Urban Skywalk as a Communication Space for Promoting Mental Health:

A Linguistic Landscape Analysis

Jollibee Angchangco Aharul

Cebu Normal University, Philippines

Corresponding author e-mail: aharulj@cnu.edu.ph

Abstract

Visual linguistic public space as one multimodal platform has been extensively popularized to proliferate grassroot movements. And although, community markings are ubiquitously situated in the Philippines, scientific studies with lens on their contents and relevance are still inadequate in number. An urban skywalk in Cebu City, Philippines, characterized with unique linguistic marks was used as the subject material in this study. The said public infrastructure encompasses linguistic features conveying mental health, one of the most discreet and yet disquieting societal concerns in these latter days. The study is anchored on the frameworks of Systemic Functional Linguistic Model, Social Semiotics, and Multimodality. The data are described and presented based on Discourse Analysis Method and Qualitative- descriptive Approach. Findings do not only reveal the intention and quality of the meaning-making processes behind the linguistic markings in the subject public space. The textual, interpersonal, and ideational functions also unveil the identities and socio-cultural attitudes of its producers and recipients.

Keywords: Public space, Cebu City skywalk, Semiotic landscapes, Multimodality, Mental health

Introduction

About 1 billion people suffer from mental health issues; and every 40 seconds, a person dies by suicide (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). This pressing issue is consistently on the rise around the world. Adversities such as poverty, compromised education, violence, gender equality, ill-health, and other global challenges are the primary causes of the internal sufferings (WHO, 2002). And with the recurring fight versus COVID-19 pandemic in the present, more than half of the entire population are now in continuous battle against depression, anxiety, stress, and the like. It

is expected that the number will continue to increase in the next years and with more vulnerable members in the society to get affected, which can result to drastic consequences. Just recently (January 2022), National Institute of Mental Health reported that young adults aged 18-25 years had the highest prevalence of Serious Mental Illness (SMI); and around 50% of mental disorders start by the age of 14. This is quite alarming as the youngsters struggle from unprecedented problems. In India, for instance, a 17-year old girl was reported to have allegedly committing suicide due to the lack of Android phone for her online classes. She hanged herself in her home while her parents were away (Press Trust of India, 2022).

The saddest part is, despite the fact that the world is facing a mental health crisis that demands action, mental health remains one of the most neglected areas of public health. Only a small percentage of the world's population has access to high-quality mental health services. More than 75 percent of people with mental, neurological, and substance use disorders in low- and middle-income countries receive no care at all. Furthermore, discrimination, stigma, punitive laws, and human rights violations continue to be common (WHO, 2020).

The state of mental health in the Philippines is of no exempt. Every year, 877,000 Filipinos die as a result of suicide, with 154 million suffering from depression, 1 million from schizophrenia, and 15.3 million from substance use disorders (Department of Health, 2018, as cited by Maravilla & Tan, 2021). And sadly, a report shows that Philippine government does not even provide financial support for groups that have been involved in the creation and implementation of mental health policies and legislation (WHO, 2007). It is important to note that, an individual battle on mental health problem may have a direct impact on the economic state of a country. According to Maravilla and Tan (2021), there is a significant relationship between individual's mental state and the country's economic condition. Mental health issues may result in a large drop in economic activity as a result of lost productivity. Equally, due to risk factors such as social exclusion, low education, treatment expenses, unemployment, and poverty, economic decline may increase the incidence of mental illness. Thus, happy people lead to healthy economy, and vice versa.

Fortunately, on June 21, 2018, the first mental health act legislation in Philippine history was signed into law as Republic Act No. 11036. It establishes a rights-based mental health bill as well as a comprehensive framework for the Philippines' implementation of excellent mental healthcare (Lally et al., 2019). From then on, comprehensive programs, addressing concerns on mental health and well-being were introduced. Treatment and rehabilitation services have been made available. Under the umbrella of the Department of Health (DOH), Philippines, multi-sectoral partnerships including LGUs and organized groups implement practical, innovative, promotive and preventive interventions. This includes mental health advocacy campaigns which started from the national down to the community level. To raise awareness, various information dissemination strategies are designed and publicized based on the peoples' interests and needs. Thus, in a similar way, campaigns are extended in all grounds, (work places, schools,

business centers, streets, etc.) all forms of communication tools and modalities have also been used to ensure comprehensive responsiveness. And this is where 'semiotic landscapes' and 'multimodality' make sense.

In the social world, communication; language in particular, can either make or break an individual and or the group he/she is around with. And since language can also shape and define the individual and social interactions (and vice versa); numerous factors are considered to ensure smooth relationship between these components. As part of a social-related concern, language use in relation to psychological aspects and social interaction, definitely call for a significant attention. And with the number of emerging semiotic landscapes ("any public space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making" [Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010]), that are purposely used like for mental health awareness; linguistic studies are essential. Unfortunately, formal studies about public spaces used for purposive discursive modality is still rare in the Philippines. The lens of this analysis are focused on the inscriptions on the staircases of a skywalk in Cebu City, Philippines. Among the eighteen (18) skywalks of the city, one was observed with noteworthy characteristics in terms of creativity, content, and meaning.

