs and,

---

<sup>8</sup> The “market” of the languages as seen in billboards or shops’ names.

on the basis of the presence of iconographic elements, distinguishes between signs with different degrees of linguistic value. Having shown that a portion of commercial names do indeed have a sort of linguistic meaning, and thus need to be correct in order to convey that meaning, I reveal, through results obtained via qualitative interviews with Japanese owners of a few restaurants and shops in Kyoto, what reasons stand behind the way Japanese people produce multilingual commercial names. This possibly demonstrates that, while trying to convey meanings, owners do not place sufficient importance upon the linguistic correctness of public signs. This is a main issue underlying the persistent presence of strange and “wrong” signs.

By contrast, Chapter 4 answers the question, ‘What are the opinions of non-Japanese about multilingual signage?’ and shows the opposite perspective. I analyze opinions and problems noted by non-Japanese about both official and public multilingual signs in the Japanese linguistic landscape. The results of the questionnaire evidence a different attitude between people from the East Asian countries, more accustomed to the quantity of multilingual signs, and people from the European, American and Oceanian countries, who tend to criticize harshly such signage. The general dissatisfaction of the non-Japanese, who would prefer less but linguistically correct multilingual signage, highlights the fact that most multilingual signage in Japan is still not successfully developed. It also confirms the hypothesis of the existence of a gap between Japanese and non-Japanese which prevents the country from receiving positive feedback about its visible multilingualism.

The conclusive Chapter 5 provides final considerations about the aims of the dissertation. On account of the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of the linguistic landscapes adopted, it is possible to affirm objectively that



Japan is failing in its intention to achieve an effective visible multilingual environment: while Japanese society is rapidly moving towards a multilingual-oriented consciousness, the still-high presence of problems hinders the successful realization of a multilingual linguistic landscape. Neither the lack of attention to these shortcomings by authorities nor the original intention of shop owners are understood by non-Japanese, who readily criticize the presence of wrong signs. The results obtained by the different surveys in each chapter show the effectiveness of this dissertation's innovative approach in not limiting itself to the mere observation of numbers, but also detecting problems and enabling the researcher to furnish concrete possible solutions (in this case, mainly concerning the correctness of linguistic contents of the signs). However, it must be also pointed out that the data collected for this study are limited: results of field works and interviews cover only a small part of reality. One of the reasons is that, as in the first two chapters, I considered respectively the signage of a small commercial district of Kyoto and a limited number of Italian restaurants. In particular, for what concerns the case of Kyoto, it is also important to highlight the fact that I collected only a part of the visible signs. This means that foreign languages contained, for example, in instructions for tourists, product names, pamphlets or menus were not part of the research object. As a consequence, this study's results cannot be generalized as the tendency of the entire country due to the lack of investigations of other domains in other cities. As stated previously, the literature heretofore has mainly focused on quantitative data and it has also almost ignored their reception by non-Japanese as well as the crucial aspect of errors. However, the almost total absence of this aspect from several recent surveys<sup>9</sup> conducted by Japanese

---

<sup>9</sup> For references: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (2014), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2016) Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2017) Japan Tourism

authorities also evidences an unjustifiably passive general attitude towards the problem in Japan. I want to emphasize that the results and the suggestions furnished by this study represent an important cue for Japan to reduce its existing gap with the outside world, thus proceeding towards a visible multilingualism that will also elevate and enhance the international image of the country.

## ***1 Japan's Advancing Multilingualism: The Case of Commercial Businesses' Names and Attitudes Towards Foreign Languages***

This chapter's objective is to answer the following question: 'How is Japanese consciousness towards foreign languages reflected in the linguistic landscape?'

To achieve this goal, I used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of the linguistic landscape. In this way it was possible to quantify the presence of a part of foreign languages in public signs in a commercial district of a relatively big touristic city like Kyoto and to demonstrate at the same time that the presence of foreign languages is becoming more and more important in relation to Japanese.

The quantitative aspect of multilingual signage on its own cannot be considered as a sufficient parameter to affirm the advancing of a multilingual consciousness. This is why I also conducted a questionnaire for native Japanese speakers in order to know if people's consciousness in relation to foreign languages has become more internationally oriented. As the results show, this is why written multilingual signs and social attitudes, when combined, must be considered as objective tools to elucidate the progression of Japan towards a multilingual-oriented society.

### ***1.1 Social Background and Brief Literature of the Linguistic Landscape***

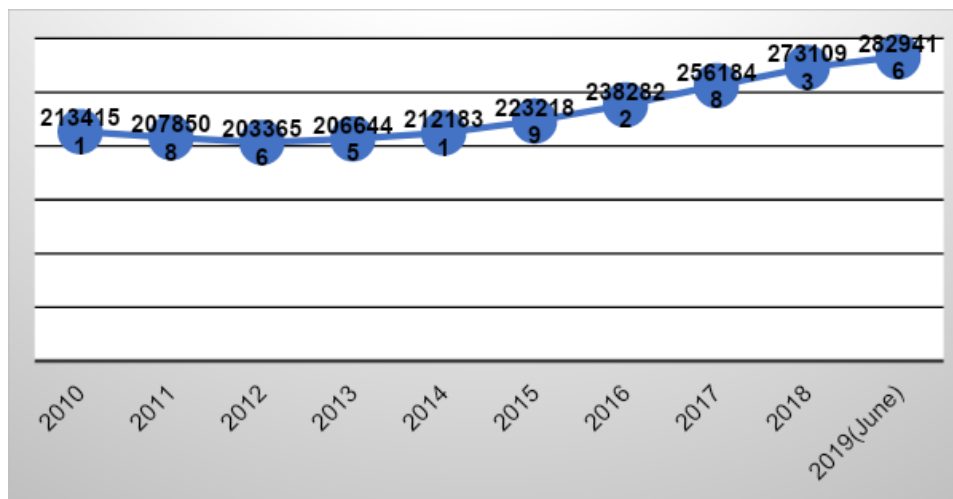
One of the causes that brought Japan to the present visible multilingualism is the increasing number of non-Japanese living in, or visiting, the country<sup>10</sup>. As data reported

---

<sup>10</sup> Linguistic landscape can be categorized into audible and visible ones. This dissertation deals with issues concerning visible signs, and calls a multilingual environment with visible multilingual signs "visible multilingualism".

in Figure 1 and 2 show, the number of foreign residents and especially foreign tourists has been increasing year by year since 2013 and 2011, respectively. According to Kawahara (2010), back in 2009 the number of foreigners living in Japan had already exceeded 2,190,000, which was 1.71% of the total population at the time. The figures below, which were drafted based on official data, make evident the rise in both foreign residents and tourists. Except for the short period after the Tohoku earthquake when a huge number of people left Japan, the number of residents has grown by almost 800,000 people. A similar, yet even more pronounced tendency can be seen concerning tourists: after a decrease in 2011, the number has skyrocketed, shifting more than fivefold from just over 6,200,000 in 2011 to about 31,800,000 in 2019.

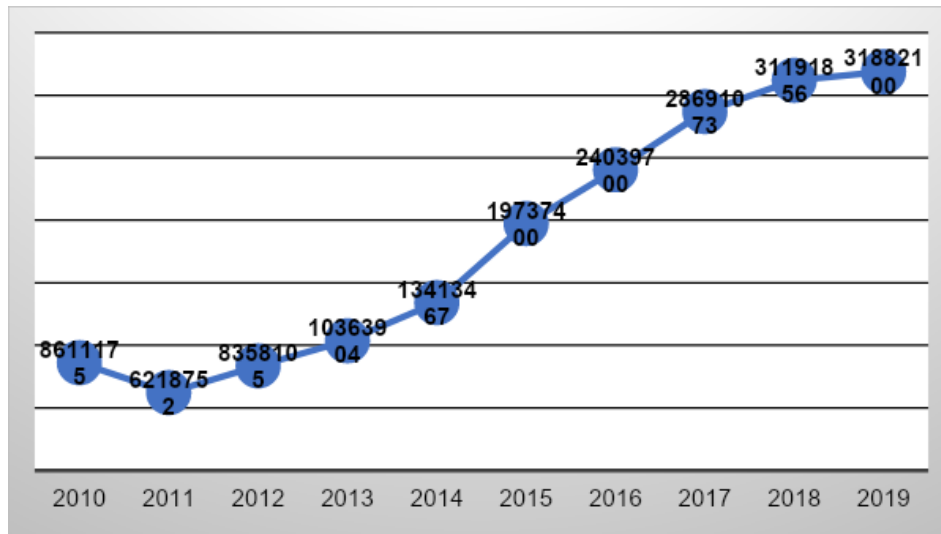
Figure 1. Foreigners living in Japan during the last decade.



Source: E-stat portal site of official statistics of Japan<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&toukei=00250012&tstat=000001018034> (accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020)

Figure 2. Number of foreign tourists in Japan during the last decade.



Source: Japan National Tourism Organization<sup>12</sup>

The increase in visitors is one of the causes which contributed to the proliferation of multilingual signage. It can mainly be seen official signs (signs on trains, informational or instructional signs provided by authorities).<sup>13</sup>

In Japan's linguistic landscape, it is becoming common to spot signage containing not only Japanese, but also several other languages, as depicted in Figure 3 below. Apart from temporary visitors, however, the increasing number of immigrants settled in the various cities of Japan must not be overlooked. Their presence affects the linguistic landscape in official (top-down) signs and public (bottom-up) signs. It can be affirmed, then, that nowadays a significant portion of the readers of this multilingual signage is represented by the non-Japanese community in Japan.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/statistics/data\\_info\\_listing/index.html](https://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/statistics/data_info_listing/index.html) (accessed on 15th March 2020).

<sup>13</sup> For the classification of signs see Backhaus (2005) and Shoji (2009: 26-29).

Figure 3. Example of multilingualism in a welcome panel at Kansai International Airport.



At this point it is necessary to explain why I chose the study of the linguistic landscape to approach matters of multilingualism and what the latest tendencies in the field are. Although the linguistic landscape is a relatively new field of research within the scope of multilingualism, it has rapidly earned popularity and respect among sociolinguists, becoming a useful source for investigating the internationalization as well as the multilingual situation of a specific country (Ben-Rafael *et al.*, 2006; Moriyama and Shiohara, 2009; Bogatto and Hélot, 2010; Marten, 2010). As it is possible to notice even in the definition by Landry and Bourhis (1997) shown in Introduction, the sources for this research consist in every kind of visible script (even though recently, some researchers tend to consider even the audible sources such as announcements in the stores and stations) that can be found in the urban space. As stated by Shohamy and Gorter (2009:1), in recent times the study of the linguistic landscape attracts a variety of researchers from different disciplines: in addition to linguistics, disciplines often involve geography,

education, sociology, politics, environmental studies, semiotics, communication, architecture, urban planning, literacy, applied linguistics, and economics. For each field the interest in understanding the deeper meanings and messages conveyed in language-in-place represent the *leitmotiv* of the researches.

Generally speaking, in recent years, many researchers have been proposing several kinds of methodologies for the linguistic landscape, with the hope that these proposals might facilitate further developments in the scientific study of the urban space (Backhaus, 2007; Barni and Bagna, 2009; Blackwood, 2010). Their researches consist in the quantitative sphere with empirical descriptions of the urban space, and their methodologies are designed for the collection and the analysis of data from the public space of various cities and territories around the world (Spolsky and Cooper, 1983, 1991; Tulp, 1978; Corbeil, 1980). This is something that can be achieved through simple studies of diverse linguistic landscapes, which should, however, be constantly documented and updated for the diachronic changes of the public space because a nation's linguistic policies, identity and perceptions have developed and evolved over time (for the perception of the *paysage linguistique*, see Landry and Bourhis, 1997). However, due to a general deadlock in this sphere of research, in recent times, this necessary process of updating is seldom carried out. In Japan, this situation is causing an unfortunate void in the study of visible multilingualism, and this is all the more important because Japan is expecting a great deal of international attention both for the Olympic Games and the Expo set to be held in Osaka in 2025.

The groundbreaking studies of Masai (1972), based on field research conducted in 1962 in a famous district of Tokyo (Shinjuku), presciently reveal in detail the Japanese situation. Masai focuses on shops' names and shows a linguistic landscape overwhelmed

with foreign-language signs. I polemically come to affirm that through the eyes of a foreigner, Shinjuku might look like a place crammed with foreign residents or even like a colonial territory. Although at that time the billboards represented in kanji and hiragana were by far the majority, examples of loan words in katakana and Romanized Japanese were already visible. What follows this first stage reported by Masai is *Europeanization* of the Japanese linguistic landscape (Shoji *et al.*, 2009: 10). As evidence of this metamorphosis, readers can refer to the studies of Backhaus (2007, 2009, 2011), Inoue (2000, 2009), Kim (2009), Long and Imamura (2012), Satojima *et al.* (2009) and Someya (2009).

In his work from 2007<sup>14</sup>, Backhaus illuminates the situation of multilingual signs of Tokyo. Following three main questions of *linguistic landscape by whom? for whom? and quo vadis?* (*ib.*: 57-59), Backhaus selected 29 stations of the Yamanote railway line, which is a loop line around Tokyo's main districts. He conducted a multilayered investigation which pictured the scenery ranging from crowded areas like Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ueno, to more residential places like Nishi Nippori or Sugamo. During his survey of the 29 areas, Backhaus found 11,834 signs in total, among which 2,444 were classified as multilingual (20.7% of the total number), and he discovered that the frequency of multilingual signs might vary considerably from one area to another. The results of Backhaus represented well the situation of a big metropolis like Tokyo and its linguistic landscape in the first years of the 21st century. Following the distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs<sup>15</sup>, Backhaus discovers that it is indeed the citizens,

---

<sup>14</sup> The actual survey was conducted between February and May 2003.

<sup>15</sup> This classification finds its grounds in the definition given by Landry and Bourhis of private and government signs: Private signs include commercial signs on storefronts and business institutions (e.g., retail stores and banks), commercial advertising on billboards, and advertising



rather than authorities, that shape the multilingual landscape of Tokyo. This peculiarity can be considered characteristic of Japan: although most Japanese are monolingual, the country has a linguistic landscape much like a prototypical multilingual country, and this aspect is mainly reflected in the bottom-up signs.

Satojima *et al.* (2009) analyzed almost 600 multilingual signs from 51 stations located inside the area encircled by the Yamanote Line. They analyzed the writing system used for multilingual signs, and proposed a unified system<sup>16</sup> so that foreigners in Japan do not run up against difficulties in reading these signs.

Most previous studies are focused mainly only on the quantitative aspects of the official multilingual signage, and their interests reside in defining the ideal representation of toponyms (place names usually derived from a topological feature), which can be understood even by people who cannot read Japanese. However, although they represent a starting point and gives important suggestions for the research of the Japanese urban space, this tendency in the research has fixed methodologies, aims, or research objects, and closed various perspectives to the study of the linguistic landscape. At the same time, they do not sufficiently explore issues from the public domain of the urban landscape, ignoring thus an important part of the multilingual landscape of a country. This banalized approach sterilizes the interest among scholars, which is testified to by the decreasing of recent studies attempting to develop the discipline. I consider the study of the linguistic

---

signs displayed in public transport and on private vehicles. Government signs refer to public signs used by national, regional or municipal governments in the following domains: road signs, place names, street names, and inscriptions on government buildings including ministries, hospitals, universities, town halls, schools, metro stations, and public parks. (1997: 26-27)

<sup>16</sup> They proposed to write the sound of the Japanese name followed by its translation as in the following example: 千代田放送協会館 *Chiyoda Hoosoo Kaikan* (Chiyoda Media Plaza) (2009:144).

landscape as a meaningful approach for detecting the evolving consciousness of the speakers of a language in an area and for resolving the problems involved in it, such as inept ways foreign languages are used in the public space. Thus, the field needs a new methodology that makes the linguistic landscape a more powerful and useful approach to multilingualism. This methodology will start from traditional and essential quantitative studies, but continue with qualitative ones as will be explained after 1.3.1.

### ***1.2 Quantitative Survey in a Kyoto Commercial District***

This section explains the methodology and the results of the quantitative research I conducted in Kyoto.

Kyoto is located in the Kansai region and is the main city of the eponymous prefecture; it has an area of about 827.83 km<sup>2</sup><sup>17</sup> and 1,467,702 inhabitants<sup>18</sup>. I decided to conduct the survey in this city because of its recognized touristic value as well as its notoriously conservative characteristics. These traits might lead to the wrong supposition that multilingual signage would not be appreciated by the local Kyoto inhabitants. In contrast to this supposition, a more astute observer could speculate that the many local residents who cater to tourists in their work might greatly appreciate the multilingual signage.

My survey delimited the research area to the perimeters of Oike Street and Shijo Street from North to South, respectively, and from West to East between Karasuma Street

---

<sup>17</sup> As reported on the Kyoto City official website:

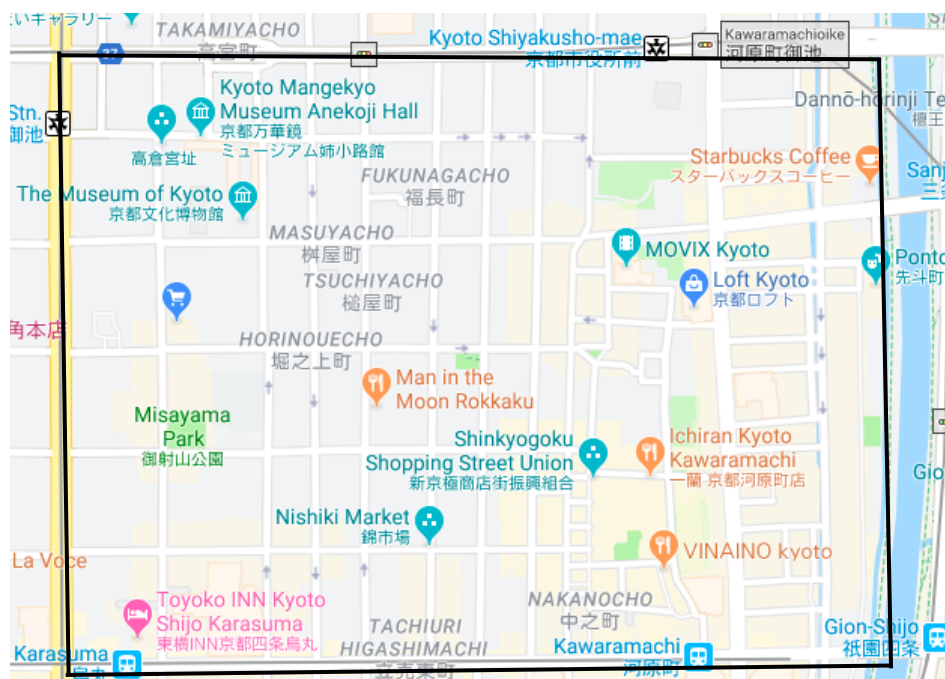
<https://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/sogo/page/0000015581.html>

<sup>18</sup> As reported on the Kyoto Prefecture official website:

<http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/tokei/monthly/suikeijinkou/suikeitop.html>

and the Kamo river, as shown by the black lines in the map below (Figure 4). This district is known by Kyoto citizens and visitors as a sort of vast shopping and eating area, where it is possible to satisfy every need for leisure and entertainment. Given these characteristics, it was deemed adequate to explore a part of the public signs in this area as a partial mirror of the reality of people’s attitudes towards foreign languages.

Figure 4. The survey area.



Source: Google Maps

The data collection for the research was conducted between May and June 2019. The methodology applied to the survey was the following:

1. Walk each street of the area depicted in Figure 4, count the shops’ names excluding companies’, major shop chains’, hotels’, clinics’, and supermarkets’ names, and categorize the language and the business type wherein this language is used.
2. If two (or more) foreign languages are used within a sign, make classification with

respect to language salience<sup>19</sup>, a notion based on Scollon and Scollon's (2003: 116-128) code preference, interpreted by text size, color contrast, quantity or composition. However, when equally present, each language counts for one token.

