Linguascaping denotes the act of exploring and experiencing urban spaces and places of varied linguistic and cultural complexity through mindful observation of one’s immediate surroundings.
Welcome to the first issue of

LinguaScaping

Toronto

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Cover Image: Cabbage Rose Love (Cabbage Town) by Ryan Dineen
Graphic Design by Kelsey Carriere
A city is not just brick and mortar.

A city is its people and their stories, both those told and those waiting to be told.

In urban spaces, we often orient ourselves and others with words and lexical expressions, such as here, over there, in front of a commercial sign, billboard, public message. These linguistic pointers play the role comparable to that of geoformations.

Metaphorically speaking, words become building blocks in defining the linguistic landscape of space, making it a place, distinct, bounded but not static, and appropriated over time. Words define us and connect us. Words that we read but also words that we utter, write and, ultimately, share.
Complex—demographically, culturally and linguistically layered and historically sedimented—cities, such as Toronto, have commensurably intricate stories to tell. From Little Italy and Little Portugal to Chinatown and Koreatown to Little India, language becomes the marker, in its own right. Whether it is the emblematic use of Italian on display of pizzerias on College Street, witnessing the presence of the Italian community in this part of Toronto, or the display of Chinese writing in all its variants in Markham and elsewhere in the Greater Toronto Area, the mere sight of the ethnolinguistic artifacts bears meaning.

Yet this is only one part of the story. It not only matters what is out there to be communicated, but also who reads these messages. A reader is never any reader. From a sophisticated reader of Greek to a casual passerby who can barely tell the distinct Greek-styled lettering on a dairy product with a relative confidence, there is a path to tread. Yet both types of readers may have a refined taste for a quality yogurt and are invested in its health benefits. They still share a story.

This is what we have explored this term in our CTL3105: Language and Literacies Education in Multilingual Contexts class and this is what has inspired this magazine. Linguascaping Toronto Magazine has been put together by the ethnographically-minded students in the CTL (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning) graduate program at OISE.

I invite you to read their work and consider the linguascaping accounts related to language and cultural groups in Toronto selected for this volume: that is, those related to the Arabs, Chinese, Ethiopians, French and la Francophonie, Irish, Jews, Koreans and Russians, who live in this city. In groups of three, students collaboratively “shaped” (-scaped) and negotiated their own linguistic places, which is the topic of this magazine.
The Linguascaping Toronto project as the final assignment in CTL3015

The focus of the course was on multilingual and multimodal literacies in urban areas as well as in cyberspace. Through select readings representing a variety of educational and pedagogical contexts and settings, both formal and informal, the students had an opportunity to (a) familiarize themselves with the concepts and theories related to multilingualism and multilingual literacy practices; (b) examine underlying issues and phenomena in society and in schooling; (c) conduct relevant fieldwork independently and extend the work collaboratively; and, informed by the above, (d) design and reflect on pedagogical practices and applications.

Based on the results of this fieldwork-driven inquiry, and informed by purposefully selected readings, the students explored a variety of methods and methodologies: autoethnography, discourse and thematic analysis, corpus-based analysis, semiotic and multimodal analysis, psychogeography and narrative analysis, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Thematically, the focus was on linguistic landscapes, a popular field of inquiry among sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists, semioticians (students of signs and meaning-making), human geographers, and, increasingly, among applied linguists and educators, which explores ramifications and underlying motivations of language presence in public places and spaces.

The pedagogical aims of the course were to enable the students to translate research into practice that can be used in classrooms. To this end, we explored a range of frameworks and disciplinary perspectives and lenses, allowing a variety of learning styles, talents and creative initiatives to be realized to a full potential, both individually and collaboratively.

This magazine features not only students’ narratives and narrative analyses, but also photographs they took as well as their original artwork, including drawings, sketches, water color paintings and digital artefacts.

For their final project, the students explored the concept of linguascaping, which is meant to describe the act of exploring and experiencing urban spaces and places of varied linguistic and cultural complexity through mindful observation of one’s immediate surroundings.

The project exemplifies the basic tenets of experiential and collaborative learning, driven by task-based inquiry, critical examination and involving multiple modalities, the skills and approaches necessary in today’s classrooms and in teaching.
**Key terms and concepts**

**Linguistic Landscapes.** In sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, the term linguistic landscapes generally describes presence (and sometimes also absence) of various languages in public spaces (Landry and Bourhis, 1997), including billboards and various street signage. As such, the term is often associated with multilingualism.

**Information vs. Symbolism.** The mere presence of particular languages within one’s vista sends a message in its own right, such as that a particular ethnic, linguistic or religious group inhabits or conducts business in the area, thus covertly marking the space. The symbolic aspects of the phenomenon of linguistic landscapes include propagation of certain ideologies, beliefs and hidden agendas (e.g., Shohami, 2006).

**Linguascape.** In the literature, the term linguascape is used either to describe spaces of linguistic fusion in various social contexts, such as linguistic ethnoscapes and ideoscapes (Dovchin, 2017;) or as a common denominator for different communicative embodiments and media, including physical spaces (Ivković, 2012; Thorne and Ivković, 2015).