Methodology

The study is grounded on the frameworks of systemic functional linguistic model (Halliday, 1978) principles of social semiotics (Van Leeuwen, 2005) and semiotic landscapes (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) and multimodality theory (Kress, 2009), and the data are described and presented based on Discourse Analysis Method and Qualitative-descriptive Approach.

Social Semiotics and Semiotic Landscapes

Social Semiotics is the study of the social dimensions of meaning, as well as the power of human processes of signification and interpretation (known as semiosis) in molding individuals and societies. The study of how people build and interpret meanings, the study of texts, and the study of how semiotic systems are influenced by social goals and ideologies, as well as how they are altered as society changes are all examples of social semiotics, (Hodge & Kress, 1988). Semiotic landscapes, on the other hand by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010), establishes the interplay between language, visual discourse, and culture; and the broader the scope of context is, the more extent the interpretation is in terms of social life. Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25) categorized semiotic landscapes into two: private and government. The former includes: commercial signs or advertising in on business establishments, billboards, transportations, etc., while the latter includes public signs in streets, state buildings like hospitals, schools, town halls, metro stations, parks and other institutions or infrastructures used by national, regional or municipal governments. Usually, it is believed that, the language displayed like in official, central or local government signage, indicate important symbols of values and status; demographic and power wise, of the institution being represented.

Systemic functional linguistic model

The theory of the fundamental functions of language establishes that language has three metafunctions: (1) ideational (the expression of ideas or abstract thoughts); (2) interpersonal (the relationship with audiences); and (3) textual (the creation of coherent units or messages). From these functions, language is then argued as a social semiotic system that come with various meaning potentials or as 'sets of resources' (Halliday, 1978, p. 39). Utilizing this linguistic framework, analysis and interpretations are focused on the purpose of semiotic systems in terms of social practice.

Multimodality

Multimodality theory in communication as proposed by Kress (2009), examines the various ways in which people connect with one another and express themselves. This theory is relevant because advances in technology, as well as access to multimedia composition software, have enabled people to use a variety of modes in art, writing, music, and dance, as well as in everyday interactions with one another. In general, a mode is a communication channel that is recognized by a culture. Writing, gesture, posture, gaze, font choice and color, photos, video, and even interactions between them are examples of modes. While many of these modes of communication and expression have always existed, they have not always been acknowledged as legitimate or culturally acceptable. Multimodal learning theorists emphasize that people communicate in a variety of ways, and that in order to fully comprehend someone, the various modes of communication must be seen and understood (Multimodality (Kress), 2022).

Discourse analysis

This is a qualitative approach of study that investigates the meanings produced by language use and communication, as well as the settings, processes, and practices resulting from these meanings. From the data, discourse analysis attempts to perceive and categorize distinct meaning-making processes, networks, and behaviors. Some varieties place a premium on a thorough and consistent investigation of language, discourse, and engagement. Other varieties place a greater emphasis on intertextuality of meanings and the relationship between genres and discourses in an interaction scenario or in a larger historical and social context or process (Van Dijik, 2001).

Qualitative-descriptive Design

This design is normally used when an "uncomplicated description is desired that focuses on the details of what, where, when, and why of an event or experience" (Holly, 2014). The linguistic data inscribed in the skywalk staircases are described in accordance with the social phenomena.

Results and Discussions

This section is for the discussion of the textual, interpersonal, and ideational functions of the chosen semiotic landscape. These are embedded on the interpreted codes, design-choices and the meanings, which are categorized and presented with the following themes: The Sign Emplacements and The Semiotic Markings.

The Sign Emplacements

Emplacement is crucial in meaning construction. The location of image makes a significant difference in how the message is read and constructed to be read (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, Ch. 8). The semiotic landscape in this study is emplaced on the stairs of a skywalk (Figure 1), a public space, situated in Osmeña Boulevard, which is a significant arterial road in Cebu City, Philippines, and is considered as one of the city's longest and busiest streets. It serves as the safest pathway connecting two schools. Along this street are commercial buildings like banks, hotels, stores, and offices, as well as public buildings which include schools, police station, and government agencies. Most jeepney routes stop or pass through here, and many individuals walk along the pavements in this road. Significant number of passersby from different walks of life are regularly seen here every day. Infrastructures like skywalks are examples of official representations of national or regional identity (Lawson, 2001). Being the center trade, commerce, and tourism in the Visayas, Cebu City, is the second richest city in the Philippines. There is a total of 18 skywalks situated in the city proper.