3. Do not count signs with initials or signs not recognized as a specific language.

I explain the criteria for categorization along with three difficulties. First, it is important to identify what languages are used for what business, but several writing systems may be mixed in the Japanese linguistic landscape, which is an obstacle for categorization. For instance, in the billboard illustrated in Figure 5-A, a non-Japanese word, *cuore* (an Italian word meaning 'heart') is transcribed in katakana, while the small Romanized word can be seen right above the katakana, which is written large and diagonally. In such cases, despite the use of katakana, the word is counted as Italian. Figure 5-B is an example of a derivative word wherein an Italian derivational affix *-nese* transcribed in katakana is attached to a Japanese root in kanji (*Kyotonese*: 'of Kyoto' or 'a person from Kyoto'). In such cases, even if the word is not properly of the Italian lexicon, the language is counted as Italian, since it is evident that the intentions of the owner(s) were to recreate an Italian-sounding, or -looking, name.

---

<sup>19</sup> Salience of a language is a concept similar to the principles of "relevance" (Bagna and Barni, 2007: 537): "the language that at first sight results most evident, the one to which it has intentionally been attributed the most semiotic load even through expedients such as the size and the font used in the sign."

Figure 5-A. The example of *cuore*, represented in katakana.



Figure 5-B. Different writing systems used for shop names.



The second criterion pertains to the frequent use of the same words shared by different languages: for categorizing them, it is convenient to consider the other elements, such as the context, which contribute to make possible the labeling of the presence of a certain language. For example, the name of the restaurant in Figure 6, “*Sesamo*” (‘sesame’ in English) is a word which can be found identically both in Italian and Spanish vocabulary.

In the context below, as it names a restaurant serving Spanish food, it must be categorized as such.

Figure 6. Same word shared by multiple languages.



As stated above, several cases of initials with no direct reference to a particular language have been excluded from the count because it is impossible to properly classify them. The last criterion concerns multilingual names. According to the principle of language saliency, when two (or more) languages were equally present on a name, it is appropriate to count each language as one single token. This is, for instance, the case with a restaurant called “*osteria Bastille*”, where *osteria* is an Italian word, while *Bastille* is French, and both words were equally salient on the sign (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Two languages equally present on a sign.



Following the methodology described in this section, I tabulated 1768 tokens, which are categorized according to language and commercial domains. The collected data is reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of languages: results of the survey categorized by language and type of business.

<b>Business</b> <b>Language</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>Shop</b>	<b>Fitness/Beauty</b>	<b>Club</b>	<b>School/Studio</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Japanese</b>	552	366	21	24	10	<b>973(55.0%)</b>
<b>English</b>	244	130	74	42	6	<b>496(28.1%)</b>
<b>French</b>	36	37	37	12	0	<b>122(6.9%)</b>
<b>Italian</b>	53	20	23	5	2	<b>103(5.8%)</b>
<b>Spanish</b>	23	5	1	3	0	<b>32(1.8%)</b>
<b>Other</b>	37	5	0	0	0	<b>42(2.4%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1768</b>

As Table 1 shows, the majority of the signs (973, 55%) use Japanese. Due to the role

English language plays in today's society<sup>20</sup>, the visual importance attached to it is not surprising. In some business such as "Fitness/Beauty" and "Club" (referring mainly to night clubs known in Japan as *cabaret club*, located mainly in the eastern side of the survey area along Kiyamachi Street), English names sometimes surpass Japanese ones. At the same time, for the businesses of both "Fitness" and "Club", exotic languages such as English, French and Italian seem to overwhelm the presence of Japanese. It is surprising to notice that when all the tokens are categorized into Japanese and the other languages in a dichotomic way, the ratio becomes 973 (55 %) to 795 (45 %), which represents a multilingual reality on the public signs in Kyoto and suggests that the society is, in this sense, indeed becoming multilingually oriented.

Among the foreign languages in the linguistic landscape of Kyoto, Italian is not outstanding, but nevertheless occupies fourth place (5.8%, N=103) after French (6.9%, N=122). The business type where Italian names were found the most is the food one, with 53 tokens or 5.6% of the total (percentage within the 103 Italian examples). If Japanese and English names are excluded because they are too commonly found in the city, Italian becomes 34.4% of the total<sup>21</sup> highlighting the popularity attributed to it for this business in relation to other languages<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>20</sup> For more references, see Morizumi (2012).

<sup>21</sup> This percentage resulted from the total number of signs when Japanese and English names are excluded (299).

<sup>22</sup> It is also interesting to compare these results with Casini (2005) and McGregor (2003), who respectively conducted researches on language contact in Ginza and Seijo (both in Tokyo). In Ginza, Italian was actually the third-most-visible language after Japanese and English, while in Seijo no traces of Italian signs could be found.



### ***1.3 Japanese Consciousness Towards Foreign Languages***

This section analyzes the results of a questionnaire regarding the consciousness of Japanese people towards several foreign languages. In this way it is possible to give a deeper meaning to the quantitative data presented in 1.2. To obtain detailed and updated information on the actual status of these multilingual imaginings among Japanese people, the results of the survey are analyzed following the semantic differential method (see 1.3.2) on the image of Japanese, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Chinese.

#### ***1.3.1 Previous Studies and Problems***

The consciousness of people towards a certain language plays a fundamental role in the realization of the linguistic landscape of Japan. It is possible to affirm that this consciousness constitutes the basis for the realization of multilingualism in the country. However, previous literature has not fully developed yet on the consciousness of Japanese people towards foreign languages, except for a few studies such as Terasawa (2014), which statistically analyzes the attitude of Japanese society towards multilingualism. As a key to interpreting the Japanese multilingual society, his study focused on the interest that people show in learning other languages than English, but it did not mention anything about visible multilingualism.

The present survey, apart from giving a deeper meaning to the quantitative data, also constitutes an important diachronic tool to compare and expand current results with those gleaned by Haarmann and Waseda (1985: 33-38 in Haarmann). These two researchers developed a model based on the image or attitude of Japanese people towards the

Japanese, English, and French languages, and pointed out the relation between the images of these languages and the use of them in Japanese television commercials. They discovered that, at the time, English was considered positively as a bright, smooth, and cool language. In a similar way, French was evaluated as beautiful, soft, smooth and refined. On the contrary, Japanese was considered positively as familiar, but at the same time antique and unrefined. At this point, given the absence of more updated studies, I will analyze how Japanese people's consciousness towards foreign languages is reflected in the data collected in the field and whether this consciousness has changed during the last decades.

### ***1.3.2 The Survey: Methodology and Results***

To achieve the goal, I decided to conduct a survey whose results are analyzed according to the semantic differential method: a scientific method developed by Osgood *et al.* (1957) related to the connotative aspect of meanings. Opposite to the denotative one, the connotative meaning relates subjectively to affective emotions that a certain word evokes in an individual. While a normal questionnaire asking directly for opinions is an inadequate tool for discriminating between different connotative dimensions, this method allows one to quantify the connotative aspect of meanings in relation to a given word without direct answers. The semantic differential is built on a series of scales, each of which relates to bipolar adjectives, between which is placed a rating scale (in this present study, a 5-scale system was adopted). Each of these scales represents a component of the meaning, and the survey participants have to indicate on the scale which pole the object of this research is closer to. Due to its relative simplicity and immediateness, the semantic

differential is particularly useful for collecting a large amount of data without overloading either the participants or the researcher.

For the present survey, I decided first to include the languages that were the most visible in the quantitative survey (see Table 1): Japanese, English, French, Italian, and Spanish. German and Chinese were also added because the former is historically important in Japan's multilingual education (Doi, 1988; Shimizu, 2010), and the latter in current educational and global economic value. For the scales, the bipolar adjectives nearly the same as those used by Haarmann and Waseda were kept: *beautiful-filthy*, *cheerful-dark*, *refined-unrefined* and *modern-antique*. To them was added *fashionable-sloppy*. In contrast, the relative pairing *like-hate* was not adopted because Japanese are likely to use the word *oshare*, whose meaning is approximately rendered as 'fashionable', which is already included in the *fashionable-sloppy* scale.

Table 2 shows the evaluation results obtained by the semantic differential method via an online survey conducted on 133 participants. The age ranges were as follows: 10-20 years old (59 participants), 30-40 years old (55 participants) and from 50 years old upward (19 participants). Table 2 shows the average obtained for each semantic bipolar pair of adjectives, and the highest value was 2 while the lowest was -2.

Table 2. Average for each semantic bipolar pair.

<b>POSITIVE</b>	<b>Jap</b>	<b>Eng</b>	<b>Ger</b>	<b>Fre</b>	<b>Ita</b>	<b>Spa</b>	<b>Chi</b>	<b>NEGATIVE</b>
Beautiful	1.2	0.5	0.4	1.2	1	0.5	-0.3	Filthy
Mild	0.6	0.5	-1	0.9	0.6	0.4	-0.6	Hard
Cheerful	0.6	1	-0.5	0.4	1.5	1.1	-0.1	Dark
Smooth	0.7	0.5	-0.4	0.9	0.6	0.2	-0.4	Rough
Refined	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.4	0	-0.4	Unrefined
Impressive	0.8	-0.1	0.8	1	1	0.6	0.4	Ordinary
Modern	-0.4	0.5	-0.4	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	-0.8	Antique
Cool	0.4	1	0.4	1	0.9	0.6	-0.4	Hickish
Familiar	0.6	0.8	-0.5	-0.1	0.9	0.5	-0.4	Unfamiliar
Fashionable	0.3	0.7	0.1	1.3	1.1	-0.4	-0.6	Sloppy

As shown in Table 2, the languages with the highest number of negative evaluations are the ones which were less used in the public domain of the linguistic landscape: German and Chinese. To them were attributed many negative values such as hard, dark, rough, unrefined, antique, hickish, unfamiliar and sloppy; there is a correlation between their infrequency in the linguistic landscape and their negative images. If there is a causal relation, it is possible to assume that such negative images are shared by most Japanese people and make it preferable for shop owners to avoid using these languages for commercial businesses' names.

In contrast, for the other languages in general, positive values are shared among Japanese speakers. French is considered most positively, in particular for its perceived

beauty, refinement, impressiveness, and fashionableness. Italian is considered the most cheerful and bright language.

It is important to notice, then, that the scores of Japanese and English are often very similar. This result suggests that Japanese speakers acknowledge a stronger presence of English and its culture in their daily life, and they are familiarized with them. The semantic value “familiar” corroborates this familiarity: English earned a higher score (0.8) than the Japanese national language (0.6). The highest familiarity registered for Italian (0.9), rather than a strong presence as the one for English, represents the general phonological similarities with Japanese which make this language easily readable and available for public uses.

What is surprising, then, are the generally low values verified for German, despite the highest prestige during the Meiji period (Doi, 1988) and many remaining loan words<sup>23</sup>. One of the possible reasons lying behind such a reputation, which could also preclude its usage in the linguistic landscape, might be the relatively inaccessible pronunciation and the generally long words. The latter is due to its morphological characteristics of compound formations, which often lead to long words. It would be counterproductive for business owners to use such words for shop names, as they are not easy either to remember or to pronounce. The low value of French (-0.1) can be explained in the same way, and the high values of familiarity noted also for Spanish (0.5) represent the positive side of the “familiarity” scale; phonological similarities to Japanese make them preferable when employed in commercial names.

In general, the ranking of the consciousness toward foreign languages can be synthesized in the following order: Italian (0.8), French (0.7), English (0.6), Spanish (0.3),

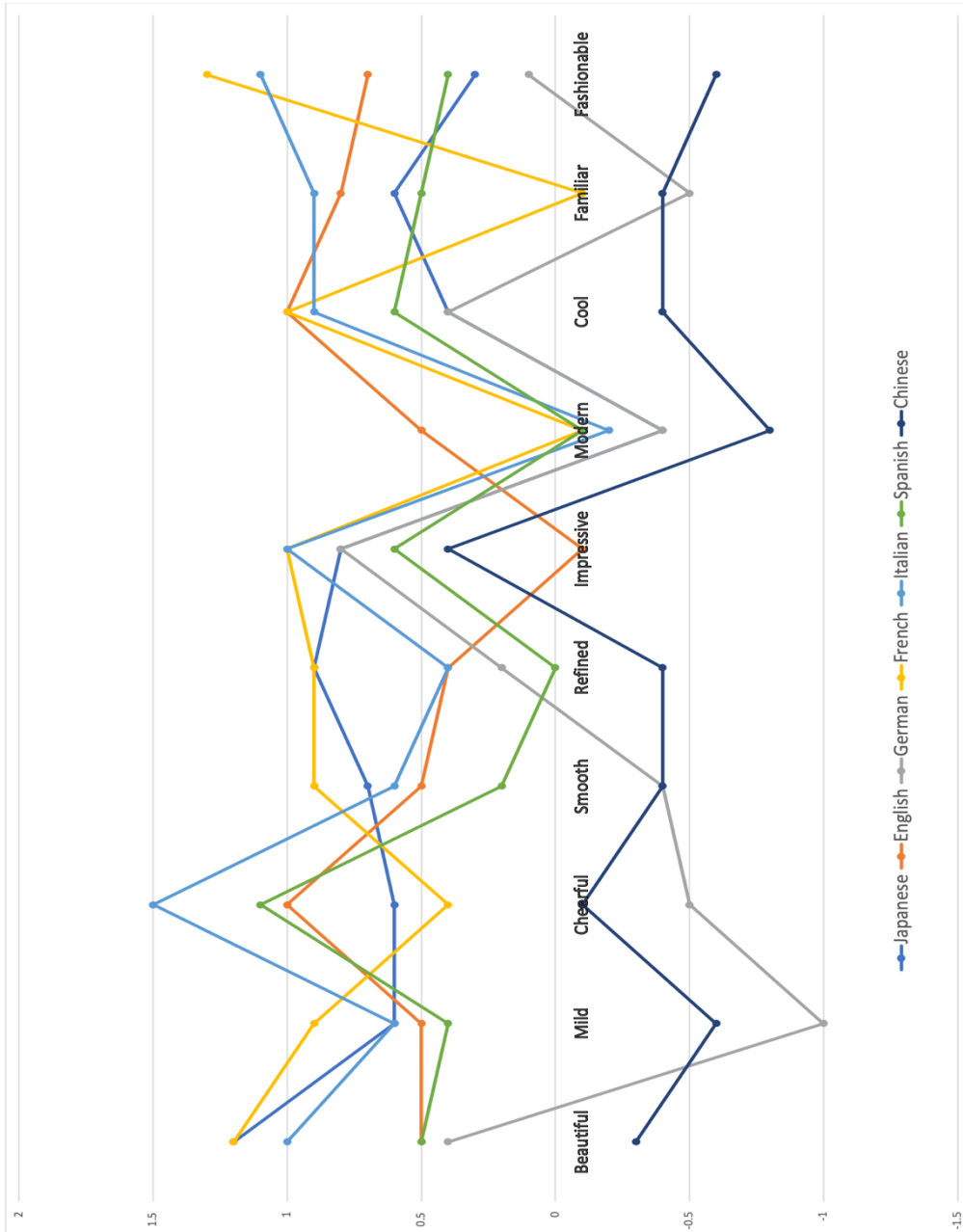
---

<sup>23</sup> Like *arubaito* ‘part-time job’, coming from the German *Arbeit*.

German (-0.1) and Chinese (-0.4). The results of the “semantic differential method” survey can explain the results of the field survey, reflecting well the fact that the higher the consciousness of a certain language is, the higher is the probability of spotting it in the public domain of the linguistic landscape. This explains the almost total absence of Chinese and German from public signs as well. In this order, English is an exception; it is given a privileged status because it is becoming more and more a part of Japanese lives. In this way, the fact that English is less “popular” than Italian and French, but more frequent in the linguistic landscape, should be seen as a process of standardization of the language which raises it almost to the same rank as Japanese (0.6).

Next, I compare the results with those obtained by Haarman and Waseda (1985) for Japanese, English, and French from a perspective of diachronic change, including the other languages in this survey. Figure 8 represents the averages obtained for each semantic bipolar pair of adjectives for the values already shown in Table 2. Starting from the middle value 0, the line extends to the left for positive values and to the right for negative ones.

Figure 8. Profiles of the consciousness of languages.



As can be seen in Figure 8, each language value differs consistently from the others. The results obtained for the present study differ from the Japanese attitudes observed in the 1980s: Haarmann and Waseda found out that English was considered in each semantic

pair positively, and the most positive value was the one of “cheerful” (right between 1 and 2<sup>24</sup>), followed by “smooth” (almost 1.5) and “cool” (a little more than 1). In the new survey, English (orange line) underwent a slight change in its profile. It appears a negative value, represented by its impressiveness, which shows in a sense how it has become part of daily lives and does not any longer constitute a factor of surprise. This also gives English in some way a perception of normality: it is taken for granted to spot a large number of English signs all around the country at each social level.

French showed in the 1980s mainly positive values, like in “mild” (almost 2), “beautiful” (around 1.5) and “smooth” (a little more than 1). In contrast it was negatively judged for its familiarity (almost -1) and modernity (a little less than 0). In present times, French (yellow line) shows a dynamic profile, with values going from -0.1 (familiar, modern) to 1.2 (fashionable), denoting very similar values to the ones discovered in their time by Haarmann and Waseda.

However, the values which changed the most are the ones of Japanese language. Once it showed a very dynamic structure, with very different values. It was very familiar (more than 2) and quite beautiful (a little more than 1). On the contrary, it was not cool and not modern (both values slightly overcame -1). In contrast with these results, today’s values of Japanese language are almost positive (with the exception of “modern”). In particular, the value for coolness underwent a significant positive change. It is also interesting to notice that today’s highly dynamic and prominently positive values for French and Italian (which was not present in survey of Haarmann and Waseda) obtained by this study’s survey closely resemble the ones that English had earned during the 1980s. Given the

---

<sup>24</sup> The two researchers took the values with a scale where the highest value was +3 and the lowest one was -3. In the table shown in Haarmann (1985: 176) it is not possible to verify the exact value.



relatively high familiarity values obtained by English today, this tendency suggests that a similar process is underway for languages other than English.

#### ***1.4 Conclusion***

This chapter demonstrated that the data collected by the field survey, although limited to a part of the signage visible in a small district of a touristic city like Kyoto and cannot be generalized for the whole country, might reflect the consciousness of a part of Japanese people towards specific foreign languages. It also demonstrated that a simple quantitative survey is not sufficient to grasp the relation between the presence of a language in the linguistic landscape and people's attitudes. Thus, the combination of written multilingual signs and social attitudes should be considered as a necessary step in order to start discussions concerning the progression of Japan towards a multilingually oriented society.

The surveys affirmed that the higher a language's social status is, the higher will be its presence in the public space. In addition, when compared with the results of thirty years ago, Japanese speakers clearly developed their multilingual consciousness. This is true both at the quantitative level, where the number of shops using foreign languages in signage almost equals the ones using only Japanese (55% to 45%), but also at the qualitative level: the values attributed to foreign languages (mainly to English) seem to have been getting closer to those ascribed to Japanese in recent decades. Moreover, today's highly dynamic and prominently positive values for French and Italian seem to resemble the ones that English had earned during the 1980s. This tendency suggests that a similar process may be underway for languages other than English, and Japan will, in the not-so-distant future, become a more internationalized, multilingually oriented society.

As I pointed out in 1.2 and 1.3, Italian or Italian-looking signs are frequent and Japanese people have a good image for Italian. However, as a matter of fact, I found many wrong or unnatural signs as well. The next chapter analyzes the linguistic factors of these errors and proposes a solution for this problem.

## ***2 Identifying Linguistic Incorrectness: A Comparative Analysis of the Differences in Naming Italian Restaurants in Italy and Japan***

The previous chapter focused on the way Japanese consciousness towards foreign languages is reflected in the multilingual signage of the linguistic landscape. The results obtained prove that a part of Japan is indeed internationalizing. However, during the field survey conducted in Kyoto, I spotted several shops' names like the following ones: *Veramore di Nucleo, A Olio, Meno Mosso, Anche, Andante, Idola, Poco Agio, Acqua Grazie*<sup>25</sup>. From the perspective of an Italian native speaker, they are strange and, in many cases, even wrong.