**Linguascaping.** With a focus on the subjective experience of spaces, Ivković (2012) uses the term linguascaping to account for the very process of meaning and sense-making: that is, as mindful, in-depth examination of one’s immediate surroundings (Ivković, Cupial, Arfin and Ceccato, 2019).

**-scape.** In modern English, -scape* is a bound morpheme (the basic unit of meaning in a word that cannot stand on its own) that only exits in words and word forms such as landscape, soundscape and landscaping. In Old English, however, its etymological equivalent, the word scapan (to shape, to create), is a free morpheme, meaning that it can appear alone in a sentence without other words or word forms. Similarly, in the modern Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), the etymological equivalents of this Old English word appear in lexical compounds and expressions such as skape musikk (to create music, to compose) or musikkskapelse (a musical composition), in Norwegian.

**Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is a buzz word today in academia and particularly in education, inspired by some tenets of the philosophy and psychology of Buddhism in the East and the philosophy of phenomenology of the West (Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty). However, the merits of an in-depth and meaningful analysis still stand and may not be just a fad. The results of such investigations should nevertheless be subject to scrutiny and scholarly rigor for the sake of applicability, replicability and generalizability, as meaningful contributions to qualitative research.
**Linguascaping as a Metaphor.**

Linguascaping is seen metaphorically as a process of discursive formations of individual as well as shared places with and through language. Figuratively speaking, putting one’s impressions of spaces into words is construed as linguistic place-making. Accordingly, the conceptual metaphor (figurative comparison) (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003) draws from the analogies that WORDS ARE BRICKS and that STORY TELLING IS MORTAR that glue these readings of space in a cohesive and communicable whole, at least partially representative of Toronto’s linguistic landscape at large.

**Linguascaping as a Construct.**

As a construct, linguascaping draws from the existing concept of linguistic landscaping: It frames the existing phenomenon of language presence and its concept in sociolinguistics in order to emphasise the process and agentive role of more or less idiosyncratic (unique or characteristic of a person) interpretations.

**Linguascaping as a Heuristic and Protocol.**

The construct is operationalized as a pedagogical heuristic and protocol through a sequence of methodical steps and deliverables leading to a final product such as completion of a course assignment or this magazine.

**Objective reality vs. Subjective Experience.**

Objective reality exists independent of individual experiences. As long as the empirical parameters are clearly defined, such as what constitutes a sign and what constitutes a language, these objects and artefacts can be tallied, categorized and statistically measured.

**Denotation.**

Linguistic experiences are conditioned on one’s linguistic knowledge. Two people of a similar linguistic background, however, are likely to have similar understandings of at least denotational, communicative aspects of the message.

**Connotation.**

Connotative readings of the message, which hinge on past linguistic and non-linguistic experiences, are likely to produce different analogies and associations, or connotations.

**Intersubjectivity and Sharable Insights.**

Once subjective readings and experiences are communicated, negotiated and, ultimately, agreed upon, these intersubjective insights are advanced to the level of sharable and replicable experiences, albeit limited in scope and applicability.

**Linguascaping: Questions, Method, Protocol**

The focus of this issue was on the following ethnic and cultural groups in Toronto and the space they live and/or work in: the Arabs, Chinese, Ethiopians, French and la Francophonie, Irish, Jews, Koreans and Russians.
Our mission was to see where, what, how, and why the given phenomena related to linguistic and cultural complexity might reside in various places along the covered route or area examined. The students recorded their observations in the form of narratives, photographs, drawings and audio files, which constituted the dataset.

More specifically, the students were tasked to address the following questions in their narratives: what is happening here? What is the purpose of this place? What conversations and practices take place here? Furthermore, they were asked to pay special attention to the everyday practices, discourses and cultures.

To this end, the students themselves had to identify not only the locus of, but also the specific approach for, conducting fieldwork, either focusing on a particular street, city block (e.g., Chinese, Arab, Korean, Ethiopian), select institutions (French, Jewish), businesses (Russian) or even events (Irish).

The protocol involved two individual visits of the area in question, separated by at least seven days, each resulting in a ‘psychogeographic’ narrative (PN1, PN2), accompanied by photographs. After finishing the PN2, the students exchanged their narratives within their teams (of three participants), discussed and negotiated emergent themes, which were the highlights of the project.

In Toronto, on April 15th, 2019

Dejan Ivković/Дејан Ивковић, PhD

References


Organization of the magazine

The magazine presents eight articles, each related to one of the communities above. Each article begins with a brief background section that gives basic geographical, historical and demographic information, illustrated with a map of the area and/or points of investigation.

The emergent themes occupy the central part of each article, in which the themes are described, followed by psychogeographic narrative excerpts (PN-s) and photographs related to each of the themes.

Embedded within each article are the vignette; that is, frames with multilingual and multimodal packaging designs of products characteristic of the culture in questions sold in Canada and respecting Canada’s bilingual language policy, followed by brief explanation of the artefacts. This assignment preceded the linguascape fieldwork, with a purpose to ‘sensitize’ the students to multilingual and multimodal stimuli on a micro level, focusing on the details rather than on the larger picture, which in turn was the goal of the linguascape task.