Figure 1 The Skywalk in Osmeña Blvd., Cebu City, Philippines

A skywalk is an enclosed aerial walkway connecting two buildings. This semiotic landscape on the other hand, serve as an elevated bridge linking the walkways on two different sides of the road. According to Dictionary of Symbolism (Protas, 1997) the bridge is inherently symbolic of communication and union. It could be a portal to 'reality' or simply a metaphor for 'travel and crossing'. There is a connection between this symbolic representation to the linguistic landscapes which is concerning mental health. In reality, numbers of people are suffering from mental illness

- some are aware of it; but some are not. They try to continue to live their life as normal as possible and convince themselves and others that everything is okay. And since mental illness is strongly stigmatized, Filipinos try to hide it to escape the negative label of "mad", as a result, they avoid obtaining professional care. Analogous to the symbolic meaning of bridges as a portal to reality; producers intend to utilize the semiotic meanings as a tool for realization of their current state.

Also, a bridge can be metaphorically linked between what can be observed and what is beyond perception, or at the very least a change or desire for change, in many cultures. It can be a test to see who is the most courageous (who will cross). Inscribing information associated with predominant socio-cultural issues (like mental health) in a public-crowded space implies a strong and massive demand for change through social actors' courageous responses. Despite the national campaign funded by different sectors about mental health advocacies through various platforms, majority, remains passive. The emplacement of the semiotic markings in a community space where general populace can freely access the information is strategic (J. Un, personal communication, January 27, 2022). It shows practicality, convenience, and implies a suggestive permanent effect.

On the flip side, we hear reports about the misuse of skywalks. Evidence shows that a lot of them are rarely visited, and when used, they are just either littered or loitered. It can also be observed that random strangers take advantage of the rarely-visited public spaces to isolate themselves. They stay to enjoy the quietness it offers and even perceive the area as 'home'. Some of those who are observed to be homeless and use public areas as their home are characterized with mental health challenges (Klein, 2020).

On the other hand, research identified jumping from a high place like buildings or bridges as one of the most common suicide methods. In some parts of Asia, it accounts for as many as 60% of all deaths by suicide (Beautrais, 2009). Suicide jumping is executed by those with extreme mental anguish. Adam Kaplin, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical Institute, pointed out, that 5 out of 10 suicide incidents are committed by jumping off; and this is all for convenience (Friedman, 2008). This is indeed quite alarming; as the number of victims with multifaceted demographic profile is continuously increasing. Just a few weeks ago, 30-year old, Cheslie Kryst, Miss USA 2019, also jumped off a 60-storey building in Manhattan, New York. Suicide risk factors that trigger the suicidal thoughts must be a world-wide concern for all.

Evidently, jumping as a suicidal method is also one of the most common causes of intentional death in the Philippines where the highest number of suicide deaths was recorded in a single year in pandemic year 2020 (Philippine Statistics Authority as cited by Merez & Eugenio, 2021). Last November, 2021 (about three months ago), a man jumped from a skywalk in Mambaling, Cebu City. Witnesses said, he was crying and shouting before the suicide jump. Number of victims with multifaceted demographic profile is continuously increasing. With the uncountable

adversities caused by problematic mental conditions, materializing the awareness campaigns about it through different modes including linguistic landscapes in public spaces such as in skywalks, eventually makes sense.

Using public space architecture as a communication mode to advocate mental health information and suicide prevention, is not a novel strategy. While others employ signs to promote access to lifesaving means like hotline numbers, there are also a few that use short but meaningful reminders. The Mapo Bridge called "Bridge of Life" in Korea for instance, has inscriptions on their language, which means in English as: "How have you been?"; Cheer Up!"; "What is bothering you today?"; "Is it very difficult?"; "If you need to talk, why don't you talk to us?"; and etc. (Starr, 2013).

The semiotic markings on this study pertains to different steps on managing anxiety, stress, depression, and positive outlook in life which are marked on the stairs of a skywalk. The skywalk has a total of four (2) pairs of U shaped stairs from both sides of the road. There are a total four (4) parallel flights of straight stairs joined by a landing. All eight (8) walk lines have inscriptions. Symbolically, staircases can suggest a journey, progress and growth. A staircase could be a link between two objects, such as places, ideas, or states of being. If one takes the stairs, the journey is almost certainly positive. If one descends the steps, however, it may be a bad, perplexing, or depressing experience (Stannah, 2018). Practically, stairs are used for simple and convenient means of moving between levels. However, stairs are not just limited to enabling users to have a quick and effective access going from point A or point B. Also, stairs can help us in an emergency. They are, nevertheless, a work of art in and of themselves. Our pacing, our feelings, our safety, and our interaction and involvement with the area around us are all influenced by the form as we traverse a stairs (Rockwell, 2018). But the question is, why are markings just inscribed on the steps only and not on the passageway

According to Rockwell (2018), the experience of stepping on the stairs can give a totally different feeling. From the skywalk steps for instance, anyone can have a view of the street, the buildings, and all the people around the area; and the walk is often slow and steady because of the wide tread. The attention of the passersby may be focused on the views outside which can automatically defeat the purpose of communication. Aside from the calculated size and space of every riser that fits the markings, the at-the-moment experiences while making each step can also give people distinct emotions and perceptions which can lead to reader's comprehension and discernment at the same time. With such details about sign emplacement, it can be construed that setting the linguistic landscapes pertaining to mental health management techniques on the staircase of a skywalk can undoubtedly leave a significant mark to its readers.