Their presence shows that wrong signs in foreign languages exist in the Japanese public space. What aspects of language make such signs wrong? This chapter aims then to answer the following question: what are the linguistic aspects that should be given importance when judging a sign as wrong or strange? To achieve this goal and for two reasons, I decided to use examples of Italian restaurant names: one reason is due to the important role this language plays in the consciousness of Japanese, as shown in the surveys of Chapter 1; the second reason is due to its significant presence in the food business. In particular, the analysis focuses on the main syntactic and lexicosemantic differences between the naming of Italian restaurants in Italy and in Japan. I demonstrate that at the basis of Italian and Italian-looking names, different syntactic and lexicosemantic naming patterns are the main causes leading to the identification of

---

<sup>25</sup> 'Real love of nucleus', 'With oil', 'Less moved', 'Also', 'Going', 'Idol' (incorrect in the feminine), 'Little ease', 'Water, thank you'. All nouns with Italian features, but similar ones can be spotted for other languages too.

linguistically wrong or strange signs.

This chapter first shows Italy's restaurant names and analyzes their linguistic features, and identifies the frequent patterns which define authentic "Italianness" of the name. The second part examines examples of restaurant names in Japan. A comparison in terms of syntactic structures and lexicosemantic choices reveals an incongruity that Italian native speakers feel when confronting Italian restaurant names in Japan. In conclusion, I suggest the use of dialects as a possible way of restaurant naming that follows today's Italian style and might be also applied to the Japanese linguistic landscape.

## ***2.1 Background of the Research***

Preceding linguistic research concerning restaurant nouns is certainly not developed.

At first, how should a restaurant name be syntactically considered? Edelman (2009) explains that in the linguistic landscape can be found proper names like the ones of shops (which include restaurant nouns), brands or products. This is why it is necessary to relate to restaurant names as proper nouns. Gardiner (1954: 43) states what follows: "a proper noun is a word or group of words recognized as indicating or tending to indicate the object or objects to which it refers by virtue of its distinctive sound alone, without regard for any meaning possessed by that symbol from the start, or acquired by it through association with the said object or objects".

Italian, as well as other languages, distinguishes proper nouns from common nouns. The former has the function of identifying a given individual: for instance, this is the case with persons', places', brands', or companies' names. This definition makes it possible to treat restaurant names as proper nouns, because they identify either a given place (the

restaurant itself) or a person (the owner) even if common nouns are used. Take an example of a fictitious restaurant name for a Japanese bar whose sign can be read *Uroko* ‘scale’: In this case, the common noun standing for unmarked “fragments found on the skin of fish and reptiles”, becomes marked due to a metonymical extension, because it markedly means that “this particular bar serves fish with scales”. However, there are no detailed previous studies on this topic.

With regard to previous researches concerning linguistic incorrectness in Japan, researchers have unilaterally criticized errors on signage (Barrs 2015; Backhaus 2007; Hyde 2002; Kallen and Dhonnacha 2010). Backhaus (2007: 117) uses the term “idiosyncrasies” for errors in order to avoid being too critical. Among researchers, however, it is common to use terms like “false” or “pseudo”, or other derogatory expressions (Hyde 2002; Furiassi 2002, 2010; Vedovelli and Casini 2014; Casini, 2015). In particular, Hyde (2002) judges the vast use of English scripts in Japan as useless, and even dangerous for didactic purposes due to their errors. This presence of strange signs in Japan is not limited to English and it threatens Japan’s international image, as mockery online sites like *Engrish.com*<sup>26</sup> demonstrate. A French example, *Nina’s derrière* ‘Nina’s bum’ for a chocolate product cited by Bloomaert (2010: 29) expresses aspiration for “Frenchness”, but ends up being, as the author writes, a rather unhappy (but at the same time, somehow entertaining) choice. Such strange uses of foreign languages persist in Japan, and most non-Japanese are aware of it.

Why and how do these names sound strange? This chapter answers this question by analyzing linguistic factors of naming strategies in Italy and Japan, and suggests possible solutions to overcome this strangeness.

---

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.english.com>

## *2.2 Syntactic and Lexicosemantic Features of Food-Related Enterprises' Names in Italy*

This section presents the methodology and shows the results of the syntactic analysis of Italian restaurant names that constitute noun phrases (NP)<sup>27</sup>.

The data consist of 114 names collected during August and September 2018 in several cities of northern Italy (Milan, Bologna, Rimini, Florence, and Verona). These names were selected without setting a precise area of the cities. I walked randomly for an hour in each city and took pictures of the restaurant names spotted. It were selected cities of various scales to expand the scenery as far as possible. The signs displaying restaurant names were analyzed afterwards.

When referring to a restaurant name, adopting the same principles of language salience as in Chapter 1, the researcher considered the most prominent script within a sign's frame. For instance, in Figure 9-A, only *BELLA VITA* 'nice life' was adopted as the restaurant name, and *Bologna* and *di là* 'up there' in the "subtitle" were omitted because they do not constitute the principal part of the name. In Figure 9-B, by contrast, there are no other scripts except for the shop's name *FORNO BRISA*.

---

<sup>27</sup> Syntactic structures where the noun represents the head (Beccaria 1989: 511).

Figure 9-A. Example of different prominence of words.



Figure 9-B. Example of same prominence of words.



The syntactic analysis focuses on the inner structure of the names. Analyzing the syntactic structure of restaurant names will contribute to furnishing a guideline for those who wish to create natural Italian names with nouns. In the analysis of the restaurants' names, 34 patterns were found. The following list includes the most frequent patterns (the number in parenthesis indicates the number of restaurants):

NP → N + PP; PP → P + N (19)

NP → N (17)

NP → N + N (15)

NP → Det. + N (6)

NP → NP + NP; (NP → N + N) + (NP → N + N) (6)

NP → N + NP; NP → Det. + N (6)<sup>28</sup>

These results range from the simplex nominal phrases N or Det. + N to more complex structures such as N + PP or NP + NP because lower constituents develop further. In the various combinations of nouns, the largest portion of restaurant names contain a word that defines the restaurant type such as *ristorante*, *osteria*, *trattoria*, or *gelateria*<sup>29</sup>. These words can be considered as an apposition<sup>30</sup> to the head. Considering the definition of ‘proper noun’, they are syntactically and semantically superfluous elements that do not help the identification of a particular place. This is, for instance, the case in the following examples.

(1) a. Trattoria 4 leoni → 4 leoni

b. Caffetteria Antica Bologna → caffetteria

---

<sup>28</sup> These numbers do not represent the whole of the data as I decided to show only frequent patterns.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Restaurant’, ‘inn/tavern’, ‘(typical) restaurant’, ‘ice-cream parlor’.

<sup>30</sup> As explained by Beccaria (1989: 76), the apposition is defined as a “syntactic unit, either simple or complex, which refers to a co-referential noun”. Since it does not imply any proper syntactic and semantic role, it functions substantially as an attribute, as it describes and defines more precisely the person, or object, to which it refers.



In (1a), even if the appositive element *trattoria* is deleted, the identification of the restaurant is still possible, while in (1b), when the principal elements *Antica Bologna* ‘old Bologna’ are deleted, *caffetteria* can no longer refer to the specific place. Given these characteristics, this is also why in the next section, the apposition part will not be considered relevant for the lexicosemantic classification, as in *Osteria del Cinghiale* ‘the boar’s inn’: *osteria* ‘inn’ is omitted, it is the PP *del Cinghiale* ‘the boars’s’ which is semantically relevant.

Another important and striking characteristic of the restaurant names is the frequent use of prepositional phrases (PP), where, as the terminology suggests, a preposition constitutes the head of a constituent. This means that a restaurant name functions as a proper noun semantically or pragmatically, but when it is analyzed syntactically, it is revealed to be a prepositional phrase. It is the presence of this sort of paradox that represents the most difficult aspect of Italian restaurant names. One might suppose, then, that most restaurants using this particular syntactic structure start from the NP → N + PP rule, and decide not to use N as the final result; this suppressed N is implicitly understood in the name.

### ***Lexicosemantic Features***

There are no previous studies that have proposed a general criterion for the categorization of restaurant nouns that should be valid for all languages. Thus, we are obliged to start from one specific language used in a specific country or region in order to elucidate lexicosemantic characteristics of restaurant names. This section attempts to clarify them in Italian and to propose a basis for cross linguistic comparison.

The analysis aims to explore the semantic features of nouns and to identify the typical naming pattern in Italian. For the classification of lexicosemantic features, I analyzed the relations between nouns in terms of hyponymy<sup>31</sup>. Hyponyms can be set out in order to characterize the head noun's meaning; in other words, they are categories of the head nouns, and the head nouns are instantiations of these categories, as in the following example<sup>32</sup>.

(2) *La Marianna* → Noun of the first owner of the restaurant → People

*Osteria del cinghiale* ('Boar's inn') → Term which indicates a mammal similar to a pig  
→ Animal

*Forno Quadrilatero* ('Quadrilatero bakery') → Noun of a district of Bologna → Place

*Spiedini & Co.* ('Skewers & Co.') → Noun of a traditional food → Food

*Il pennello* ('Paintbrush') → Noun which identifies the art tradition of Italy → Objects

*Fourghetti* → Original word → Word play

From the structuralist point of view, Casadei (2011: 61) reminds us that when analyzing the meaning of words, they must not be treated independently from the other words and

---

<sup>31</sup> Geeraerts (2010: 82) defines the concept as follows: "the terms 'hyponymy' and 'hyperonymy' both refer to the relationship of semantic inclusion that holds between a more general term such as *bird* and a more specific one such as *finch*. Terminologically speaking, the more general term is the 'hyperonym' (sometimes 'hypernym') or superordinate term. The more specific term is the 'hyponym' or subordinate term". The terminology was first introduced by Lyons in 1963. Murphy (2006: 446) also defines hyponymy as a "semantic relation of inclusion whose converse is hyperonymy".

<sup>32</sup> The appositive part of the restaurant name was not considered relevant because, as already shown, it is a syntactically and semantically superfluous element which does not help the identification of a specific place.

their relations with the other words must be taken into consideration. This principle allows for detecting several lexicosemantic patterns in the restaurant names.

Table 3. Lexicosemantic patterns of Italian restaurants naming.

<b>ANIMATE</b>	HUMAN		Brunelleschi
	ANIMAL		Il Bufalo Trippone ('the fat buffalo')
<b>INANIMATE</b>	PHYSICAL ENTITY	PLACE	Bar Gelateria La Cattedrale ('the cathedral')
		FOOD	Tigella Bella ('beautiful Tigella')
		OBJECTS	Il pennello ('the paintbrush')
	WORD PLAY		Bolpetta (fusion of 'Bologna' and 'Polpetta', 'meat ball'), Porcomondo ('rottenworld' and 'pig world' appealing to meat dishes)

Table 3 illustrates the classification system with a few examples. Following the examples of several studies (Capitani *et al.* 1994; Funnel and Sheridan 1990), I first individuated the hyperonyms "animate" and "inanimate" entities in order to develop hierarchical relations.

The hyperonym "animate" is divided into the "human" and "non-human" categories. The former includes the names of historical figures or groups such as Brunelleschi<sup>33</sup>,

---

<sup>33</sup> Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) is considered one of the fathers of Italian Renaissance architecture. Mostly famous for the design of the Florence Cathedral.

Lorenzo de' Medici<sup>34</sup>, or *Giubbe rosse*<sup>35</sup>. The “non-human” category includes, for instance, nouns such as *Il Bufalo Trippone* ‘the fat buffalo’ or *Osteria del Cinghiale* ‘The boar’s inn’.

The “inanimate” category included both physical and abstract entities, and physical entities are “place”, “food”, and “object”. “Place” are nouns that refer to places, such as *Lungarno* ‘Arno riverbanks’, or architectural features of the city identifiable as places (i.e. metonymy), such as *Cattedrale* ‘cathedral’. In this pattern, the case of an ice cream parlor *Lilasù* is interesting; it is a combination of two demonstrative pronouns *lì* ‘there’ and *la* ‘there’, and a preposition *su* ‘above’. This name itself represents a clear quotation of the words that passersby shout when looking up at the historical roof of the *portico* where the ice-cream parlor is located; in fact, an arrow from the Middle Ages is still embedded in the old wood of the roof; tourists and even local denizens strive to find it, saying *lilasù*.

The “food” category refers to edible things evoked by the nouns: for example, *Spiedini & Co* ‘translation in English’ make us think about skewers of good quality and original flavors, *Tigella bella* ‘beautiful tigella’ a restaurant that serves nice and warm *tigella*<sup>36</sup> with a wide selection of cheeses, hams, or sausages.

The “object” category pertains to various Italian cultural products such as *Il Pennello* ‘paintbrush’ (an artistic and traditional product) or *Fiorino d’Oro* ‘the golden forint’ (a coin minted in Firenze from 1252 that played an important commercial role in Europe

---

<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo de' Medici (1469-1492) was a magnate, ruler of the Florentine Republic. Promoter of the Renaissance culture, he gave his sponsorship to Michelangelo and Botticelli.

<sup>35</sup> (‘Red Coats’) was a group of volunteers gathered by Giuseppe Garibaldi for the glorious “Expedition of the thousand” in Southern Italy of 1860.

<sup>36</sup> These are round and thin breads typical of the mountain area of Emilia-Romagna. They are traditionally eaten filled with cheese, ham and similar sausages, sauces and vegetables.

during the 13<sup>th</sup> century).

At the bottom of the “inanimate” row is the most intriguing and complicated category: wordplay or puns. As can be seen in table 3, this category is included in “inanimate”, but distinguished from the other “inanimate” categories because it does not refer to any concrete objects. As stated by Giorgadze (2014: 271), “wordplays can be expressed in ambiguous verbal wit, orthographic peculiarities, sounds and forms of the words, in breaking the grammar rules and other linguistic factors”. The names of this category often contain original words that are usually not easy to identify for several reasons: first, they require a high-level of language knowledge; second, they sometimes contain a foreign word arbitrarily mixed with an Italian word; the final reason, though not exhaustive, is that they have an amusing and witty effect. For instance, *Missfagiola* ‘it sounds good to me’ derives from the verb *sfagiolare*, of rustic origins, which means “to be keen on an idea”. Here it is conjugated at the first person singular, with the same meaning, but at the same time appealing to the vegan features of the restaurant: *fagiolo*, contained in the stem of the word, means ‘bean’, one of the most representative ingredients for vegan cuisine. Last, for *Cibiamo*, the creation of the wordplay double meaning becomes possible only when semiotically expressed in a real sign indicating a restaurant (see Figure 10 below). This is the conjugation for the verb *cibare* ‘to feed’, explicitly conveying the rather banal and simplistic meaning of “we serve you food”. However, when one notices the highlight evidenced by the different colors of the signs, it becomes possible to understand the real meaning behind the name: *Cibi* ‘food’ and *amo* (first person for *amare*, ‘to love’) resulting in “I love food”.

Figure 10. A wordplay semiotically rendered.



In conclusion, the analysis revealed that Italian owners of these restaurants have chosen their names from limited and well-defined lexicosemantic patterns. Although the data are not exhaustive and further observations are necessary in order to identify all the possible existing patterns, the results of this section can be a first step toward the clarification of lexicosemantic features of Italian naming. The next section will show the results of the same linguistic analysis concerning Italian names found in the in the public domain of the linguistic landscape in Japan. This analysis will shed light on consistently different naming patterns that may be the source of strangeness or wrongness of Italian signs in Japan.

### ***2.3 Syntactic and Lexicosemantic Features of the “Japanese Style” of Italian Naming.***

This section tries to identify the syntactic patterns of Japanese style in naming Italian restaurants. To this end, I analyze the Italian signs in Japan with respect to syntax and

lexical semantics in the same way as Italian naming in Italy<sup>37</sup>

For this analysis, I scrutinized 114 restaurant names found in streets of several Japanese cities from north to south, such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Utsunomiya, and Naha between November 2018 and December 2019. To avoid possible ambiguity, I selected the signs only with Italian, excluding Japanese' (*kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana*) and other languages' characters.

Figure 11. Example of Italian name in Japan.



On the syntactic level, collected data include the prototypical Italian noun phrases N or Det + N: e.g., *Vicolo* 'alley', *Leone* 'lion', *Rinascimento* 'renaissance', *Sfida* 'challenge', *Il cipresso* 'cypress', *La locanda* 'inn', *Il pinolo* 'pine kernel', *Il ghiottone* 'gourmand', and so forth. Apart from the selection of lexicon, which is dealt with later, there is no syntactic incongruence between the names in Italy and in Japan; both observes the canonical structure such as N + Adj. (or Adj. + N following adjective types) and N + N.

---

<sup>37</sup> As for the analyses of Italian signs in Japan, Vedovelli and Casini (2014) only presented a geosociolinguistic categorization of Pseudo-Italianism, without giving sufficient importance to the linguistic patterns that can be seen in the Japanese style of naming.

This is a frequent constructional pattern that non-native speakers tend to choose. However, some morphological errors are found because Italian adjectives need declension in accordance with the grammatical number and gender of the nouns that they modify. For example, *Bella Porto* should be *Bel Porto*, because *porto* ‘harbor’ is singular masculine.

Here are frequent syntactic patterns of the signs found in the linguistic landscape in Japan (the number in parenthesis indicates the number of restaurants).

NP → N (29)

NP → Det. + N (21)

NP → N + Adj. (15)

NP → N + N (13)

\*AP → Adj. (9)

\*VP → V (5)

Syntactic variations of the Japanese way of naming are limited to 11, far less than those found in Italy (34). This difference suggests a limited knowledge of Italian of Japanese owners. In addition, it appears that complex syntactic structures such as N + PP are avoided. On the other side, there exist naming patterns that are totally absent in Italy: it is the case for the names constituted just by an adjective or a verb (except for *Cibiamo*, which was found in Italy to be a word pun). For instance, in the data are found names based on verbs, either at the infinitive *Salire* ‘to go up’, *Legare* ‘to bind’, or other verbal forms, like a subjunctive-looking name *Fiorisca* ‘\*may it blow, hope it blows’<sup>38</sup>. As for

---

<sup>38</sup> The subjunctive is used only in subordinate clauses. This is why it is almost impossible to interpret the meaning when it is used independently in a name.



adjectives, *Caloroso* ‘warming’ and *Piano piano* ‘little by little’ were used.

Among the 114 analyzed names, I identifies several ungrammatical constructions (11, 9.6% of the total). This was the case with names like *Bene pesce* ‘\*well fish’ (adverb + noun), *Osteria sempre* ‘\*tavern always’ (noun + adverb), or *Caffè Ciao Presso* ‘\*coffee hello nearby’ (noun + interjection + adverb).

In general, the limited number of syntactic patterns itself does not represent a cause of strangeness for Italian native speakers because these syntactic patterns are correct and familiar with Italian. What is problematic is the presence of patterns that do not exist in Italy, such as verbal or adjectival phrases, as well as ungrammatical constructions. It means that the creators of these signs ignore or do not pay sufficient attention to Italian grammar.

Although the data are limited, the results obtained in this survey allow us to infer that it is particularly difficult for Japanese people to use correctly Italian prepositions that do not exist in their language, and to distinguish adjectives and adverbs that are categorized based on different criteria between the two languages. Restaurant names containing the Italian “typical” prepositional structure shown in previous sections were almost absent and the names in which adverbs are used (as, for example, in the before-mentioned *Osteria Sempre* or *Caffè Ciao Presso*) were mostly wrong. In particular, it is probable that in a name such as *Bene pesce* the following mistake occurred: the owner originally meant to replicate the meaning of *ii gyokai* (good/nice fish), but mistook the Italian adjective *buono* for the adverb *bene*. A simple research using online free dictionaries and blogs about the Italian language shows that, the meaning of *bene*, which functions mostly as an adverb, is often associated with the Japanese adjective *ii*. This misunderstanding is likely to be due to the existence of the Italian common phrase *va bene*, which sometimes

corresponds to the Japanese *choshi ii*, as both can mean *in good condition, to be fine*. In the case of the restaurant, the correct word for the name should rather be *buon* (*Buon pesce* ‘delicious fish’, where the final vowel of *buono* disappears for apocope). However, while in Japanese many adverbs are formed by the inflection in *-ku* of the adjective (*ii* = *yoku*; *oishii* = *oishiku*), in Italian the formation of an adverb resorts either to a different word (e.g., *buono* → *bene*, *cattivo* ‘bad’ → *male*), or to more complex morphological changes than in Japanese (e.g., *facile* ‘easy’ → *facilmente* ‘easily’).

### ***Lexicosemantic Features***

In this section I focus on the lexicosemantic aspect of Italian names in Japan and identifies frequent Japanese lexical choices in order to elucidate the differences between Japanese and Italian naming with Italian language.

I adopted the same dichotomic categorization of “animate” and “inanimate”. The results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Lexicosemantic patterns of Italian restaurants in Japan.

<b>ANIMATE</b>	HUMAN		Il Ghiottone ('the glutton')
	ANIMAL		Maiale ('pig')
	PLANT		Giglio ('lily')
<b>INANIMATE</b>	PHYSICAL	PLACE	Il Lago ('the lake')
	ENTITY	FOOD	Aceto ('vinegar')
		OBJECT	Il Piatto ('the plate')
	ABSTRACT	CONCEPT	La Pace ('peace')
	ENTITY		
<b>NON-IDENTIFIED</b>			Virgola ('comma'), Tanto Tanto ('very very' or 'a lot of') of')

Table 4 shows that the lexical choices of Japanese speakers resemble the ones of Italian speakers. However, there are several differences that need to be discussed.

The “animate” category subsumes a category that was absent in the Italian naming: “plant”. *Il fiore* ‘the flower’ or *Giglio* ‘lily’ are examples for this category. In the “inanimate” also, there exists a newly identified category “abstract entity” such as *Ricordi* ‘memories’ or *La pace* ‘peace’.

The most important issue is that the relation between the selection of words for a commercial business and their meaning is sometimes unclear (the row “non-identified” in Table 4). This is the case for names such as *Vena* ‘vein’, *Tramonto* ‘sunset’, *Giocare* ‘to play’, *Osteria sempre* ‘osteria always’, or *Tanto tanto* ‘very very’. For *Vena* and

*Tramonto*, it may be possible to presuppose other intermediate categories such as “human body” or “weather” under “human” and “physical entity”, respectively. However, they are isolated cases, and these ad-hoc categories make it difficult to analyze these names in relation to other names. On the other hand, with regard to strange structures like *Giocare* or *Tanto Tanto* (when seen as an adjective), the absence of a noun makes it perplexing to relate them to other nouns. This should be considered a crucial issue that creates a sense of strangeness and incorrectness in the eyes of native Italians.

Apart from the differences concerning the lexicosemantic patterns, for some nouns, the word selection itself is a cause of strangeness. For instance, it is the case with nouns such as *Virgola* ‘comma’, *Sfida* ‘challenge’, *Maiale* ‘pig’, *Bocca del vino* ‘wine’s mouth’ and all the verbs or adjectives. These nouns give an impression of “poorness” of language knowledge or of lack of attention to the production of signs<sup>39</sup>.

Along with the syntactic patterns, the lexicosemantic analysis equally showed notable differences in the choices of restaurant names by Japanese owners. Despite the wider scope of lexical options that Italian speakers have, their awkward choices make the signage unnatural. While it is true that naming is an action that an owner has the right to conduct freely, it is also true that it should be conducted following the canonical linguistic structure (exceptions could be accepted for evident word puns) in order to avoid unnaturalness.

---

<sup>39</sup> This aspect will be discussed further in the next chapters.

## 2.4 Suggestions for Naming Patterns: Use of Dialects

Now that the comparative analysis has evidenced where linguistic problems lie, this section proposes a way for naming based on new trends observed in Italy which might help Japanese owners to avoid difficult syntactic and lexicosemantic issues: restaurant names using dialects.

In the last few years, Italy has been rediscovering the local languages, especially in the sphere of commercial business' names that are often thought to create amusing wordplays (Scaglione, 2017) as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Example of Rimini dialect in Italy: *A sém toast* 'We are tough/ We are toast.



In Italy, dialectal signs are abundant in the food business, while they can be found in both public (commercial businesses' names, souvenirs, advertising) and official (warning signs or notices) domains in Japan. As I stated elsewhere (Lo Cigno 2020), based on researches concerning the Kyoto dialect, the signs that include dialectal expressions are used in permanent signage such as an information map in the official domain (Figure 13-A) and signage for a limited period such as a campaign notice (Figure 13-B) in Japan, which

leads to a wide range of usage.

Figure 13-A. Example of permanent sign: the message *okoshiyasu* ‘welcome’ on a map.



Figure 13-B. Example of transitory sign: a campaign against drunk driving.



The signage for a limited period is a typical characteristic of dialectal sign in Japan both at the official and public domain (Lo Cigno, 2020). Thus, dialects have this wide range of usage in Japan, but they are not so frequently used for restaurant names.

In contrast to this, in Italy there are more and more restaurant names using dialects. What is interesting to notice is the fact that these names often show a use of dialects which

seems approximative. For instance, *Forno brisa* (*brisa* is the Bolognese dialect's version of the negative Italian adverb *non* 'do not'), when "translated" in Italian sounds like *Forno non* 'bakery not' (see Figure 9-B) and does not make much sense. Another example is the fixed Bolognese imperative expression *Vai mo'* 'go on' (Figure 14). One might also find a bar called *Bona lè*, which represents another fixed expression and means 'give it a rest'.

Figure 14. A dialectal name using a fixed expression.



As shown by these few examples, it appears clear that Italian owners sometimes have no intention of creating a linguistically meaningful name, but rather appeal to the rediscovered social value of Italian dialects. This aspect also justifies the presence of signs which, when translated into Italian, reveal themselves to be linguistically strange.

Given then the relevance such dialectal names have been acquiring in Italy in recent years, I suggest that these popular tendencies are a good compromise when creating Italian style names which also allow the overcoming of the syntactic and lexicosemantic rules necessary when creating a correct name. This does not mean that when using dialectal names, all syntactic and lexicosemantic restrictions are canceled. However, this compromise can in some way be compared with a sociolinguistic phenomenon existing

in Japan called *hogen cosplay* ‘dialect cosplay’. Tanaka (2016: 4) defines it as the use of a local variation of Japanese that is different from one’s own. For example, a native speaker of Tokyo dialect sometimes uses an expression typical of the Kansai region’s variations in order to appeal to certain sociolinguistic images and “dress-up” (cosplay) as a linguistically different character. Tanaka also affirms that when a certain dialect is used as *hogen cosplay*, its linguistic correctness is not necessary (Tanaka, *ibid.*). Thus, given such aspects, it can be suggested that a similar use of dialects applied to Italian names might represent for Japanese people a familiar way of dealing with dialects, which does not require a rigid linguistic correctness. Employing a dialect in signage might require much more effort, but would be feasible with the help either of its native speakers or of online dictionaries<sup>40</sup> which accommodate more and more local variations of a specific language.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter showed the basic differences in the naming patterns of Italian restaurants in Italy and Japan, and suggested a possible solution for Japanese to use dialects as they are recently used in Italy.

The syntactic analysis of 114 Italian restaurant names identified so far 34 syntactic patterns. Among them, the most frequent pattern with simple structures such as N and Det. + N counts 64 examples in total. However, complex patterns were also verified (50

---

<sup>40</sup> Here is the example for *dialettando.com*, an online dictionary where the user can select the region, or even the city, and find the desired word from an Italian input: <https://www.dialettando.com/dizionario/dizionario.lasso>



names in total) that contain other syntactic units at a deeper level, and the most frequent pattern was N + PP (19 names). This complex, but frequent, structure may be an obstacle for foreigners attempting to recreate Italian style names. The lexicosemantic analysis showed clear tendencies in the naming patterns.

In contrast, from the present analysis of the Japanese linguistic landscape arose limited syntactic patterns (11 patterns identified), and some of them are ungrammatical and hence the patterns that are not used by native speakers. This fundamentally demonstrates that linguistically strange or wrong signs exist in the Japanese public space. On the basis of these strange or wrong signs, there are fundamental linguistic factors: less standardized lexicosemantic patterns and strange lexical choices. Filling the syntactic and semantic gaps between Italian and Japanese naming patterns clarified in this chapter, Japanese signs can be corrected immediately.

Given the linguistic parameters reported in this chapter, it is possible to elaborate a set of criteria for evaluation of linguistic correctness, which can easily be applied to languages other than Italian.

Figure 15. Criterion of linguistic correctness of signs.

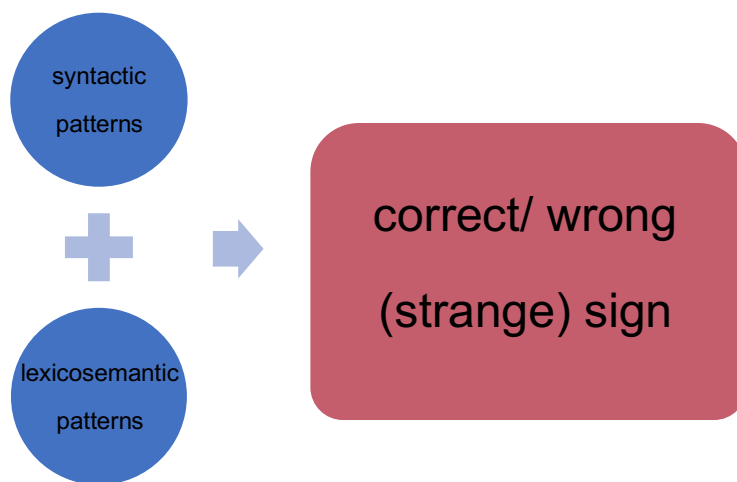


Figure 15 represents the linguistic correctness criteria of foreign language signs based on the results of the comparative analysis. The blue circles include syntactic and lexicosemantic patterns and the analysis of both of them helps to decide whether a sign should be judged linguistically correct or wrong.

Why do such errors persist? A hypothesis is that wrong signs are produced by people who, in most cases, might have no knowledge of the language used for signs or do not pay enough attention to linguistic correctness. The next chapter attempts to confirm this hypothesis, in discovering the underlying consciousness of Japanese speakers.

### ***3 The Persistence of Linguistic Incorrectness: Choices and Reasons Behind the Naming of Public Signs.***

The analysis in Chapter 2 showed that the syntactic and lexicosemantic patterns of Italian names in Japan differ from those in Italy, and examined how sign makers often ignore linguistic correctness. Given that such wrong signs remain a problem, this chapter tries to uncover what lies behind the choices of a name and the reasons for the presence of strange or wrong signs.

To achieve this goal, after showing how the image of Italy has developed in Japan and has become part of its visual multilingualism, I first discuss visual features of Italian names used in public signs. To expand the scenery, differently from the previous chapter, I also considered other names apart from those of restaurants, like the ones of other shops.

Previous studies of Japan's linguistic landscape have asserted that most of its signs from the public domain function as mere symbols and reflect the images of their languages in Japanese society. In sum, they are not meant to convey a normal linguistic meaning (finalized to the transmission of a message) and their incorrect features are not given too much importance. I will show that this might not be necessarily true and will illustrate this with the results of few qualitative interviews of Japanese owners concerning the way they used Italian language for the names of their enterprises. At the end, I present the reasons why linguistic incorrectness persists. The results also allow the assertion that, with regard to these names, a portion of them are actually meant to convey a sort of meaning. Thus, their linguistic correctness must not be ignored.

### ***3.1 How the Image of a Language is Reflected in the Public Domain***

In this section I will show what can be found in previous literature considering the uses of foreign languages and the way their image is reflected in Japan's public signage. Secondly, I will try to highlight the relations between the use of a certain language and the commercial content of a shop, which is the first step necessary to distinguish the symbolic and the linguistic use of foreign languages.

First, it must be pointed out that the discussion concerning the symbolic meaning of foreign language is not fully developed yet. The existing previous studies (Harrmann 1986; Hyde 2002; Ben Rafael *et al.* 2006; Bloomaert 2010) concerning the case of Japan's public domain have pointed out that foreign languages often perform a merely symbolic function in the Japanese public space and that their use reflects the images Japanese society has of a certain country<sup>41</sup>. As Bloomaert (2010) defines it, the symbolic function of language intends the conveyance of complex associative meanings evoked by a language. In such cases the linguistic function as a denotational sign is unimportant. This symbolic use of foreign languages, which is based on the images a certain society attributes to another one<sup>42</sup>, is particularly quantitatively prominent in the public domain, such as in names of restaurants, shops, products, or buildings. It can be said that most of such public names using foreign languages do not convey any "meaning", but rather they mainly function as symbols of coolness, of authenticity (in representing a foreign country)

---

<sup>41</sup> A similar tendency can be seen also in East-Asian countries. Jaworsky and Yeung (2010) analyze the case of Hong Kong.

<sup>42</sup>It must be recalled that this phenomenon is not exclusive to Japan or other East-Asian countries. As shown in Rodriguez (2012: 217-218), for instance, traces of pseudo-Italianism can also be seen in the linguistic landscape of Sevilla, Spain.

or high-standards/quality and the selection of words is, in many cases, not given too much importance. This can be verified in names such as *Nina's derrière* ('Nina's butt') explained by Bloomaert (2010: 29, see also 2.1 of this dissertation).

Although a specific study analyzing public signage's foreign languages does not exist, it is possible to have a look at several previous studies in order to understand the way foreign languages from public signage have been seen so far. In a study concerning the use of French in Japanese TV commercials, Haarmann (1985: 179) affirms that "originally the understanding of French texts by the viewers is not the aim of the producers of the commercials". They rather aim to increase consumers' desire to buy by using the positive image evoked by the French language. In a similar way, Hyde (2002) affirms that the use of English is often symbolic, and the aim of its usage is to convey a fashionable and desirable image rather than communicate something. Bloomaert (2010: 31) confirms this view in the following way.

"[foreign languages] are mobile semiotic, rather than linguistic, resources. In moving from space where people have sufficient linguistic competence to project linguistic functions onto the signs (e.g. France in the case of French) to a space where such competences cannot be presupposed (e.g. Japan), the signs (sic) changes from a linguistic sign to an emblematic<sup>43</sup> one. [A sign] ceases to be something that produces linguistic meaning, because the [people] consuming it cannot extract such meaning from the sign".

What previous studies have argued for can be partially confirmed in today's linguistic landscape: many signs can still be found which appeal to symbolic values. However, is it so for all of them? Previous academic discussions have always been ignoring the relation

---

<sup>43</sup> In previous literature's terminology both "emblematic" and "symbolic" are used. These stand for the same notion.

between the image a language evokes and the type of commercial content it represents, which is a fundamental point to distinguish between merely symbolic and something similar to linguistic signs. To better explain this relation, in the following two paragraphs I will show practical examples (see Figure 16-A and 16-B).

Figure 16-A. A bakery using a French name.



Figure 16-B. A hairdresser using an Italian name.



Figure 16-A is a bakery's sign using a French name *FLEUR DE FARINE* 'flower of flour'. According to Kimura (1945), Japan's first bakery was founded by a Frenchman in 1892, and this was the first step in associating French culture with bread. It would be sufficient,

then, to walk the streets of any Japanese city to realize the custom of using French names for bakeries. The same results would be obtained by the observation of the relation between Italian restaurants and Italian language, Spanish restaurants and Spanish language, etc. This type of language use is called “explicit” because the relation between the language in question and the commercial content is explicitly recognizable.

By contrast, in Figure 16-B, the Italian name for a hairdresser’s salon, *Ragazzo* ‘boy’ does not directly relate the image of Italy to the business of hairdressers. This is an example of “implicit” use of languages; it is very hard to recognize the relation between the image of the language in question and the commercial content. Then, what is related with Italian language, when the business does not have direct relation with its sign? To answer this question and to find what is related with the language on a sign, it is necessary to figure out the motivation of Japanese owners to use a foreign language for the sign.

This way of using foreign languages, classified according to the explicitness and implicitness of the relation between the language and the commercial content, is shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Explicit and implicit use of languages.

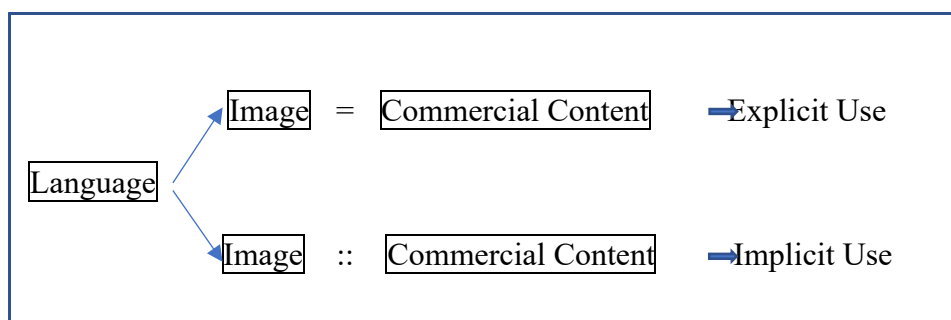


Figure 17 starts (at left) from the usage of a certain language. This use is related both to

the commercial content of the activity and to the image of the language. When the image and the content are related (=) it is an explicit use. In contrast, when it is not related (::) then it is an implicit use. As is mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, “explicit” means a clear relation between the language and the commercial content or the image of this language (e.g., Italian name = Italian restaurant), and “implicit” an opaque relation between them (e.g., Italian name :: hairdresser).

Now that I have shown the existence of different relations between the image of a language and its usage in signage, can it be still said that Japanese speakers who do not understand foreign languages use them only for the sake of the conveyance of the image? To answer this question, the development of Italy’s image will first be briefly shown.

### ***3.2 The Image of Italy in Japanese Society***

The whole world gives some sort of importance to Italy. This is thanks to the role played by the *Made in Italy* industry (Bagna, 2014), which is recognized as a synonym for living well, good taste, and a refined fashion sense. In this respect, the symbolic values of Italian are hypothesized to be positive; if a positive attitude toward Italian or Italy embraced by the speakers of other languages is confirmed in a country or area wherein Italian signs are abundant in the urban space, then the relation between the image of a language and the abundance of signs in this language is also confirmed.

First of all, why is it common to spot Italian signs all over the world? Generally speaking, Italian is perceived by non-native speakers as a somehow “affable” language (Vedovelli, 2002, 2005). This is why Italian, as reflected in foreigners’ eyes, seems to be an easily manipulated language, highly versatile and of high impact on consumers: For



example, the choice of certain well-known Italian words<sup>44</sup> might provoke “non-linguistic” decisions, such as purchase of a product (Bagna, 2014). These are the reasons why it is common to spot Italian or Italian-looking signs in linguistic landscapes all over the world.

With regard to Japan, previous studies (Vedovelli and Machetti 2006; Bagna 2009) have already documented a number of Italian signs in the linguistic landscape. To explain the presence of this language in a country where it is not an official language nor a minority one, previous literature focuses on cultural backgrounds. The popularity of Italy and its culture is said to have exploded with the so-called *Ita-meshi būmu* ‘Italian food boom’ at the beginning of the first decade of the 20th century (Sawaguchi, 2012). In addition, due to friendly political relations between the two countries, uncountable Italian-related businesses bloomed in Japan, such as restaurants, fashion apparel, education, vehicles, opera, etc.<sup>45</sup>

Among these, it is primarily the restaurant business that most contributes to the diffusion of the image of Italy in the Japanese imagination, with the vast use of Italian names and menu items. This Italian culinary presence in the country can be explained by the data furnished by *Townpage*; by November 2020, there were registered in total almost 8,534 Italian restaurants, among which 1,800 were located in the Tokyo conurbation alone<sup>46</sup>. If we exclude the towering total number of Chinese restaurants (55,095<sup>47</sup>), the

---

<sup>44</sup> It is the case of words such as *pizza*, *pasta* or *cappuccino*.

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016):

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/pr/wakaru/topics/vol146/index.html> (accessed on the 11th of May 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Source: <https://townpage.goo.ne.jp/result.php?sfword=イタリア料> (accessed on the 11th of November 2020).