The Semiotic Markings

Semiotic analysis explores the use of linguistic markings in specific social situations. It provides the foundation for relating a text to the non-linguistic dimension of its situational and cultural surroundings (Long, 2019). The contents of the semiotic markings analyzed on this study are writings about tips on managing the most familiar mental illnesses all over the world such as anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as some texts on how to have a positive outlook in life.

According to the report (World Health Organization (WHO), 2019) anxiety disorder is the most common psychological problem worldwide. An anxiety disorder is diagnosed if the person's response is inappropriate for the scenario, if the person is unable to regulate the response, or if the anxiety interferes with normal functioning (Casarella, 2021). In 2019, an estimated 275 million people suffer from this mental illness (Dattani et al., 2018). This is quite a number as it comprises 4% of the global population. Reasons may include traumatic events and acute illnesses. According to McIntosh (2016), women, adults under the age of 35, and people with underlying medical issues were the most impacted by anxiety disorders. And in 2020, at the peak of COVID19 pandemic, a total of 4802 total cases for every 100,000 population all over the world has been recorded.

Figure 2 shows texts about "Tips on Managing Anxiety". Arranged from the landing part are the following inscriptions written on the staircase risers are:

"No one is Perfect"

"AVOID AVOIDANCE"

"Understand that it can't harm you."

"Accept that it is a Normal Emotion and can be helpful"

"Tips on Managing Anxiety"

"SKIP YOUR WORRIES, TAKE A STEP."

"COLOR YOUR MIND"

Figure 2 The left-hand main staircase with inscriptions about: "Tips on Managing Anxiety" (Sidewalk A)

But before the texts, the first thing people usually recognize on this staircase is the variation of colors. In Psychology, colors are determinant of human behavior which can also influence perceptions that are not obvious. Also, addition of colors within words' physical characteristic is found to effectively improve memory retention as it mainly attracts attention. This is because of the color perception that gives a sense of emphasis (Santos et al., 2019). In the context of mental health, colors are beneficial for therapy, affecting the patients' mood and behavior. There are three colors: yellow, carnation pink, and salmon pink. The two shades of pink are identical that others may find difficult contrasting them at first glance. Dominance of pink on this context is in accordance with its positive and negative associations. It is linked to calmness, comfort, and optimism; but also for timidity, naivety, lack of will power, and unwillingness to take matters seriously (Psychology of the Pink Colour (2021), 2021). Yellow on the other hand offers hope, inspiration, enthusiasm, and happiness. For mental aspect, it relates to new ideas and an adventure to find new ways of doing things (Kelly, 2019). It also carries negative connotations as a symbol of sickness, cowardice, and mental illness (Smith, 2019). The amount of information the receivers are able to grasp may also depend on color presentation. As per psychology of colors yellow and pink as the background in primary staircases can be understood that the color assignments are parallel to the intention of the messages inscribed.

The colorful risers capacitate the readers in processing the foregrounded texts. In the process of sending a written message, colors can influence how the audience views the textual presentation. There are 18 risers and 17 treads in the staircase. One color is assigned for every six (6) steps, equally distributed for the three colors but not for

the text classification. Yellow is the background of the 'tips', carnation pink is where the title is, and salmon pink is for the reading stimulus. The title "Tips on Managing Anxiety" is on the 9th riser, middle part the stairs. There is a four-riser gap between the title and the second text from the flooring area. Aside from its place, and color assignment, its the smile emoji " :)" that only makes this marking distinctive from the rest. It must have been written in the mid-part to be visible for all readers who have either low or high vision. But the presence of the tip: "Accept that it is a Normal Emotion and can be helpful" on the same color group, apparently makes the title unrecognizable.

"SKIP YOUR WORRIES, TAKE A STEP." And "COLOR YOUR MIND" are the two statements below the title. These markings are also seen and on the same positions in all the other two staircases with topics about stress and depression. These two statements are adjacent the flooring area. To ensure visibility, the texts are written in all capital letters. The former has punctuations such as comma and a period while the latter only have quotation marks. "COLOR YOUR MIND" is the first among all the other statements. It can be assumed that most readers may recognize the colors of the stairs first before they get acquainted with the texts. "COLOR YOUR MIND" is a metaphor that tells the readers to divert their thoughts to something different from their present views. The term 'color' as a verb means to put or to change color. The producers of the linguistic landscape expects that the intended recipients are in a current state of 'dullness, dreariness, or darkness'. "SKIP YOUR WORRIES, TAKE A STEP" on the other hand, pertains to the suggested action for the addressee. Similar to the text above, this statement also implies two promptings. The first is for the action necessary for traversing the stairs [SKIP] and [TAKE A STEP]; while the second suggests a proactive way to be free from [WORRIES]. Considering their meanings and locations, the two statements serve as mental stimulation notifying the readers about the subsequent visual sensation. And although they can also be considered as part of the 'tips', their distance from the title may form a certain exclusivity, leading to a conclusion that they are merely for stimulus in reading and not part of the step interventions.

Above the title are the 'tips on managing the anxiety'. Situating those texts on the top level signify implied meanings. The importance of upward draw of the eye strategy is a symbolism of stairs (Stairway to Accessibility: the History and Symbolism of Stairs, 2019). This approach is intended to elicit sentiments of smallness in the observer, as well as feelings of being about to go on a journey or undertaking, as well as feelings of being connected to something greater. The same as true in this context where the intended reader may feel small and helpless with his or her recent plights. But as he or she starts setting foot and takes in every piece of advice produced on the stairs, the reader then starts to embark on new endeavor.

The four recommendations on anxiety management are of different lengths. One is long and the other three are short. These statement lengths might have been chosen for a certain purpose. According to Wiginton (2020), anxiety can cause speech problems, likewise it can be hard for people with anxiety disorder to think because there is

a lot going on for them. Experts believe that issues on speech production and recognition may have something to do with how the brain gets information from long-term memories. Another observation is about the the usage of a verb "Accept", "Understand" and "Avoid" in the beginning of every statement. Halliday (1985, p. 68) stresses that speech acts are dialogic: An 'act' of speaking … might more appropriately be called an 'interact': it is an exchange in which giving implies receiving, and demanding implies giving in response. He explains that containing an explicit speech act verb makes the interaction more physical. In types of sentences, the said texts are known as Imperative Sentence. This gives the reader an order, an instruction, a request or offer advice. The idea about these are already foreshadowed in the title by introducing the word 'Tips' which means 'advice'. 'Understand' and 'accept' are positive verbs that affirmatively describe actions. These verbs are followed by words with positive or neutral meanings, while 'avoid' is the other way around. It suggests someone to keep away or stop from doing something. It is succeeded by a word or phrase with negative denotation. The same goes with 'no one' as in 'No one is Perfect', the statement before situated on the riser before the landing area. Raypole (2020), indicated that affirmations are helpful to boost positive moods, increase motivation and address negative thoughts. Statements in present simple tense and positive phrasing are highly recommended in encouraging people with anxiety as they can help them focus on more positive and real possibilities.

Another noticeable linguistic features on the staircase is the irregularity on graphology, the study of graphemes and other aspects of the written media, such as punctuation, paragraphing, and spacing (Wales, 2001, p. 182). The first letter of the content words like 'Perfect', 'Normal', 'Emotion' and 'Helpful' as well as the function ones like 'It' and 'No' are capitalized. Proper punctuations are not applied as well, like the absence of comma (,) after an independent clause and a full stop (.) on the last part of a sentence. Although they are minimal, in grammatical conventions, these irregularities are considered erroneous.

On the other hand, there are 13 risers and 13 treads on. It contains the continuation of the texts about anxiety management. From the landing, going down, are the following inscriptions:
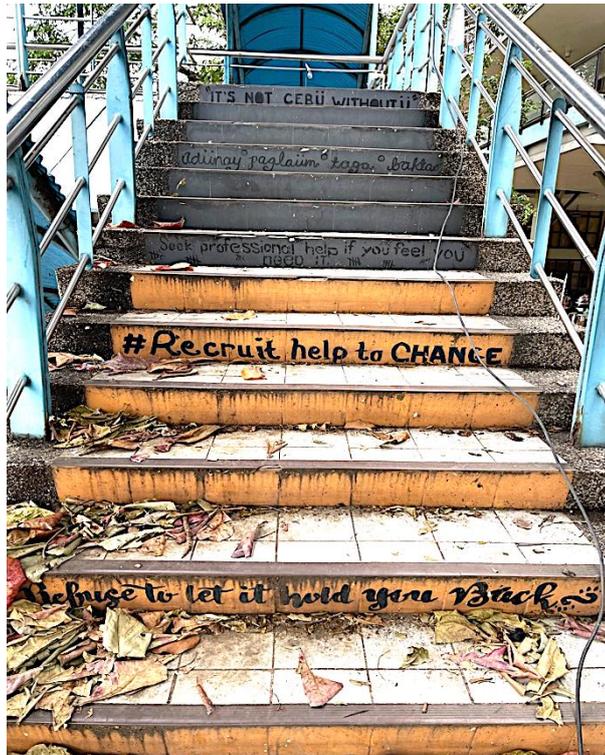
"IT'S NOT CEBU WITHOUT U"