<sup>47</sup> Number by 2014, source: <https://todo-ran.com/t/kiji/13423> (accessed on the 12th of May 2019).

number surpasses the totals of French (7,537<sup>48</sup>) and Indian (2,162<sup>49</sup>) restaurants. As to the reasons behind such popularity, the business consultant web page J-Net21 points out the results of a survey conducted in 2008<sup>50</sup>. According to this report, at that time, Japanese people appreciated Italian food mostly for the reasonable prices and for the particular atmosphere recreated by restaurants' owners, which was considerably fashionable and smart. Moreover, the use of healthy ingredients such as olive oil matches the Japanese lifestyle. After the culinary culture, the fashion industry represents the most researched and popular aspect of Italianness: In almost every metropolis of the country, it is possible to find shops of the world-famous brands such as Bulgari, Dolce and Gabbana, Armani, or Gucci. To the same degree, the sector of luxury cars, with brands such as Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati, has seen stores opened in cities throughout the country.

These cultural and economic icons stand on the ground of the high presence of Italian signs in the public space. However, it is not only the Italy-related businesses that exploit the positive values Japanese society confers on the language in order to promote any kind of commerce. The groundswell of Italian language studies in Japan is said to have first begun in the 1990s; the FIFA World Cup hosted by Italy has an influence on many people and encouraged them to study Italian<sup>51</sup>. Around the same period, the national broadcasting company NHK started radio courses and made Italian accessible to a vast audience. According to Inoue (2000: 6-8), the sales of Italian textbooks based on the radio courses reached 640,000 units by 1999: it was the same number as Chinese earned and ranked

---

<sup>48</sup> Number by 2014, source: <https://todo-ran.com/t/kiji/15039> (accessed on the 12th of May 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Number by 2017, source: [https://tpdb.jp/townpage/order?nid=TP01&gid=&scrid=TPDB\\_G281](https://tpdb.jp/townpage/order?nid=TP01&gid=&scrid=TPDB_G281) (accessed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2019).

<sup>50</sup> <http://j-net21.smrj.go.jp/establish/research/restaurant/cons-italy.html>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.todainavi.jp/archive/13815/>

second place after English.

As Takeda (2005) points out, at a time in the past, Italian was taught only in conservatories at the academic level. This time around, Japan counts seven universities that have an Italian major department, and more than one hundred colleges that offer Italian courses. In addition, according to the statistics of *Townpage*, there are approximately three hundred officially registered language schools offering Italian lessons either privately or group-style<sup>52</sup>. If this number is added to the people studying at cultural centers or on their own, it is probable that the portion of population in contact with Italy and its culture is much wider than one might imagine.

Thus, Italy has become part of daily life in Japan and earned a positive image among people. At the same time, this situation has come to function as a common background that justifies and encourages the production of Italian signs in the linguistic landscape. What the previous literature has not yet investigated is the way Italy is visually represented in the urban space of Japan and to what degree the image of the country relates to the reasons behind the use of the Italian language in commercial names.

### ***3.3 Italian in the Public Signs of Japan: The Role of Iconographic Elements***

This section shows how the Italian language is visually represented in public signs. As shown in Chapter 2, Italian signs in Japan are often wrong or involve strangeness, but signs sometimes consist of both language(s) and iconographic elements. This section discusses the possibility of conveying some sort of meaning supported by iconographic elements as a possible parameter to distinguish symbolic and not mere signs both from

---

<sup>52</sup> <https://itp.ne.jp/result/?kw=イタリア語スクール>

explicit and implicit uses of foreign languages.

Concerning the previous literature on the presence of Italian in the Japanese urban space, Vedovelli and Casini (2014: 51) assume that “Italian in Japan is structurally present in the Japanese linguistic-cultural sphere of public and social communication as a language able to evoke symbolic values which characterize paradigmatically Italy in the world”. As seen so far, most previous studies have focused on the reader of multilingual signs and the image they evoke, and have not paid enough attention to the intention of those who produced such signs; do they actually not intend to communicate anything but the coolness or images of a foreign language? To introduce this problem, take, for example, the following picture (Figure 18).

Figure 18. *Pinocchio (Fresh oyasai kitchen)*: a restaurant not directly linked with the Italian kitchen.



On the sign appears an Italian proper name, *Pinocchio* (after the puppet protagonist of the famous story written by Carlo Collodi), which stands for a restaurant that makes an appeal of fresh vegetables (*oyasai*) to current and potential guests. Except for the name there is no direct reference to Italy; this relates to the previously introduced “implicit use” of

foreign languages. In addition, there is no trace of visible elements which could help relate the sign to the image of Italy. For this reason, it is difficult to identify whether or how the image of Italy is reflected by the use of an Italian word. What the language expresses is not directly related to the country and culture that it evokes in this example of *Pinocchio*. It allows us to think that the image of a country is not necessarily reflected by the supposed symbolic use of a certain foreign language, and that the original language function of conveying some sort of meaning plays a role to some extent. This is a hypothesis that goes against the previous studies asserting only symbolic and meaningless use of language in signs in Japan. Moreover, if our hypothesis is not true and the argument of the previous studies is correct, the language used for signs must be identified as such by the speakers who do not have any knowledge of this language. Otherwise, an unknown language could play its symbolic function: This is an inconceivable consequence. To investigate this problem further, I will show the role played by the iconographic elements.

A deeper observation of the public domain of the urban space, then, contributes to supporting our hypothesis. In the case of Italian, in fact, apart from the language, graphic elements on a sign<sup>53</sup>, such as the Italian national flag or other features connected to Italy, help readers to understand what language is used. Take the following three pictures as examples (Figure 19-A, -B, and -C).

---

<sup>53</sup> Defined by Barna and Bagni (2007: 544) as “signs belonging also to the non-verbal codes [...], such as the Italian flag or its colors; images referring to Italy, like the profile or silhouette of the peninsula, or the stylization of some monuments (the Tower of Pisa, the Colosseum etc.) or elements which stereotypically recall it (a partiture, a gondola etc.)”.

Figure 19-A. Italian national flag: high iconographic clarity.



Figure 19-B. A *Vespa* motorbike: medium iconographic clarity (on the black plate is the name: *Osteria il lago del maggio* 'Lake of May Inn').



Figure 19-C. Only language: absence of iconographic clarity.



In these Figures, the name of each restaurant is described only with Latin characters. The extent to which Japanese readers of these signs can notice the language used varies according to the iconographic effects. The national flag in Figure 19-A easily allows most Japanese to identify the language as Italian, and a *Vespa* in Figure 19-B may require a deeper knowledge and bypassing process in order to relate this icon to Italy (e.g., this motorcycle is fabricated in Italy, and therefore, the restaurant displaying it is Italian). Except for Figure 19-C, which includes no iconographic elements, restaurants with these iconographic elements enable guests to identify the language that is used in the signs, and succeed in evoking the (positive) image that Italian can arouse, whether directly or indirectly.

What is problematic for the present study is the interpretation of Figure 19-C, which closely resembles the example of *Pinocchio* (Figure 18). The absence of an element that allows non-Italian speakers to perceive the positive values that Italian can evoke, means that the owner does not necessarily resort to such positive values. There are sufficient possibilities to consider whether he, or she, is indeed conveying another type of meaning,

which is not merely symbolic, with the use of Italian words: In this case *il filo*, (meaning ‘the wire’) is a word selected not randomly and aims to communicate something which will become clear only when one asks the owner (as will be shown in the next section).

Examples similar to Figure 19-C are also found in businesses other than food for other implicit uses.

Figure 20-A. *Unico* ‘Unique’, an interiors store.



Figure 20-B. *la vista* ‘The View’, a beauty salon for women.



Both Figure 20-A and -B do not contain any kind of iconographic elements which make the readers understand that each script is Italian. In other words, there is no clue for



relating these shops to Italy, and hence, to the positive image that Italy or Italian evokes. Why, then, do Japanese owners decide to use Italian names? A possible hypothesis is that, in contrast to what Haarmann (1985, 1986, 1989) states about the existence of an “impersonal multilingualism<sup>54</sup>”, some Japanese business owners do attach some meaning to the names.

By proposing this hypothesis, I do not mean that every multilingual name in Japan conveys some meaning. However, the view of the previous studies—that the function of foreign language on the signs in the public domain is merely symbolic—is too simplistic to capture the factual reality. In fact, there is a trade-off relation between the clarity of iconographic elements and the meaning that a language conveys (“Meaning value”). This relation is illustrated in Figure 21.

Figure 21. Relation between iconographic elements and value of language.

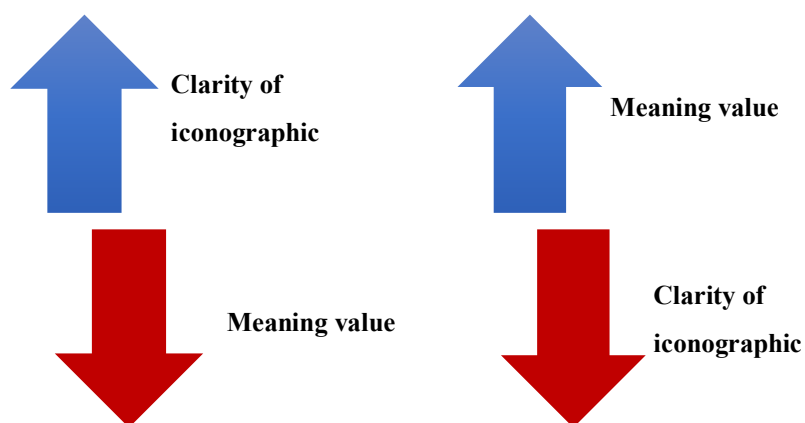


Figure 21 shows that the more informative the iconographic elements are, the less

---

<sup>54</sup> The phenomenon for which the use of English, or other foreign languages, in Japan does not reflect the everyday language use of the Japanese. Haarmann used this expression in relation to Japanese mass media.

important the meaning value in terms of literal meanings the name has, and vice versa. When an iconographic element is sufficiently informative, the language on a sign is more likely to be used in the symbolic way. When an iconographic element is less informative or absent, the language itself is meant to convey meaning. In this last case, if the sign is intended to convey some sort of meaning, it is obvious that it must be correct, otherwise it inevitably fails to make sense. Such a degree, which the relation between languages and images undergoes, does indeed exist and should be expressed in terms of “clarity”, meaning how iconographic elements influence the criteria for judging a foreign language script as either a symbol or a kind of message.

To verify if the names without iconographic elements truly intend to convey meanings (in this case, they must be grammatically or lexico-semantically correct), I examine the interviews of Japanese owners in order to determine their intentions in using Italian.

### ***3.4 What is Hidden Behind a Name: Reasons for the Choice of Italian***

As is hypothesized in the previous section, when iconographic elements are not informative or are absent, the script on a sign conveys or may intend to convey some sort of meaning. This meaning does not relate to the “linguistic meaning” which can be found in official signs and is meant to convey precise information (e.g., how to reach a station, the fare of a bus or a train route, instructions in case of emergency, etc.), but rather to the intention to communicate something by the use of specific words or expressions, which represent, for instance, images or feelings concerning a foreign language, embraced by the producer/s of the signs. Henceforth, we will refer to such meaning as “suggestive”, in the sense that the name is indeed meant to convey an imaginary message which connects

the commercial activity to its attributes. This way of naming adopted by Japanese owners can be compared to the more developed “brand naming”, where firms put a deep effort, energy and time into creating brand names for their products (Kohli and LaBahn, 1997).

The direct approach to verify the intention of conveying is to pose questions to the creators of the signs. To this end, I interviewed the ones who gave their assent to the survey. The interviews<sup>55</sup> were conducted between March and April 2019 in Kyoto. The interviewees were Japanese owners (3 from the food business (O1 to O3), 2 from the shop business (O4 and O5)) who used Italian to present their businesses to the public but did not use any iconographic element. The topics of the questions are the following: 1. the reason why they chose Italian for the sign; 2. the criteria according to which the name was chosen; and 3. whether they are aware of errors, mistakes, or strangeness that Italian native speakers feel (when observing the sign). Analyses of their responses will reveal their intentions in using Italian for the signs (original Japanese text with English translation below).

Question 1: なぜ自分の店にイタリア語の店名をつけようと思ったか？

*(Why did you choose to use Italian for your business?)*

O1 イタリア語のジェラート屋さんなので.

*(Because it is a gelato ice-cream parlor.)*

O2 イタリア料理の店だからイタリア語をつけた.

---

<sup>55</sup> Each interview was conducted by previous appointment. The audio of the interviews was recorded and each participant signed a consent form. The parts of the answers which directly cite names are reported with “xx” for the privacy of the participants.

*(I used Italian because it is an Italian restaurant.)*

O3 イタリアの Tavola Calda<sup>56</sup>だよ、というの言いたかったから、〇〇にした。

*(I wanted to say that it is like an Italian “tavola calda”, so I chose “xx”).*

O4 うちの仕事は採寸して職人の手によって作られて、手によってお客さんにお渡しできて、やっぱり人と人との絆を繋いでいけるような会社にしようと思いを込めています。[...]自分たちのコンセプトを表している店名だと思う。

*(Our work consists in measurements and the hand work of artisans. The final product is also handed over to the customer, fostering a relationship with him/her. (By using Italian) we wanted to express our company’s concept.)*

O5 この仕事は一对一で信頼関係で成り立っている仕事なので、うちの店のスタイルはネットで売っていない、アナログで口コミのみで信頼のある客と信頼していただく客に紹介してもらおう、完全紹介制度。なので信頼を根本的に大事にしたいから、それをイタリア語で日本人の人々に聞いてもらえるように。

*(This work is based on the trust between the tailor and the customer, and I am not doing online business: It is completely based on introductions from the customers who rely on me. So, I wanted to build this trust, the most important aspect of my work, and by writing the shop name in Italian I give the customers the chance to ask me the meaning of the name.)*

The answers of owners O1 and O2 show how directly the Italian name derived from the relation between the image of a country and the type of commerce (Italian food = Italian name): this seems to confirm the explicit aspect of the use of languages.

---

<sup>56</sup> A little snack bar where hot and cold meals are served rapidly. In general, the menu consists of sandwiches, fried foods, and small pizzas.

However, as the other answers demonstrate, some owners indeed intend to convey linguistic meanings by their naming, even when a business is not strictly related to the image of Italian or Italy (implicit use). In the cases of O4 and O5 in particular, they evidently wish to communicate the concept of their business by choosing Italian words. In such situations, the use of Italian is definitely not symbolic as O5 affirms: there is a clear wish to be understood by the customers (Japanese).

Question 2: どのような基準でイタリア語を使ったのか？

*(What is the criterion at the basis of your naming choice?)*

O1 ローマの友達 (のアドバイス) .

*(Our Roman friend suggested it to us.)*

O2 (自分の妻の) 苗字に由来があって.

*(I took it from my wife's name.)*

O3 Tavola Calda だよ、というの言いたかったから.

*(I wanted to say "tavola calda".)*

O4 名付け親は税理士.

*(Our tax accountant decided it for us.)*

O5 「〇〇」を調べた時にイタリア語で「〇〇」出てきた.

*(When I searched for Japanese "xx" in Italian, "yy" came out.)*

Except for O4, each owner has put his or her personal meaning into the name. As can be seen, a suggestion, a translation of a proper name, an appeal, or simple dictionary research are the strategies adopted by the owners; there is no apparent trace of any linguistic

criteria for the production of the names. In this sense, the intention to convey linguistic meanings can be confirmed, but the methods of producing Italian names are arbitrary and do not follow the standard criterion or the frequent patterns used in Italy that were discussed in Chapter 2. O1 is the only case where a native speaker's opinion was respected/adopted.

Question 3: 母語話者視点では奇妙なイタリア語の看板がたくさんあるが、それらに関して意識はあるか？

*(Italian native speakers in Japan, from their point of view, can see many strange or wrong Italian names. Are you conscious of this?)*

O1 あまり考えない.

*(I don't think about it too much.)*

O2 特にどうも思わないです.

*(I have no particular thoughts about it.)*

O3 造語？自分が考えた、イタリア語じゃないけど、イタリア語っぽくしましたよ、みたいなお店だったら、もう語感？口に出してよかったらそれはそれで良いと思うけど.

*(I think that it is fine if it is a name based on the sound of words, like an Italian-sounding name, which is not necessarily real Italian.)*

O4 日本人は綺麗な響きを重視し、外国人にはわからないかも。意味は考えていない.

*(I think that Japanese people give more importance to the sound, maybe foreigners don't understand this. They don't think of the meaning.)*

O5 意識ないけど、イタリア語の店見た時になんか意味があってつけているなど思う。間違っているか間違っていないか気にしていない。

*(I am not conscious of it, but when I see Italian names in shops I think that the owners used them with a meaning. It is not important for them if it is right or wrong.)*

In general, the attitude towards the correctness of language seems clear: Japanese owners do not pay attention to whether they are writing or using Italian language correctly. Despite this aspect (excepting the case of O4, whose reply seems to contradict the one given to Question 2 about the meaning used to express their own business concept), what is affirmed by O5 is that Italian is used with a precise meaning, regardless of correctness not being considered.

When the interviewer pointed out that many strange or wrong signs are seen, the business owners nevertheless responded as follows.

O1 ちゃんとした正しい言葉、誰かに聞いたりとか、イタリア人の知り合いにとかすべきだと思う [...] 恥ずかしいよね、どうせやるならちゃんと完璧にした方が良い。

*(I think it would be better to use right words by asking someone, such as an Italian friend. It is embarrassing, if one decided to use it so it must be done properly.)*

O2 僕は外国行って変な日本語あればすごく違和感ありますね。

*(If I went to other countries and saw strange Japanese signs, I would feel dazed.)*

O3 わかる人は見るとちょっとウケるとか、やめた方が良くいなど。

*(If someone who understands the language saw them it might be hilarious. It is better to correct them.)*

O4 今はすぐネットで調べられるから、やっぱり残念な意味を付けてしまうともっと調べておけば良かったと思う。

*(Today, when it can be easily searched on the Internet, it would be better to write correctly before regretting the choice of a strange meaning.)*

O5 理由はなくて間違っている店を変えた方が良い。

*(If they are writing wrong signs without a reason, it would be better to change them.)*

As suggested by the answers, errors are not well accepted by Japanese owners: strange or wrong signs are seen as a source of embarrassment and/or hilarity, and cannot be justified nowadays because it is easy to directly consult a native speaker or seek advice on the Internet. The answers to Question 3 are contradictory in total; a portion of Japanese owners do not care about linguistic correctness on one hand, and on the other they firmly wish for a more correct realization of foreign language signs.

This is the result of only five owners who agreed to the interviews. Although this cannot be statistically significant, it nevertheless provides a useful hint. In fact, the possibility that foreign language signs also convey linguistic meaning does indeed exist and should be investigated further. This qualitative approach to the linguistic landscape was revealed to be very effective for discovering the reasons behind the choice of languages and the ways Japanese use them. However, it also has the demerit of sometimes being difficult to carry out: it was not easy to find people willing to collaborate, particularly in Japan, where the personal referral custom tends to exclude strangers instead of introducing people to each other, which prevents researchers from finding potential informants.



### ***3.5 Conclusion***

In this chapter, I tried to discover the reasons for the presence of strange or wrong signs in the Japanese linguistic landscape, and started from a partial critique of the previous studies, which stated that multilingual signs in Japan's shops' names (public domain) were merely symbolic.

First, I pointed out the relations between the image of a country and the commercial content of an enterprise that uses foreign languages for public signs. These relations were expressed in terms of their explicitness or implicitness: when the relations between the image of the country and the commercial content are clear (Italian restaurant = Italian language) then it is explicit; on the contrary, when it is not clear (hairdresser :: Italian language) then it is implicit.

Next, I verified the existing relation between a language and the symbolic values it evokes for Japanese society, as pointed out by previous studies. In light of this symbolic value, this chapter analyzed the example of the Italian language, verifying that these uses of Italian are determined by the relation between a certain business and the positive image that Italian evokes in Japanese society.

However, to demonstrate that a part of the signs is not merely symbolic, I showed the relation between the presence of iconographic elements and the higher or lower degree of linguistic value: one cannot relate to the positive values of a language if it is not clear what language it is. The presence of a national flag or other visible elements helps the reader of the sign to identify a language and relate to the positive values evoked by it. On the contrary, if such elements are absent, or unclear, then there is the possibility that the owner is indeed also trying to convey a sort of meaning, named "suggestive", in the sign.

This observation sustains the hypothesis of the existence of signs which do convey meaning instead of merely being symbolic: the higher the presence of such iconographic elements is, the lower might be the linguistic value conveyed, and vice versa.