"Adunay paglaum taga baktas"

"Seek professional help if you feel you need it"

"Recruit help to CHANGE"

"Refuse to let it hold you Back"

Figure 3 The half landing staircase situated midway up the left-hand staircase (Sidewalk A)

The foregrounded messages on this stair-flight path are about hope, help, and change. The vernacular statement: "Adunay paglaum taga baktas" means: There is hope in every step. This line is a notable feature on this staircase as it is in Cebuano version (a regional dialect of Cebu). A statement in mother-tongue does not just reflect culture and identity (Kooy & Hulshof, 2010), it also gives the resident readers the sense of belonging. This assumption is reinforced by the subsequent line: "IT'S NOT CEBU WITHOUT U". The "U" which represents the second person pronoun directly addresses the intended reader. Unlike other texts, specifically the imperative sentences, where subject is just implied; this line appears to be more straightforward and specific, enabling the reader to feel more affected and involved. Help and change otherwise are indicated on the other lines. With these, the intended recipients can feel they are valued and their presence truly counts. On the other hand, unlike other short and simple structure used for other "tips", the text "Refuse to let it hold you back" gives a vague meaning. The presence of the infinitive phrase: "to let (it), make the thought indirect and may make other readers think longer first before they get the gist of it.

Also, it can be observed that all the stairs after the half landing have the same color assignments such as in Figures 3 and 5. Similar to that on the primary staircases, the written discourses and the colored risers also correspond to each other on this staircase. While the previous, has yellow (lemon) and pink, the color background on this path are yellow color in fire and a shade of gray. The former can signify passion, energy, and danger (Lundberg, 2020). It is almost close to orange which is linked to strength, determination, and success. The two lines inscribed on the yellow

risers with words 'refuse' and 'recruit' have two opposing ideas in terms of negative and positive connotation. 'Refuse' is for the danger that might be brought about by 'holding back' of the unwanted emotions caused by anxiety while 'recruit help to change' requires strength and determination. Gray color on the other hand, symbolizes neutrality and balance (Ferreira, 2019). As per these meanings, clearly, gray as the background for the writings: "It's not CEBU without U" paired with two general reminders serve its purpose. These statements act as the neutralizer and at the same time the conclusive note after the 'tips'.

Lastly, some markings are apparently unnecessary. The presence of tally or hash marks and the smile emoji do not create significant impact on the texts in terms of meaning making. It can even hamper the purpose of the entire linguistic landscape as they appear more of a nuisance instead of being a visual stimuli. The accuracy and reliability of the information are at stake if audience do not find the relationship between and among the texts elements. The credibility of the source may also be in danger if there is inappropriacy on the content of visual-based information.

Facing the main staircase presented on Figure 2 is another set of steps with the inscriptions about "Tips of Coping Depression". The staircase on Figure 4 is located on the right side, facing the street. Obviously, the texts "SKIP YOUR WORRIES, TAKE A STEP." And "COLOR YOUR MIND" are still present and on the same level of risers as in the staircase in Figure 6.

Figure 4 The right-hand main staircase with inscriptions about: "Tips of Coping Depression" (Sidewalk A)

The most obvious feature on its linguistic landscape compared to the previous is the inclusion of the 'TIP' and the respective number before each statement above the title. There are also four 'tips' on this staircase written on the following texts:

"TIP NO.1: Reach out and stay CONNECTED"

"TIP NO.2: DO THINGS THAT CAN MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD."

"TIP NO.3: GET MOVING

"TIP NO.4: EAT A HEALTHY

Among the four 'tips' on that staircase, only one is not capitalized all throughout. On the first tip "Reach out and stay CONNECTED", only the word 'connected' is on the uppercase. The distinction of this tip is not only seen on the statement structure but as well as on its meaning. Compared to the other three, this is the only advice that suggests an activity about socialization which means that there is a need for others' involvement for this act to succeed. The other three are for personal interest that call for individual or personalized actions. Grammatical errors can easily be identified as it occurs on the title itself. The use of the preposition 'of 'and absence of 'with' after 'coping' make the syntax awkward. A similar case is spotted on the fourth tip: "EAT A HEALTHY" where the presence of an article 'a' or absence of an object after 'health' makes the statement illogical.

The markings on Figure 5 as seen below, are the continuation of those in Figure 4. The risers where they are written adjoined the half space landing of the staircase previously discussed. It can be observed that there is consistency in the handwriting as well as in the use of indicator: "TIP NO. (digit)" before the two statements. From the landing area, arranged per occupied riser, texts are indicated as follows:

"It's not CEBU without U"

"Your story is not over yet"

"Want someone to talk to? CALL"

"Tawag Paglaum – 0939-937-"

"5433 / 0939-936-5433 / 0927-654-1629"

"TIP NO.6: Challenge Negative Thinking"

"TIP NO 5: Get a daily dose of Sunlight"

Figure 5 The half landing staircase situated midway up the right-hand staircase (Sidewalk A)

The unique feature on this staircase is the presence of the new set of texts on the gray-colored risers. Unlike in Figure 3 where the statement: "Seek professional help if you feel you need it", this pathway already contains specific information as to where to 'seek professional help'. Similar to other linguistic landscapes with preventive reminders, hotline numbers are provided. As of the time of writing, all numbers are active. The lines are directed to Tawag Paglaum Centro Bisaya (Cebu), a government run program by Department of Health Region VII and Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center. This is a 24-7 depression and suicide intervention crisis hotline, whose responders are mental health professionals. They provide non-provocative and non-aggressive exchanges, expressive responses, and active listening. Callers are offered with advice and to better meet their needs, they are referred to professionals who deal with counseling, psychological, and psychiatric services (Tawag Paglaum - Centro Bisaya, n.d.). Among the eight staircases, this is the only one provided with the hotline numbers. Although the staircase markings may not offer a direct treatment procedures and is more like a passive psychosocial intervention or an information drive (J. Un, personal communication, January 27, 2022), accessing the hotline information can serve the callers direct active mediation for care and cure. Due to its worn appearance though, (approximated that the markings are already years old), and with the dark prints with a gray background, the texts are almost not noticeable. Point-to-point communications link that connects emergency services such as police tip hotlines or suicide crisis hotlines must be easily seen and conveniently accessible by the public. The fact that the numbers are only seen on this particular staircase, walkers passing by this tread are the only ones to notice the numbers.

Figure 6 below shows the third main staircase for this semiotic analysis. To mentally stimulate and notify the readers, like on the other two, the promptings: "SKIP YOUR WORRIES, TAKE A STEP." And "COLOR YOUR MIND" are also on the first few risers from the flooring. The title "Ways of Stress Management" is also in the middle part of the staircase, followed by the chronologically numbered texts going up. Unlike the previous, the listed 'ways' on this staircase, are no longer preceded by a word but instead, a number sign (#) before each number is produced. The inscriptions are listed as follows:

"#1 Keep a positive attitude"

"#2 Accept that you can't control events in life"

"#3 Learn and Practice Relaxation techniques"
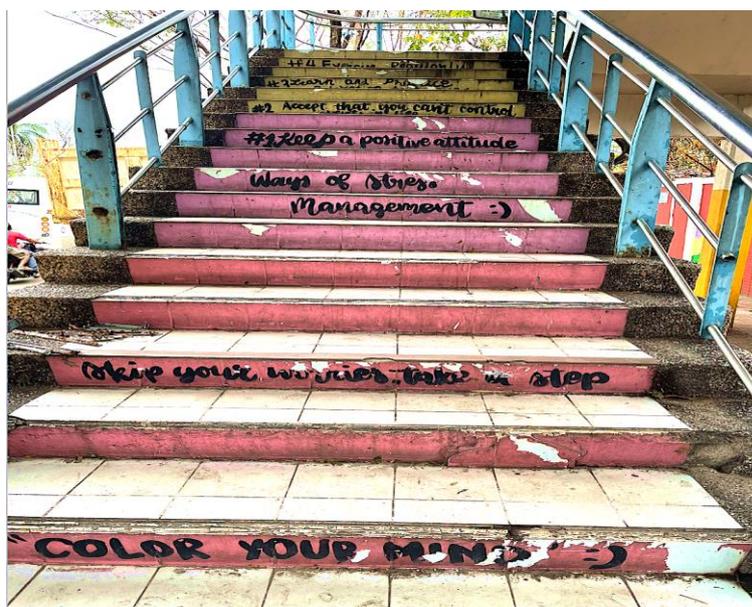
"#4 Exercise Regularly"

Figure 6 The right-hand main staircase with inscriptions about: "Ways of Stress Management" (Sidewalk B)

Considering the linguistic conventions, the only deficiency observed from this group of written discourse, is the absence of a period (.) after each sentence and the random use of upper case such as in words 'Regularly', 'Practice', 'Relaxation'. Negative verb conjugation is also seen [can't] but the effect may be less as it is headed by an affirmative verb 'accept'. As per audience design, the most distinct feature on it is the script fonts used in almost all of the written discourses. Only the text "COLOR YOUR MIND" is not in a cursive writing. Even the line "Skip your worries" which is supposed to be a counterpart-introductory note to 'COLOR YOUR MIND', is also inscribed in a longhand style. Usually the flowing manner of the texts in semiotic landscapes represent uniqueness, creativity, and perceptibility. In logo design, this visual stimulating writing style suggests history, emotion, and experience. However,

in accordance with font psychology as cited by Hodgson (n.d.), the flowing manner of script fonts also provoke ideas of femininity. The staircase on Figure 6 depicts the ways on stress management. If the interpretation of font psychology is considered, wouldn't this be counted as a sample case of gender-biased textual presentation? Or the usage of the stylish font was really intended to address the intended recipients who are mostly the 'stressed' women?