Finally, the results of the interviews revealed why and how a foreign language is chosen for a business name in Japan (in this case Italian). Given the motivation and intention of the owners to communicate a message, the simplistic vision proposed by previous studies is not completely valid. On the other hand, despite their intention to convey meanings, it is also revealed that owners do not pay sufficient attention to linguistic correctness. This contradiction should be considered as a source of syntactic and lexicosemantic strange/wrong signs, which may be dishonorable for the national image of Japan.

The next chapter deals with the final point: the image of Japan seen by foreigners who find multilingual signage incorrect or strange and do not seem to understand owners' intentions.

#### *4 Japan's Linguistic Landscape from Non-Japanese Viewpoints*

Chapter 3 showed both the symbolic use of foreign languages and the actual intention of a few Japanese owners to infuse linguistic meanings into the names of their businesses, though these names are incorrectly formed. The contradictory attitude toward linguistic incorrectness and the message infused into the names on signage characterize the Japanese multilingual environment, and involve the linguistic intuitions of non-Japanese speakers, who are also part of Japan's society, that find incorrectness, strangeness and other problems in the multilingual signage. This aspect, namely the evaluation by non-Japanese, is actually underestimated, and the psychological gap between Japanese and non-Japanese speakers seems to be a critical obstacle to the achievement of the successful multilingual environment that Japan is aiming for, because most non-Japanese do not know the Japanese ways of symbolically using languages and their lack of attention to linguistic correctness of the signs. The increasing number of foreigners brings into the open the problems of the Japanese linguistic landscape.

This chapter aims to understand opinions of the non-Japanese about Japanese multilingual signage, and to show the conflict between the intentions of Japanese and the understandings of non-Japanese. Although the data are limited, this chapter reports the actual opinions of foreign residents and international tourists on the multilingual signage in Japan, which, at the same time, illuminate different attitudes towards this multilingual signage among people from different continents. Simply put, while people from Asia (mostly East Asia) judged mainly positively multilingual signage of Japan, people from Europe, America and Australia appeared not fully satisfied with such signage. This dissatisfaction highlights the fact that an important part of Japanese multilingual signage

might not be successfully developed, which leads to many negative feedbacks about its visible multilingualism.

#### ***4.1 Backgrounds and Brief Theoretical Preliminaries***

In this section, I briefly explain why the feedback of visitors is important for evaluating the multilingualism of a country. Then I point out how the problem of wrong signage in Japan has been not sufficiently dealt with by previous academic studies and by official surveys.

As explained in the previous chapters<sup>57</sup>, most of the categorization of the multilingual signage examines signs produced by the host society (i.e., Japan) from a private (commercial businesses) and a public (transport facilities or administration) (Shoji, 2009). This study, however, as I have observed in Introduction, follows Fishman's categorization (Fishman, 1965; 1972): official signs (transport facilities or administration), public signs (commercial businesses and other not controlled signage), and private signs (proper of the privacy of citizens, thus mainly not visible). Following this categorization, it seems legit to consider as target of analysis the ones from the official and the public domains. As already said in Introduction, it must be pointed out that the two domains of signs have different scopes: official ones are meant to precisely convey linguistic meanings (e.g., indications, prohibitions, alerts, fares, etc.); public ones are mainly used for symbolic purposes, although as shown in the previous chapter, there might be the possibility that a part of them goes beyond the "mere" symbolic functions in terms of suggestive meanings

---

<sup>57</sup> See Introduction and Chapter 1.

(see Section 3.4 of this study). Given the assumption that many of these signs are a kind of “linguistic service” (see Kawahara 2004; Fujii 2005) produced by the host community in most cases, they are to be evaluated also by visitors, who are also a part of Japanese society (referring to immigrants). As Shohamy and Gorter (2009: 3) state, it is this approach to the public spaces that provides information about multilingualism in a country.

On the issues of linguistic incorrectness - in particular from the public domain - a fully developed scientific literature does not exist thus far. Previous studies focus mainly on official signs (Backhaus, 2007, 2009; Honda, Iwata and Kurabayashi, 2017; Satojima *et al.*, 2009), and the public ones, including also symbolic uses of foreign language, have not been deeply analyzed yet. Apart from the numerous articles of online journals and other web pages that aim in most cases at a mere mocking of the “wrong” signs seen in Japan, as well as in other Asian countries, previous researches did not focus on this issue. The only attempt describing strange signage and discussing it can be found in Honda, Iwata and Kurabayashi (2017: 11-28). Iwata, in particular, presents wrong English signage from the official domain and analyzes the linguistic problematics involved in it. He arrives at the conclusion that there is still an overwhelming quantity of wrong signage and that, to avoid errors and permit a wider understanding of the linguistic content, an attempt must be made to use the simplest and straightest expressions as possible, as in the following example:

*(Signage found in Kyoto concerning littering)*

Original content: “In the Beautification Enforcement Areas you will be fined up to ¥30,000 for littering regardless of your nationality or status”

Iwata's suggestion: "Do not litter. Violators will be fined up to ¥30,000" (ibid.: 14-15)

In other studies, Backhaus (2007: 116-121) briefly mentions that the problem constitutes an integral part of the signs and that errors should not be ignored when collecting data. Barrs (2015) recognizes signs with wrong English in Japan as a potential threat to the international image of Japan and asks for proofreading before signs go on display. Moreover, Hyde (2002) is more critical of these linguistic "errors" because they may indicate the educational levels of Japan and create a poor reputation for the country in international society. On this particular topic, it is possible to consult the results of a few surveys<sup>58</sup> published by Japanese authorities in which linguistic aspects of signs are almost ignored and excluded from the "items to improve".

The positions of previous researchers and the aforementioned "mockery" sites suggest that non-Japanese have critical attitudes toward Japan's multilingual signage, but a study that analyzes in detail the point of view of non-Japanese is still absent. Without such a study, it is not possible to objectively evaluate the multilingualism of Japan.

#### ***4.2 Methodology of the Survey***

As these times of pandemic alert have led Japan to block its boundaries, it was impossible to conduct road interviews to tourists. At the same time, considered the infection danger that a road interview might expose the participants to, I concluded that the most effective way to safely collect data was to conduct the research online. Opinions were collected during March and April 2020, using the platform *Google Forms*.

---

<sup>58</sup> For more references, see Introduction of this dissertation.

The target of the questionnaire were non-Japanese native speakers, either residents or with at least one touristic experience in Japan. They were specifically chosen because it was necessary the evaluations of someone who has, or had, an experience of Japanese multilingual signage. The survey asked for their opinions concerning both *official* and *public* signs in order to gather as much information as possible over Japan's multilingualism and to verify if a difference perception in such terms exists.

As there were no direct interactions with the participants, it was necessary to structure the questions in the most direct and unambiguous way. The survey was subdivided into two main blocks, the evaluation part and the open questions one, added to the information concerning personal information. The questions were submitted to the participants structured as follows.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Country
- Resident or tourist
- Evaluation of signs section:

### **EVALUATION PART**

A) Evaluate the following aspects of OFFICIAL SIGNS (touristic information, signs at bus stops or stations, prohibition signs, etc.)

- Linguistic correctness (if the language is grammatically correct)
- Information quality (if the information is easily understandable)
- Impression (if they are easily visible)

B) Evaluate the following aspects of PUBLIC SIGNS (hotels, shops, restaurants' names, menus, product names, etc.)

- Linguistic correctness (if the language is grammatically correct)
- Information quality (if their meaning is easily understandable)

-Impression (if they remind you of the atmosphere of a certain foreign country)

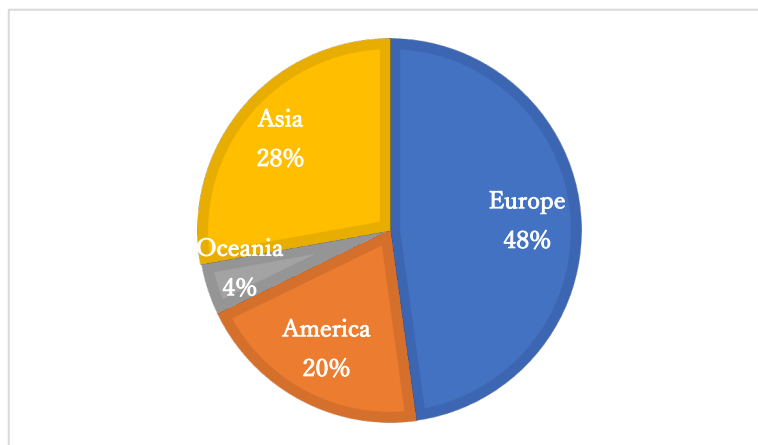
### **OPEN QUESTIONS PART**

- 1) What do you think about the huge number of signs and posters that can be seen in Japan?
- 2) What do you think about the use of foreign languages in many of the names of shops, restaurants and facilities?
- 3) Do you think some aspects of those signs might be refined? If yes, explain briefly why.

### ***4.3 Results***

In total, it was possible to collect 115 online respondents to the questionnaire, 65 being residents, 50 being tourists or former residents (not living in Japan at the time of the survey). They were categorized based on their country in order to observe possibly different tendencies of evaluation.

Figure 22. *Geographical division of the participants.*



In Figure 22 I show the geographical division of the participants. Almost half of them (48%, n= 55) are from European countries such as France, Italy, UK or Spain; 28% (n=



32) are from Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore or Turkey; the next 20% (n= 23) of them are from the American continent which includes the United States, Canada, Mexico or Ecuador; only 5 participants (4% of the total) are from Oceania, i.e. Australia and New Zealand. There were no African participants.

Table 5. *Averages of the evaluation part.*

CONTINENT	OFFICIAL SIGNS				PUBLIC SIGNS				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	TOTAL	Q1	Q2	Q3	TOTAL	
EUROPE	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.5	2.7	3.1	2.9	2.9	3.2
ASIA	4.1	3.7	3.6	3.8	4	3.8	4	3.9	3.9
AMERICA	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.1	3.4	2.6	3	3.4
OCEANIA	3	3.6	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.2
TOTAL	3.5	3.7	3.6		3.2	3.4	3.2		

Table 5 represents the averages categorized per question (Q1, Q2, Q3) for both official and unofficial signs. As already said earlier, due to the COVID-19 emergency it was not possible to perform face-to-face interviews. As a consequence, the answers obtained for this study do not reach a statistically satisfactory quantity. The predominant national origins of informants are European countries (Italy above all), thus it is also difficult to firmly ascertain to what extent they represent the reality. This is why the general results are considered as implying only a possible and partial representativeness of the reality.

Europeans tend to evaluate official signs mainly as ‘moderately correct’, with values around 3.3 and 3.6. In particular, they seem to appreciate the information on official signs that are understandable for the most part. People from the Asian continent seem to evaluate the linguistic correctness of official signs as ‘mainly correct’ with a score slightly

over 4. The other two questions (Q2 and Q3) surpass the value of 3 (3.7 and 3.6). Evaluations by people from the American continent exceed those made by Europeans but do not reach the value of 4: The easy visibility of signs (“impression” in the questionnaire) is the aspect that reached the highest score (Q3: 3.8). The evaluation’s tendencies of people from Oceania resemble the ones of the Europeans, where the average (TOTAL: 3.3) indicates moderately correct signs.

With regard to the public signs, the overall result varies from region to region. The evaluation by Europeans becomes harsher and the scores decrease: Compared to the evaluations of official signs, the score decreases to 2.7 (‘slightly bad’) for correctness (-0.6), to 3.1 for quality (-0.5), and to 2.9 for the impression (-0.6). On the contrary, for people from some of the Asian countries, apart from a slight decrease (-0.1) in the score for correctness, the other two objects of evaluation show an increase in the average score: The score increases to 3.8 (+0.1) for the quality; more significantly, the score increases to 4 (+0.4) for the impression. With regard to both correctness and impression, signs are judged as mainly ‘correct/good.’ People from the American continent evaluate in the same as Europeans: A general decrease for the first two questions (-0.4 and -0.3), and a drastic decrease of -1.2 for the impression, as most respondents from this region appear to judge as ‘slightly bad’ the Japanese producers’ attempts to recreate a *non-Japanese* atmosphere. A similar tendency can also be seen in the scores for Oceania: the linguistic correctness of unofficial signs decreases to 2.8 (-0.2), the quality to 3.2 (-0.4) and the impression to 3.2 (-0.2).

Table 5 illustrates the general averages, as well as the ones for each question and each continent. While for the official signs the evaluations seem to be quite homogeneous (the lowest score is Oceania’s 3.3, the highest Asia’s 3.8), the public signs deviate from this

homogeneity: The total scores for Europe, America and Oceania clearly decrease (respectively -0.6, -0.7, -0.2); for Asia, on the contrary, the average slightly increases (+0.1). Still, in the context of public signs, it is interesting to notice the difference of 1 point between the total of Europe and the total of Asia (2.9 and 3.9 respectively). America and Oceania are not statistically far from Europe (3 and 3.1).

#### ***4.4 Discussion of Official Signs***

As a general evaluation, the score 4 stands out with 46 votes (40%), which means that a number of non-Japanese have a good impression of the *linguistic correctness* of the official signs. However, a different regional tendency is observed: the great majority of Asian people chose the highest two scores (29 votes, or 88% of the total), while the responses of the remaining participants from Europe, America and Oceania are concentrated on the scores 4 (37%) and 3 (35%). Moreover, the lower scores (1 and 2), which were voted mainly by Europeans, should not be ignored: Among them, the majority of the participants were from Italy and France, thus it might be possible that at their eyes official signs written in their language do not always reach the target. People from Oceania also showed a relatively low degree of satisfaction (3) with the linguistic correctness of official signs.

A linguistic difference between European languages and East Asian languages may contribute to this different evaluation of linguistic correctness, arising from the participants' origins. For instance, as for transcription, languages using Latin characters may be more subject to mistypes or additional errors than languages using other characters, such as Chinese or Korean. This is due to the fact that, given the larger

presence of Chinese and Koreans both among visitors and inhabitants<sup>59</sup> of Japan, such signs are more easily checkable or producible by native speakers. This can be seen as a cause probably affecting their impressions of multilingual signage.

The *linguistic quality* of information question asks about the degree of comprehensibility and whether necessary information is sufficiently provided. The result is slightly better than the previous question. In particular, Oceania's results increased by 0.6 (3.6), and, on the contrary, for some reason which seems to be a partial countersense to the previous responses, the evaluation of Asians decreased by 0.4 (from 4.1 to 3.7). In general, while for the 62% responses of 4 or 5 points were predominant, a slight difference according to the groups was confirmed again in the negative scores. Although representing the minority, 39% of people from Europe, America and Oceania voted for 2 and 3. This data is particularly significant because it suggests that Japanese official signs are not sufficiently informative for about 40% of the participants, most of whom cannot read Japanese. In a similar way, for people from Asia as well, the highest two scores represent the majority of the participants, which proves general satisfaction and no particular indication of any kind of problems for the linguistic quality of multilingual signs. However, almost 33% of them (among them 5 out of 12 were participants from Turkey) gave negative evaluations, so the two groups do not clearly differ in negative opinions.

For the visual aspects - *impression* - of official signs, a general satisfaction is

---

<sup>59</sup> According to the Japan National Tourism Agency (JNTO) 70% of the total visitors come from Asian countries. Among them, Chinese visitors were at the top with more than 9 million visitors (Korean visitors diminished drastically after the rise in political tensions between Korea and Japan in 2019). According to the Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan (e-Stat), by the end of 2019 almost 3 million inhabitants were from Asian countries. Among them Chinese were more than 800,000, followed by Koreans, almost 450,000.

confirmed. In this case it was people from America who expressed the highest opinion (3.8 of average). The low scores (1 and 2) of people from the Asian countries are voted by Singaporean tourists who probably have a higher English knowledge than other Asians due to the multilingual circumstances in Singapore (see Tajima, [2007]: 135).

#### ***4.5 Discussion of Public Signs***

The evaluation of the *linguistic correctness* in the public domain differs significantly from that in the official domain. Although the majority of the participants voted for the score 3 (47 votes, 41% in total), negative evaluations with the lowest two scores (33 votes, 29% in total) are almost exclusive of people from Europe, America and Oceania, while the highest voting rate for the score 5 belongs to the people from Asia.

The average score of Europeans is 2.7, which suggests a negative evaluation in total. In other words, they certainly recognize linguistically strange or wrong signs. It is true that such signs target Japanese people in most cases (Hyde 2002), but they are inevitably visible to non-Japanese people as well. They are perceived and negatively evaluated by many of the non-Japanese, in particular by people from non-Asian countries: apart from the lowest scores which belong to the European group, in fact, people from the Oceanian continent also judge such public signs as 'slightly incorrect' (average of 2.8); Americans are right above the medium score of 3 with 3.1. These results may suggest that many Japanese do not still put enough effort on the linguistic correctness of their signs, thus giving the impression of Japan as a partially not well-developed multilingual country.

The responses to the second question of *quality* pertain to the level of understanding of shops' posters, notices, or menus. Even though only the European show a partially

significant decrease in their evaluations (-0.5) compared to the official signs, a general disagreement is still existing (19 votes for the scores 1 and 2, or 23%), and the positive scores (4 and 5) are predominant (30 votes, or 36%). This is mainly true for people from Europe and Oceania. Among the Asian responses, the positive scores reach 66% (22 votes), which indicates a general satisfaction with how informative Japanese public signs are.

The last question “*impression* of public signs” asks if the foreign languages on the signs evoke the atmosphere of a certain foreign country. It turned out that this aspect seems to be effective for people from Asia: the average score increases, in relation to the same aspect of official signs (+0.4), with almost no negative scores and more than 60% of responses included within the two highest scores. On the contrary, when analyzed in block the scores of people from Europe, America and Oceania, the percentage of the high scores (25 votes, 30%) is almost equal to that of the low scores (23 votes, 28%). In particular, the average values of Europe and America decreased the most (-0.6 and -0.7, respectively). This difference between Asian and non-Asian people suggests that the multilingual signs probably do not fully achieve their goal to evoke foreign atmosphere or coolness in the eyes of non-Asian people.

In conclusion, it can be said that people from Europe, America and Oceania tend to attribute harsher evaluations to public signs, and, for a portion of them, these impressions of multilingual signs might lower the evaluation of Japan itself as a multilingual society. The different evaluation between Asian and non-Asian people also suggests that a similar language use with symbolic values can be found in other Asian countries such as China<sup>60</sup>,

---

<sup>60</sup> For references on *Chinglish* or wrong signage in Eastern Asia: Carducci (2002); Radtke (2007); Wey and Fei (2003); Zhang (2016); Zhang and Zu (2015).

and this difference might play an important role when judging the linguistic landscape of Japan.

#### *4.6 Analysis of the Open Questions*

For the open question part of the questionnaire, I analyzed the written answers and extrapolated from each question the opinions of the non-Japanese. For this analysis, I used the online text-mining tool “Voyant” (see Figure 23 below). Voyant generates a “cirrus network” of words frequently appearing in the answers, which I inputted verbatim. The bigger the word physically appears in the cirrus network, the higher is its relevance. When inputting the answers, I provided for the omission of “stop words”, a set of words regularly used in any language that might disturb and invalidate the result and/or be uninformative. For English, this is the case with articles like ‘the’, ‘a’, prepositions, pronouns, etc.<sup>61</sup> The results are first shown from a general point of view, and then for further analysis a selected portion of the actual answers is also implemented from the data.

---

<sup>61</sup> Here can be found a list of English “stop words”:  
<https://github.com/igorbrigadir/stopwords/blob/master/en/terrier.txt>

Figure 23. Opinions on the huge number of signs and posters that can be seen in Japan.