The last staircase for this semiotic analysis is presented on Figures7 which contains various statements about "How to have a positive outlook in life". From the stair landing, are the following texts arranged per occupied riser:

"Beware the Self"

"fulfilling Prophecy"

"Practice Thought Stopping"

"Stop Complaining"

"HOW TO HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK IN LIFE"

"Skip your worries,"

"Take a step (smile emoji)"

"COLOR YOUR MIND"

Figure 7 The left-hand main staircase with inscriptions about: "How to Have A Positive Outlook in Life" (Sidewalk B)

Scott (2020) stressed out that positive thoughts reduce the amount of stress. Pure Recovery California (2019) supported this argument and added that positive mental attitude can make people physically and mentally healthier. The inscriptions on the steps as shown in Figure 7 serve as the overall advice for anxiety, depression, and stress management, synthesizing the inscriptions on the above-discussed staircases. The faulty mood regulation by the brain is thought to be one of the major causes of mental health issues. It is the crucial state of the mind that can lead to all the other symptoms. According to studies, positive thinking has been linked to health benefits such as lower blood pressure, less heart disease, better weight control, and lower blood sugar levels. Positive outlook can considerably improve one's quality of life even when faced with an incurable sickness (Brody, 2017).

In Figure 7, grammatical errors make two statements ambiguous. The texts: "Beware the Self-fulfilling Prophecy" and "Practice Thought Stopping" are difficult to understand at one glance. Similarly, prepositions in Figure 4 ("Tips of Coping Depression") and Figure 6 ("Ways of Stress Management") are also erroneous. It is important to note that the deviation from the immanent rules of language can badly affect communication. Erroneous sentences are considered subpar and may appear illogical or meaningless. This may also jeopardize the credibility of the sender, as the receiver may arrive to different negative conclusions. Distrust is most likely to happen when the source is considered unreliable. This will then result to the defeated purpose of mass participation.

Another exclusive feature observed, is the inclusion of smile emoji and emoticons. Such non-verbal cues pertain to a rich emotional meaning of positive feelings. A smiling emoji or emoticon can be used to express happiness, gratitude or friendliness. It makes all the statements warm, easy, and helpful to the recipients. The smiling emoji after the statement: "Take a step" may also imply a reminder that the reader can receive a smile back from others when he/she does the advice. Moreover, the use of this sort of digital-based communication could also lead to the intended recipients of the writings. Surveys specified 92% of the online population with about 50% of young adults aged 18-29 uses emojis on a daily basis. This assumption coincides the facts released by National Institute of Mental Health (2022), that young adults aged 18-25 years had the highest prevalence of mental health illnesses. Producing particular effects for the intended recipients such as the emojis discussed above is known in sociolinguistics as 'audience design' (Bell, 1997).

My random investigations led me to some information about the producers of the linguistic landscapes. According to the local government, the text resourcefulness on the stairs was initiated by a local youth group whose action was also supported by the local government, particularly by the Department of Health, the principal health agency in the Philippines and Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center, a government-owned hospital in Cebu. It is

indeed noteworthy that the publicly displayed written discourse on this study related to mental health campaigns was produced by a group of youngsters whose goal is to help the society (most particularly the younger ones) minimize detrimental consequences brought about by mental disorders.

Conclusion

The sign emplacement, the linguistic markings, and the audience designs clearly strengthen the meaningful contents produced in the analyzed urban skywalk. Also, the methods of communication, types of information, and manner of presentation highlight the communicative intents featured on the platform. With the flow of semiosis, language presence and modalities of linguistic representation, the identity of the producers and the intended recipients are also revealed. The role of the skywalk staircases as semiotic landscape on this study does not only serve as the source of data for analysis of language but also performs as the foundation in revealing the status of mental health issue in the locality. Initiatives in emplacing publicly displayed written discourses such as on this investigated resource also reminds us that there really are people mostly the young ones who are genuinely become the advocates of mental health. Despite the inconsistency and inappropriacy on some of its linguistic elements, the subject public space is nonetheless creative, informative, supportive, practical, and meaningful. Multimodality in visual communication as in the context of the markings on the stairways of the skywalk in Cebu has proven its value in reinforcing current mental health advocacies and efforts, specifically on the aspect of the global movements for managing anxiety, depression, and stress.

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