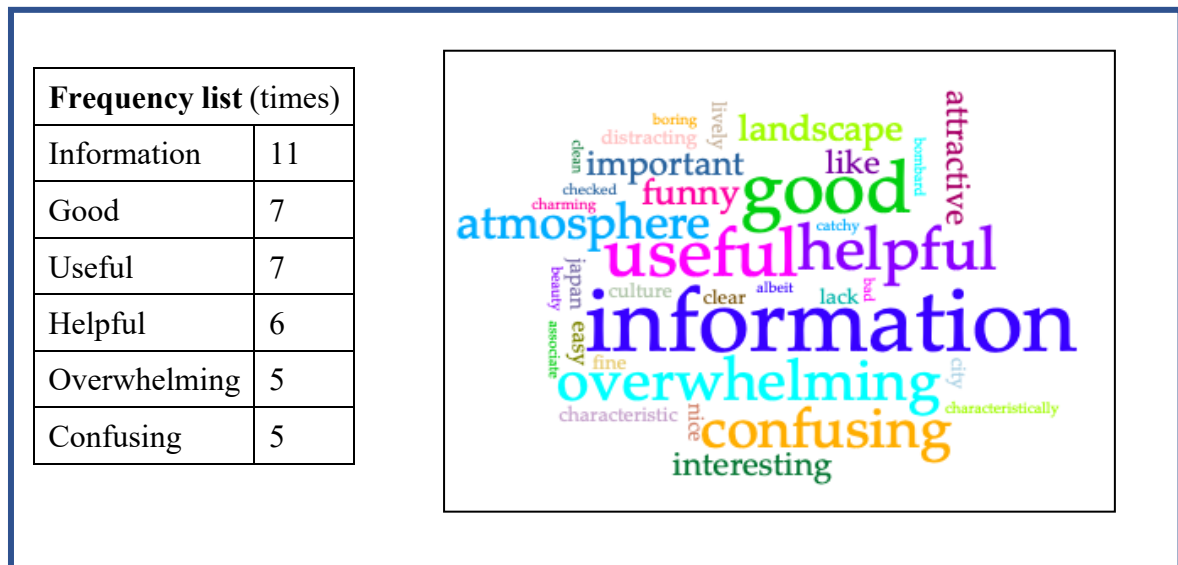


Figure 23 shows that the non-Japanese paid the most attention to the *information* (word used 11 times). This result can be interpreted as a positive evaluation for the informativeness of the official signs in the same ways as the evaluation section. This positive evaluation is also confirmed by other eye-catching words in the cirrus such as *good* (7 times), *useful* (7 times), and *helpful* (6 times). On the other hand, it is also possible to note words like *overwhelming*, *confusing* (5 times each). In sum, the abundance of multilingual signs in the urban space of Japan is concurrently considered useful, helpful, overwhelming and confusing.

It must be noticed, however, that the *overwhelming* aspect of the linguistic landscape stands in a particular position. Although the number of signs is recognized as relatively abundant, this fact is not necessarily interpreted in a negative way: the cirrus also contains *atmosphere*, *attractive*, or *charming* that are all positive words (mainly for people from Europe, America and Oceania, who are not often exposed in their own countries to an overwhelming linguistic landscape as, for example, people from Eastern Asia are) and,



as many of the answers testify, it is also this overwhelming aspect that characterizes the Japanese linguistic landscape. With words like the following, the foreigners evaluate Japan itself in a positive way:

*A1: Too much, but that's also a characteristic of this Country.*

*A2: For someone who is not used to, sometimes they are too many, and you end up not finding the information you were looking for because there is too much of everything.*

*A3: I actually like it, especially at night. It creates a nice atmosphere.*

*A4: I think it is part of their culture and of their landscapes. I can't think of Japan without those signs.*

Most of the negative comments for this topic concern the confusing aspect of signs, derived from the impression of being exaggeratedly numerous, and the linguistic incorrectness, thus implying wrong messages which do not contribute to a positive judgment of Japan's visible multilingualism. Although still representing a minority of the comments, non-Japanese (most of them from European country as Italy, France and Sweden) point out the necessity of a native proofreading process in order to avoid *funny* or *silly* mistakes, before producing multilingual signs.

*A5: They want to make something cool, but it only looks pretty silly in the end.*

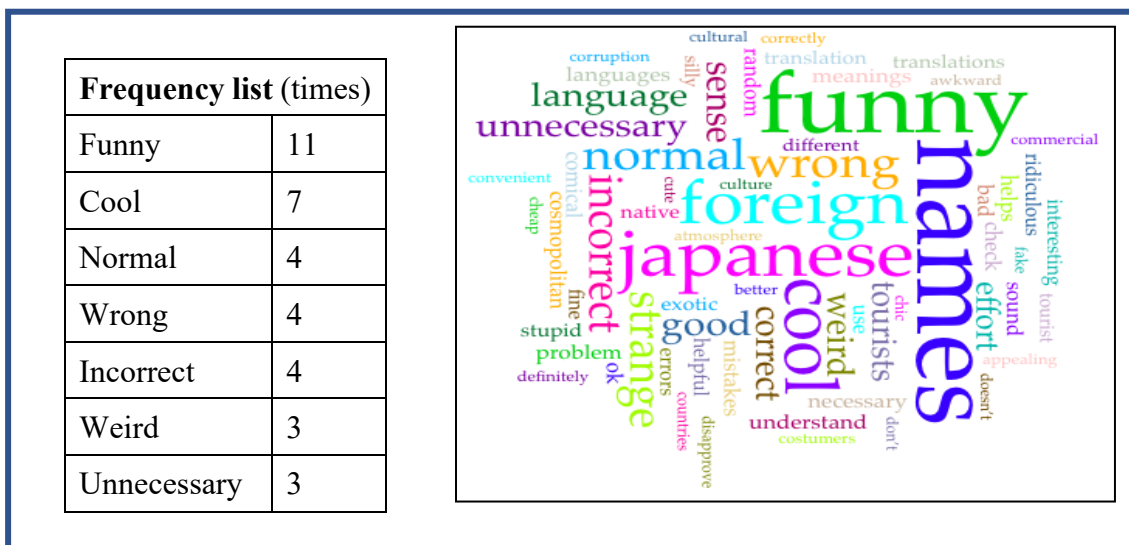
*A6: They need to be proofread by native speakers before they are printed and published.*

*A7: Mostly helpful although often grammatically incorrect.*

The second question was: 'what do you think about the use of foreign languages in many

of the names of shops, restaurants, and facilities?’, Figure 24 summarizes the results in the same ways as Figure 23, using the text-mining tool.

Figure 24. Opinions about the use of foreign languages in names of shops, restaurants and facilities.



Differently from the answers to the first question, the results were harsh for the use of foreign languages in the unofficial domain. Here we exclude the obvious frequency of words such as *names*, *Japanese* and *foreign*, which stand out in the cirrus due to their close relation to the question. Though positive words such as *cool* (7 times), *normal* (4 times), are found among East Asians’ opinions, negative words such as *funny* (11 times), *wrong* (4 times), *incorrect* (4 times), *weird* (3 times) and *unnecessary* (3 times) are also conspicuous. Thus, it can be thought the vast usage of foreign words for naming private businesses is not successfully accepted, mainly by European people, and fails to achieve the goal of making an international impression on the linguistic landscape of Japan. Most of such names are considered grammatically wrong, cheap (due to the lack of a native-

check), funny, or even silly.

Many non-Japanese speakers appealed for a more authentically *Japanese-looking* landscape and the reduction of foreign names: names in foreign languages are excessive and unnecessary for them. Given these opinions, it is more appropriate to fault the overwhelming presence of foreign languages themselves, rather than to reduce errors, which are inevitable in a sense.

*A8: I think that in Japan, as in other countries, the use of foreign languages in signs gives a sense of exotic and appealing. But they are not always grammatically or lexically correct.*

*A9: Sometimes they use in a very weird way, without knowing the meaning and it's look so stupid...*

*A10: I find it to be ok, but as a tourist I still may prefer to see Japanese names, maybe written in romaji sometimes. I think, as an average tourist, that could make me feel more comfortable in reading the name and remember it, other than feel part of the place and slowly diving into Japanese culture.*

*A11: Strange sensation. I often wonder why Japanese isn't used very much.*

*A12: 99% of the times the names they choose mean something different in the original language, and it is a silly/offensive naming in most of the cases.*

*A13: A little is ok but too much takes away from the Japan experience.*

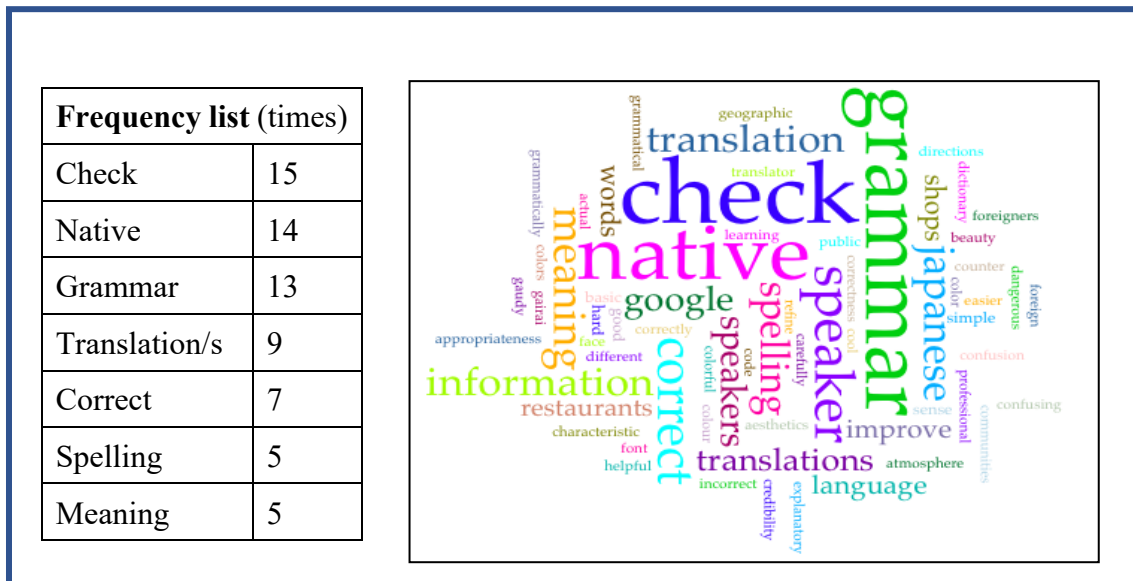
*A14: Too much and the beauty of Japanese is becoming diluted.*

*A15: It is definitely too much, redundant. Lack of Japanese atmosphere.*

The third question was 'do you think some aspects of those signs might be refined? If yes,

explain briefly why'. Figure 25 summarizes the opinions that emerged in the questionnaire.

Figure 25. Aspects of the signs that might be refined.



Although it cannot be verified from the figure extrapolated by the software Voyant, the answers to the last question can be divided into three categories: 1. *Need to be refined* (67%, 77 answers), 2. *Do not need to be refined* (27%, 31 answers), and 3. *No idea* (6%, 7 answers).

Among the 31 answers containing a positive opinion *Do not need to be refined*, almost the half of them (15) are those of Eastern cultures' people. This means that for 46% of the Eastern ones who answered the question, signs in Japan are either good enough or no problem, even though sometimes they are imprecise or wrong. Compared to the similar 16 opinions of people from the Westerner cultures (19% of the total), this result is particularly significant because it means that percentage of them who accept the present

situation is very low.

Figure 25 shows quite clearly the high-frequency of words relating to linguistic aspects such as *check* (15 times), *native* (14 times), and *grammar* (13 times), followed by *translation/s* (9 times), (not) *correct* (7 times), *spelling* (5 times), and *meaning* (5 times). They refer to the necessity of avoiding machine translation software instead of consulting native speakers, which may include grammar or spelling errors.

Among all the comments, it was in particular the evaluation of people from not anglophone countries in Europe, like Italy, Spain or France (who also represent the majority of the participants) who expressed the most negative comments and mainly requested for a more severe check of foreign language signs. This result might suggest that, while English signs in general do not cause harsh reaction to natives and the linguistic issues are fewer, for *minor* foreign languages (in the Japanese context) as Italian or French (understood by a very limited range of Japanese) the problems seem to be more salient.

*A16: Please don't use google translator.*

*A17: I don't think they should rely on translation software.*

*A18: No need to adopt a foreign language in your home country unless you have a clear marketing strategy, which, most often than not, is absent.*

*A19: Yes, now that the country is visited by more and more foreigners, could be better to invest more in right translations.*

*A20: Yes, because sometimes they use google translation directly it's really hard to understand.*

*A21: If the interpretation is bad, that can cause confusion. It's important knowing well*

*the meaning of what they will use for it.*

*A22: Yes. Just because it looks cool with English words it doesn't always mean what the sign or poster is supposed to mean.*

*A23: They end up just giving a "Japanese style" of foreign language use, so in the end, they are almost a counter-sense (because of their wrong use).*

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter's aim was to analyze the opinions of non-Japanese and make objective evaluations about the multilingual signage that can be seen in Japan at the official and public domain. Apart from a part of the previous literature dealing mostly with the official domain of multilingual signs (Backhaus, 2007, 2009; Honda, Iwata and Kurabayashi, 2017; Satojima *et al.*, 2009), this is an aspect that has been almost ignored, also by government surveys. Although the data collected were not fully satisfactory, the online survey of foreigners' opinions (115 informants) possibly revealed the actual degree of satisfaction/acceptance with the multilingual signage of Japan.

Through the evaluation part of the survey, a different evaluative attitude emerged towards multilingual signs when comparing the different continents. While for the official signage participants showed generally mostly positive opinions (apart from the aspect of *linguistic quality*, which earned more negative scores) and evidence a similar degree of satisfaction, the same cannot be said regarding public signs. In fact, a clearly different attitude appeared because people from Europe, America and Oceania often evaluated such signs negatively. This referred in particular to the presence of wrong or strange signs, which give the impression of being *cheap*, *funny* or even *silly*. It was in particular the evaluation of people from European, not anglophone countries like Italy (the majority of

the participants to this survey) or France who expressed the harshest comments/evaluations. This might suggest that, while for English signs linguistic issues are fewer, for *minor* foreign language (in the Japanese context) as Italian or French (understood by a very limited range of Japanese) the problems could be more salient. On the contrary, many people from Asian countries such as China, South Korea and Taiwan were generally satisfied with the public signs of the Japanese linguistic landscape. This tendency is probably due mainly to discrepancies at the basis of concepts of multilingual signage between the different cultures: people from Eastern Asia are more familiar with, and forgiving of, *overwhelming* multilingual signage as well as symbolic uses of foreign languages.

The open question part suggested concrete opinions of non-Japanese speakers. First it can be said that most of them do not consider the *overwhelming* presence of signage in Japan a problem, but it is rather considered as a positive characteristic of the country. However, some respondents also remarked that when the signage is too abundant it might cause confusion. In addition, linguistic incorrectness does not contribute to a positive judgment of Japan's multilingualism: many comments pointed out the necessity of a proofreading process by native speakers in order to avoid mistakes. Then, it was shown that the vast usage of foreign languages for public signs is not always successfully accepted by non-Japanese, who, in many cases, prefer a major presence of traditional scripts, supported by Romanized transcriptions or translations. The answers also evidenced harsh opinions like, *wrong*, *cheap*, *funny*, and *unnecessary*, which must not be ignored: while it is true that these foreign signs target Japanese people, if Japanese society wants to achieve a better multilingual linguistic landscape, the opinions collected by the present survey must not be neglected as they, although representing only a limited part of

the opinions, contribute to point out an existing problem. It can be said, then, that the persistence of strange or wrong signs contributes to the creation of a sociolinguistic gap between the intentions of Japanese producers and the foreigners who inevitably “judge” their multilingual visible outputs: non-Japanese often do not understand the intentions of Japanese to use multilingual signage or the strategies for such signage, and end up judging them as strange or wrong, with negative consequences to the image of Japan. The results of the present survey evidenced that Japanese multilingualism, when analyzed from the perspective of the linguistic landscape has achieved only partial success. The main cause of this lies in the still vast presence of strange or wrong signs: if their presence persists, the attempts of a part of Japanese society to appear more globalized and readier for internationalization are, in all probability, partly counterproductive.

To sum up, although it must be recognized again that it is not clear to what extent the data collected represent reality (most of the informants were people from Europe, and in particular from Italy), from the survey emerged the following possible solutions of the problem: 1. avoid machine translations and adopt systematic native proofreading, and 2. reduce the number of multilingual public signs and use more Japanese texts supported by Romanized transcriptions or translations. In the next chapter I will draw the final conclusions from the content of the dissertation.



## *5 Conclusion*

This dissertation's aim was to verify whether Japan is actually moving towards a successful multilingual environment through the analysis of the linguistic landscape. To judge multilingual signage as successful or not, we considered several parameters: linguistic correctness, visibility, information quantity and, in the case of signs from the public domain, their understanding and acceptance by foreigners. I argued that Japan is developing a multilingually-oriented society only to a partial degree: the high number of strange or wrong signs in the urban space prevents Japan from fully developing its visible multilingual environment because such signs are negatively judged by most foreigners visiting or residing in the country. Thus, a gap looms between the intentions of Japanese and the impressions of foreigners, mainly due to the linguistic incorrectness noticeable in signs, principally signs from the private domain of the linguistic landscape. As long as this gap persists, Japan will not be able to achieve its intention of becoming a more multilingually-oriented country.

The study's objective was achieved through a renewed approach to the study of the linguistic landscape of Japan, which considered both quantitative and qualitative surveys directly asking both Japanese and non-Japanese people for their opinions and their supporting reasons concerning the multilingual environment of Japan. In order to solve the main problem, it was necessary to proceed step by step and obtain answers to several questions.

Chapter 1 aims to verify how Japanese people's consciousness towards foreign languages is reflected in the linguistic landscape. I showed that when analyzing both multilingual signs and people's attitudes it was possible to demonstrate objectively the

degrees to which Japanese society is becoming internationally oriented. A commercial district Kyoto was chosen as a model to present part of the situation of Japan's linguistic landscape. The results indicated a high number of signs containing foreign languages in shop's names from the public domain. Quantitatively speaking, it was confirmed that an almost negligible difference exists between monolingual Japanese and multilingual signs (55% to 45%, respectively). This gave a proof of advancing multilingualism. In addition, a further survey showed how the linguistic landscape reflects very well the consciousness of Japanese people towards foreign languages: the higher a language's social status, the higher its presence is in the public space. Moreover, as the results show, it was interesting to note how the Japanese and English languages reflect almost equivalent attitudes among Japanese people. Compared to the results obtained by previous studies of more than thirty years ago, the results suggest that the social position of English has risen together with the multilingual consciousness of Japanese people. Both surveys in the present study evidenced in particular the importance of Italian: Italian is widely used at the visible level, and it enjoys a high degree of consciousness. This is why, in the chapter that followed, I decided to analyze Italian's linguistic issues.

In Chapter 2, I analyzed linguistic characteristics found in strange Italian signs in Japan and tried to define strangeness or wrongness in terms of linguistic criteria. Collecting Italian restaurants' names in Italy and Japan, syntactic and lexicosemantic differences were analyzed. The results revealed two major differences: one is a different syntactic pattern constructing noun phrases of proper nouns such as restaurants' names. In Japan, the frequent patterns in Italy were respected only to a certain degree, and rare or even ungrammatical structures were also found. The other difference is the lexical choice; in Japan, semantically strange words were used. These two differences are

considered to create strangeness or wrongness for Italian native speakers. Thus, syntactic and lexicosemantic characteristics constitute the main criteria that should be given importance when judging the correctness of signs. Also, in Chapter 2 I suggested dialectal signs as useful and up-to-date style of Italian restaurant names that can ameliorate Italian signs in Japan; Italian owners often use dialectal names in an approximate manner and sometimes do not strictly respect Italian grammar canons. Considering the importance given to the territorial linguistic variations in Japan (i.e., dialects), and the phenomenon of the so-called *hogen cosplay*, Japanese owners should consider it possible and desirable to emulate the recent Italian attitude toward dialects in order to overcome strict syntactic and lexicosemantic restrictions and obtain, at the same time, an “original” naming.

Then, it was necessary to discover why such linguistically incorrect signs persist in Japan’s linguistic landscape: this is the issue dealt with in Chapter 3. First, I identified a model representing explicit and implicit uses of foreign languages in the public domain. This classification was initially made by recognizing the existing relation between a certain commercial content and the image that the language used in the sign evokes in Japanese society. I showed how the high presence of Italian signs is explained by the positive image of Italy that has developed in Japan during the last several decades. This justifies the vast explicit use of Italian for businesses related to the image of Italy (i.e., Italian restaurants). However, implicit uses of a foreign language also occur (i.e. Italian for a hairdresser): in this case the relation between a given language and the commercial content of a business is ambiguous because the producer of the sign is not explicitly appealing to the positive image of the language. Thus, I demonstrated that a portion of private signs can be thought to convey another type of meaning, named “suggestive” meaning, which is meant to convey personal messages or business concepts. To recognize

such signs, I suggested determining the presence/absence of iconographic elements which directly relate to the meaning of signs: the lower the presence of such elements, the higher the possibilities are that a foreign language sign is not merely symbolic. To test this thesis, the qualitative interviews conducted among a few owners of restaurants using Italian names seemed to confirm that foreign language signs in Japan sometimes may convey other meanings, rather than mere symbolic ones. At the same time, however, the owners acknowledged that the attention paid towards the linguistic correctness of signage was very low. Given the fact that some signs are indeed meant to convey meanings, they need to be correct to fully achieve their goal.

Once the reasons for choosing foreign languages in the signs of the Japanese urban space were clear, Chapter 4 aimed to explore the impressions and opinions of non-Japanese concerning such signage. The survey consists of interviews with non-Japanese residents and tourists. The results revealed a general satisfaction with the rise of multilingual signage of Japan on one hand, and different social attitudes between people from different continents on the other: people from East Asian countries are more accustomed to “overwhelming” signs than people from Europe, America or Oceania are. Moreover, in particular Europeans and Oceanians, tended to be more critical and mostly did not accept the incorrectness of signs. This was particularly true for signs from the public domain and showed at the same time an ambivalence toward the signs in foreign languages: the fact that they are helpful and satisfy a necessity in many situations did not guarantee positive impressions. While it is certainly true that the aim of signs from the public domain is mostly to convey an image directed to Japanese readers, it is also true that, as they inevitably end up being read also by non-Japanese people (and Japanese people who understand foreign languages), this is why it should be given more

importance to the issue of linguistic correctness. Incorrectness is the main cause for the negative image of Japan's multilingualism and is likely to create a gap between the intentions of Japanese producers of the signs and part of the readers, who end up criticizing such signage. In conclusion, as the opinions of non-Japanese showed, it can be stated in sum that improvement of multilingualism requires the producers of signs to pay more attention to their quality than to their quantity: avoiding machine translations and relying more on native proofreading in producing fewer but more correct multilingual signs.

This dissertation clarified the validity of the renewed approach used for the study of linguistic landscapes. This approach has never previously been attempted and has made it possible to detect deeper and more objective information upon which basic conclusions were drawn. It stands, thus, against the single application of quantitative approaches frequently used in the literature (Backhaus, 2007, 2009; Barni and Bagna, 2010; Du Plessis, 2010; Huebner, 2006; Inoue, 2000; MacGregor, 2003; Someya, 2009, etc.), which eventually lead to conclusions based only on the observations and interpretations of a researcher, sometimes depriving him of objectivity. This outdated trend has brought about a stagnation in the field which lost some of its attractiveness as a discipline. By contrast, this dissertation made use of the study of the linguistic landscapes to analyze both quantitative and qualitative matters. The present dissertation, then, becomes significant because it contributes to the further academic development of the study of linguistic landscapes, seen as sources for usefully investigating the multilingualism of nations which currently endeavor to move towards internationalization.

The process towards multilingualism in Japan has started only in the last few decades and will take considerable time to be achieved. The observations this dissertation has

made on signage in terms of official, public, and private domains suggest that a double-layered multilingual linguistic landscape might be in development in Japan: one is developed by authorities in the official domain, and the other by individuals in the public domain<sup>62</sup>. As the results presented in Chapter 4 showed, they are differently judged and considered as two different entities of Japan's visual multilingualism. However, in contrast to the official domain, the public domain has not been sufficiently explored. This is due to the fact that in order to conduct a survey it is inevitably necessary to enter a private sphere of linguistic choices. In this sense, this dissertation should be considered as a meaningful attempt to enlarge a way of investigation into the public domain which can be further developed in the future with in-depth linguistic analyses focusing on the different aspects of proper names from private businesses.

Given such premises, it will be also fundamental to discover whether, at this historical moment with the forth-coming Olympic Games and Expo, if the long process of multilingualism of Japan will continue its development or not, and, if yes, how. The implementation of several qualitative analyses, which consider the voices of the very interpreters of this visible multilingualism, suggested that Japan has to deal with the development of regulations concerning multilingual signage: weight must be given not only to the quantity/quality of the official signs, but also to the excellence of the public ones. The contents and the results of this dissertation must also function as a practical cue for Japanese authorities who have too often neglected the matter of incorrect signage. At the same time, however, it must also be recognized that the quantitative survey was based only on the results of only a part of the visible multilingual signage of a small district of

---

<sup>62</sup> The distinction adopted in this study concerning the official, public and private domains is not rigid. Although it is not analyzed in this study, the private domain is likely to directly constitute, or indirectly anchor, the individual layer of multilingualism found in the public domain.

Kyoto, and the number of interviews (both for producers and readers) must be augmented in order to develop more precise discussions. With further studies it is conceivable that the results obtained by this study could be confirmed for other areas of Japan as well.

## **References**

- Backhaus, P. 2005. Nihon no tagengokeikan. *Nihon no tagengoshakai*, pp. 53-56.
- Backhaus, P. 2007. *Linguistic landscapes. A comparative study of multilingualism in Tokyo*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Backhaus, P. 2009. Nihon no gengokeikan no gyoseitekishaiki: Tokyo wo jirei to shite. *Nihon no Gengokeikan*, pp. 145-170.
- Backhaus, P. 2011. Gengokeikan kara yomitoku Nihon no tagengoka: Tokyo wo Jirei ni. *Sekai no gengokeikan Nihon no gengokeikan: keishiki no naka no kotoba*, pp. 122-128.
- Bagna C., Barni M. 2007. La Lingua italiana nella comunicazione pubblica/sociale planetaria. *Studi italiani di linguistica teorica e applicata*, XXXVI, 3, pp. 529-553.
- Bagna, C. 2009. L'italiano in Giappone. Nuove vie di diffusione. *Plurilinguismo, multiculturalismo e apprendimento delle lingue: confronto tra Giappone e Italia*, pp. 295-314.
- Bagna, C. 2014. Italianismi ed economia italiana nel mondo. *Essere italiani nel mondo globale oggi. Riscoprire l'appartenenza*, pp. 53-63.
- Barni, M., Bagna, C. 2009. A Mapping technique and the linguistic landscape, *Linguistic landscape: expanding the scenery*, pp. 126-140.
- Barni S., Bagna C. 2010. Linguistic landscape and language vitality. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp. 3-18.
- Barrs, K. 2015. Errors in the use of English in the Japanese linguistic landscape. *English today* 124, (31/4), pp. 30-33.
- Baseel, C. 10. 29. 2014. *Why does 'Engrish' happen in Japan?* Retrieved from <https://japantoday.com/category/features/lifestyle/why-does-engrish-happen-in-japan>
- Beccaria, G.L. 1989. *Dizionario di linguistica e di filologia, metrica, retorica*. Torino:



Einaudi.

Ben-Rafael, E., Shohamy, E., Amara, M., Hecht, N. 2006. The symbolic construction of the public space: the case of Israel. *International journal of multilingualism* 3 (1), pp. 7-28.

Ben-Rafael, E., Shohamy, E., Barni M. 2010. Introduction: an approach to an 'ordered disorder'. *Linguistic Landscape in the City*, pp.xi-xxviii.

Blackwood, R. J. 2010. Marking France's public space: empirical survey on regional heritage language in two provincial cities. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp. 292-306.

Bloomaert, J. 2010. *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bogatto F., Hélot C. 2010. Linguistic landscape and language diversity in Strasbourg: the 'quartier gare'. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp. 275-291.

Capitani E., Laiacona M., Barbarotto R., Trivelli C. 1994. Living and non-living categories. Is there a "normal" asymmetry? *Neuropsychologia* 32 (12), pp. 1453-1463.

Carducci, L. 2002. *As great as the world*. Beijing: China International Press.

Casadei, F. 2011. *Lessico e semantica*. Roma: Carrocci.

Casini, S. 2015. Italianismi e pseudoitalianismi nel mondo globale: il ruolo dell'enogastronomia. *Italiani nel mondo. Una expo permanente della lingua e della cucina italiana*, pp. 89-102.

Cenoz J., Gorter D. 2006. Linguistic landscape and minority languages. *International journal of multilingualism (special issue)* 3 (1), pp. 67-80.

Corbeil, J. C. 1980. *L'aménagement linguistique du Québec*. Montreal: Guerin.

Coulmas, F. 2009. Linguistic landscaping and the seed of the public sphere. *Linguistic landscape. Expanding the scenery*, pp.13-24.

- Dittmar, N. 1976. *Sociolinguistics: a critical survey of theory and application*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Doi, T. 1988. *The study of language in Japan*. Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin.
- Du Plessis, T. 2010. Bloemfontein/Mangaung, 'city on the move'. Language management and transformation of non-representative linguistic landscape. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp. 74-95.
- Edelman, L. 2009. What's in a name? Classification of proper names by language. *linguistic landscape. Expanding the scenery*, pp. 141-154.
- Edelman L., Gorter D. 2010. Linguistic landscape in the market. *Language and the market*, pp. 96-108.
- Fishman, J. 1965. Who speaks what language to whom and when?. *La linguistique*, pp. 67-88.
- Fishman, J. 1972. Domains and the relationship between micro- and macro-sociolinguistics. *Directions in sociolinguistics: the ethnography of communication* pp. 435-453.
- Fujii, K. 2005. Gyosei no tagengo joho sabisu. *Jiten: Nihon no tagengoshakai*, pp. 59-63.
- Funnel E., Sheridan J. 1990. Categories of knowledge? Unfamiliar aspects of living and nonliving things. *Cognitive neuropsychology* 9 (2), pp. 135-153.
- Furiassi, C. 2002. False italianism in British and American English: a meta-lexicographic analysis. *Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> EURALEX international congress*, pp. 771-777.
- Furiassi, C. 2010. *False anglicisms in Italian*. Monza: Polimetrica, 2010.
- Gardiner, A. 1954. *The theory of proper names: a controversial essay*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Geeraerts, D. 2010. *Theories of lexical semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Giorgadze, M. 2014. Linguistic features of pun, its typology and classification. *European scientific journal* (2), pp. 271-275.
- Gumperz, J.J. 1971. *Language in social groups*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Haarmann, H. 1985. *Gengoseitaigaku*. Tokyo: Taishukan.
- Haarmann, H. 1986. Verbal strategies in Japanese fashion magazines: a study in impersonal bilingualism and ethnosymbolism. *International journal of the sociology of language*, pp. 107-121.
- Haarmann, H. 1989. *Symbolic names of foreign language use: from the Japanese case to a general sociolinguistic perspective*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Haarmann, H., Waseda M. 1985. The use of foreign elements in Japanese TV commercials: a report. Tokyo.
- Hess-Lüttich, E.W.B. 2009. The socio symbolic function of language. *Semiotica* 173, pp. 249-266.
- Honda H., Iwata K., Kurabayashi H. 2017. *Machi no kokyo sain wo tenken suru: gaikokujin ni ha do mieru ka*. Tokyo: Taishukan.
- Huebner, T. 2006. Bangkok's linguistic landscapes: environmental print, codemixing and language change. *International journal of multilingualism* 3 (1), 31-51.
- Hyde, B. 2002. Japan's emblematic English: an analysis of public English and (not) learning the language. *English today* 71 (18/3), pp. 12-16.
- Inoue, F. 2000. *Nihongo no nedan*. Tokyo: Taishukan.
- Inoue, F. 2009. Keizaigengogaku kara mita gengoikeikan: kako to genzai. *Nihon no gengoikeikan*, pp. 53-78.
- Japan Tourism Agency (MLIT). 2019. *Kouribunya no tagengotaio ni kan suru honichi gaikokujin ryokosha no ishiki chosa: chosa kekka*.

- Japan Tourism Agency (MLIT). 2019. *Koyokotsukikan ni okeru tagengohyoki: chosa kekka gaiyo*.
- Jaworsky A., Yeung S. 2010. Life in the garden of Eden: the naming and imagery of residential Hong Kong. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp. 153-181.
- Kallen L. J., Dhonnacha, N. 2010. Language and inter-language in urban Irish and Japanese linguistic landscapes. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp.19-36.
- Kawahara, T. 2004. *Jichitai gengo sabisu: tagengoshakai he no tobira wo hiraku*. Yokohama: Shunpusha.
- Kawahara, T. 2010. “Sekai no gengoseisaku” to “tagengoshakai”. *Sekai no gengoseisaku 3: tagengoshakai wo ikiru*, pp. 223-252.
- Kim, M. 2009. Gengokeikan ni okeru imingengo no arawarekata: korian komyuniti no gengohenyo wo jirei ni. *Nihon no gengokeikan*, pp. 187-205.
- Kimura, E. 1945. *Pan no meijihyakunenshi*. Tokyo: pan no meijihyakunenshikankokai.
- Kohi, C., LaBahn, D.W. 1997. Creating effective brand names: a study of the brand naming process. *Journal of advertising research* 37, pp. 67-75.
- Kopp, R. 1.16.2020. *Why English translation needs the native touch*. Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2020/01/16/how-tos/translation-needs-native-touch/>
- Landry, R., Bourhis, Y.R. 1997. Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality. An empirical study. *Journal of language and social psychology*, pp. 23-49.
- Lo Cigno, S. 2020. Il dialetto nello spazio pubblico di Kyoto: analisi linguistica e metodologia di classificazione del dialetto nel paesaggio linguistico. *Quaderni di semantica*, pp. 245-268.
- Long, D., Imamura, K. 2012. Igauenno no Ttenggo-tahogen no gengokeikan. *Nihongo*

- kenkyu* (32), pp. 141-161.
- Masai, Y. 1972. *Tokyo no seikatsu chizu*. Tokyo: Jijitsushinsha.
- MacGregor, L. 2003. The language of shop signs in Tokyo. *English today* 19, pp. 18-23.
- Marten, H.F. 2010. Linguistic landscape under strict state language policy: reversing the soviet legacy in a regional centre in Latvia. *Linguistic landscape in the city*, pp. 115-132.
- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). 2016. *Korigyo no ten'nai no gengo hyoji ni kakaru gaidorain* (Ver. 1.0).
- Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). 2014. *Kanko rikkoku jitsugen ni muketa tagengo taio no kaizen kyoka no tame no gaidorain*.
- Moriyama, M., Shiohara, A. 2009. *Tagengoshakai Indonesia: kawariyuku kokugo, chihogo, gaikokugo no shoso*. Tokyo: Mekon.
- Morizumi, F. 2012. Nihonjin ni totte eigo to ha nani ka: eigokyoiku to gengoseisaku. *Ajia taiheiyo kenkyu* (37), pp. 139-157.
- Murphy, M. L. 2006. Hyponymy and hyperonymy. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* 1, pp. 446-448.
- Okado, H. 2007. Nihon ni okeru gaikokugoshisaku no Rekishi to doko. *Sekai no gengoseisaku 2: tagengoshakai ni sonaete*, pp. 7-28.
- Osgood, C.E, Suci, G.J., Tannenbaum, P.H. 1957. *The measurement of meaning*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Pütz, M. 2020. Exploring the linguistic landscape of Cameroon: reflections on language policy and ideology. *Russian journal of linguistics* 24 (2), pp. 294 -324.
- Radtke, O.L. 2007. *Chinglish. Found in translation*. Layton: Gibbs Smith.
- Rodriguez, L.P. 2012. *El paisaje linguistico de sevilla: Lenguas y variedades en el escenario urbano hispalense*. Sevilla: Diputacion de Sevilla.

- Satojima, S., Kobayashi, R., Saito, M. 2009. Chikatetsu an'naiban ni miru romajihyoki: Tokyo ni okeru 1999 nen no jittai. *Nihon no gengokeikan*, pp. 123-144.
- Sawaguchi, K. 2012. Nihon ni okeru Itaria ryori no sangyoshi to kokku no raifu, histori, kenkyu: sono jorontekikosatsu. *Taishodaigaku kenkyukiyo* 97, pp. 143-154.
- Scaglione, F. 2017. Dialetto e linguistic landscape: il caso delle insegne delle attività commerciali a Palermo, *Dialetto. Uno nessuno e centomila*, pp. 185-196.
- Scollon, R., Scollon, S.W. 2003. *Discourse in place: language in the material world*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Shimizu, M. 2010. Japanese English education and learning: a history of adapting foreign cultures. *Educational perspectives* 43, pp. 5-11.
- Shohamy, E., Gorter, D. 2009. *Linguistic landscape: expanding the scenery*. New York: Routledge.
- Shoji, H. 2009. Tagengoka no gengokeikan. *Nihon no gengokeikan*, pp. 17-52.
- Someya, Y. 2009. Gengokeikan no naka no kanbanhyoki to sono chiikisa: Odakyusenzoisen no jittaichosahokoku. *Nihon no gengokeikan*, pp. 95-122.
- Spolsky B., Cooper R. 1983. *The languages of Jerusalem: Arab-Jewish relation in the old City*. Bar-Ilan: Bar-Ilan University.
- Spolsky B., Cooper R. 1991. *The languages of Jerusalem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Taylor-Leech, K. J. 2012. Language choice as an index of identity: linguistic landscape in Dili, Timor-Leste. *International journal of multilingualism* 9 (1), pp. 15-34.
- Terasawa, T. 2014. Eigo igai no igengo ni taisuru 'nihonjin' no taido no shakai tokeitekibunseki. *Gengojuhokagaku* 12, pp. 91-107.
- Spolsky, B. 2009. Prolegomena to a sociolinguistic theory of public signage. *Linguistic landscape. Expanding the scenery*, pp. 25-39.

- Tokyo Metropolitan Government. 2017. *Tagengo taio hyoji, hyoshiki nado ni kan suru chosa: hokokusho*.
- Tulp, S.M. 1978. Reklame en tweetaligheid, een onderzoek naar de geographische verspreiding van franstalige en nederlandstalige affiches in Brussels. *Taal en sociale integratie 1*, pp. 261-288.
- Van Mensel L., Vandenbroucke M., Blackwood R. 2017. Linguistic landscapes. *The Oxford handbook of language and society*, pp.423-449.
- Vedovelli, M. 2002. *L'Italiano degli stranieri*. Roma: Carocci.
- Vedovelli, M. 2005. L'Italiano nel mondo da lingua straniera e lingua identitaria: il caso freddoccino. *Silta*, CXXXIV 3, pp. 585-609.
- Vedovelli, M., Casini S. 2014. Italianismi e pseudoitalianismi in Giappone: le radici profonde di una consonanza culturale nel mondo globale. *La lingua in Giappone (2)*, pp. 34-106.
- Vedovelli, M., Machetti, S. 2006. Italiano e lingue Eeotiche in contatto nella comunicazione sociale: il caso degli italianismi a Tokyo. *Lo Spazio linguistico italiano e le lingue esotiche, Atti del XXXIX congresso della SLI 50*, pp. 181-206.
- Wey, Y., Fei, J. 2003. Using English in China. *English today 19 (4)*, pp. 42-47.
- Yasuda, T. 2012. *Nihongogaku no manazashi*. Tokyo: Sangensha.
- Zhang, B., Xu, T. 2015. English translation of linguistic signs: a study from the perspective of linguistic landscape. *Studies in literature and language 11 (3)*, pp. 35-42.
- Zhang, J. 2016. The analysis of application and problems in bilingual public signs or plates. *Sino-US English teaching 13 (6)*, pp. 492-498.

## *Acknowledgments*

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Takahiro Morita, my research supervisor, for his patient guidance, encouragement and useful critiques of this dissertation. I would also like to thank Professor Nobuyuki Tsukahara and Professor Kazumi Taniguchi, for their precious advices and assistance.

My grateful thanks are also extended to Professor Stewart Wachs for his precious help in editing my English and supporting me throughout the writing process. I would also like to thank Professor Andrea Leonardi for his moral support and useful advices.

I also extend my thanks to everyone who helped in offering me the collaboration to the surveys.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for the support and encouragement throughout my studying period in Japan.