Violetta Parra Mural at Dundas and Brock, photo by Salena Barry
French: où ça?

Xiang (Olivia) Li was an education consultant in Shanghai for two years, and assisted over fifty students with their educational planning before studying at OISE. Except for education, she is always passionate about languages and cultures. She speaks Mandarin and English, and is now brushing up on her French skills.

Winnie Liu is a FSL educator and Elementary Technology Lead Teacher at York Region District School Board. She has taught languages internationally in China, Taiwan and France. She has a passion for innovation and student engagement. She is interested in identity and integrating Modern Learning approaches to Second Language Learning.

Sabrina Rokerya is a language and culture aficionado, Francophile, and an Ontario certified French and Italian Teacher. As a passionate language educator, Sabrina is multilingual in 9 languages, teaches French at the Ontario Government, and is completing her Master of Education in Language and Literacies Education. At OISE, the University of Toronto. With the goal of seeing a truly bilingual Canada, Sabrina is also completing a specialization with the Centre de recherches en éducation franco-ontarienne at OISE.

The Francophone population occupies less than 3% of Toronto’s total population, and is unevenly distributed throughout the Census Metropolitan Area (Langlois & Gilbert, 2008). There is no particular area or neighbourhood designated to French language or culture or even where French speakers might meet or congregate, so where are the linguistic spaces where the general public might experience “la francophonie” and “French language” around Toronto? We struggled to name a specific location or discover a French enclave, so instead we visited quintessential sites, home to “French experiences” across Toronto and accessible to the public, such as educational institutions, restaurants and bakeries, art galleries, cinemas, French Open Mic, lectures, and a lineup of events celebrating La Semaine de la Francophonie (March 18 - March 31) at various venues around the city.

We noticed the emphasis on French language in the educational institutions we visited. We agreed that Toronto French School was a famous example of a private Elementary/High school that proudly exemplified excellence in French Language. Directly across from TFS, there is a post-secondary institution of a French Campus: Glendon College of York University. Both are nestled in the heart of Bayview Avenue and Lawrence area. Our final destination was the French Cultural Institute; Alliance Française, a global French network with 800 locations in 132 countries, with one of its locations in downtown Toronto, just South of Spadina and Bloor.
Lack of French language presence in a bilingual country

On the surface, Toronto seems to haven’t fully embraced French language and culture. French makes very rare appearances on the street/shop signs or in peoples’ conversations. French is living through the ephemerality of events, within people, in homes, and most prominently in French language institutions trying to preserve this linguistic heritage that is seemingly ubiquitous and yet nowhere to be found.

“Strolling east along Bloor Street, I look attentively at the bright signs of streets and shops, while I notice that French makes very rare appearance. Only one solitary sign writing “Crêpe à gogo” hangs on the storefront of a crepe restaurant, standing alone at the crossroads of Spadina Road and Bloor Street. The faded soft yellow letters radiate the warmth of the sunlight, displaying a tinge of melancholy. On the surface, Toronto seems haven’t fully embraced French, one of the nation’s official languages other than English. If I say “bonjour” to a store clerk, they will perhaps be caught off guard and give me a perplexing look. Neither the subway signs nor the street signs display French besides English. Walking on Bloor Street, I constantly hear Mandarin, Korean or Spanish, while I seldom overhear people speaking French. It’s even less frequent to hear French conversations here compared with where I lived in Shanghai (I used to live in Shanghai’s French concession, a former foreign concession until the 1940s, where it was common to hear the strangers sharing a table with you speaking French). Is French a declining language in Toronto? Keeping this question in my mind, I reached the first destination of today’s trip – Alliance Française, the largest French language school and cultural center in Canada, boasting a history of 116 years.” - Olivia

“Previously, Elaine Gold, the Museum Director had mentioned that the Canadian Language Museum was a travelling exhibit, finding refuge in a library here or a exhibit there and for most of the time in the nooks and crannies in storage. Being given the space at Glendon was a major turning point for the Language Museum, although it still lacks funding and relies entirely on donations and some of her own pocket money to run, having a physical space gave it a permanent home and a tangible presence for students and teachers to visit and even attracted visitors and tourists across Toronto.” - Winnie
French in educational contexts

The only place we felt it “continuing” was with educational French institutions. We talked about French education from different dimensions: Toronto French School, a private French Elementary/High school; Glendon College of York University, a post-secondary institution of a French Campus; and Alliance Française, a global French cultural institution.

“We turn into the new wing of the building that received $20 million in 2008 from the Government of Ontario as a Excellence for French-language and Bilingual Postsecondary Education in southern Ontario. This part of the campus has a futuristic, modern, sleek look with minimalist curves and floor to ceiling glass windows. Across one wall there is an art installation “Que est votre moment GL?”, a community photo project with Instagram square-like photos of student life. Diego points out some of his spaces on campus: the state-of-the art language labs, an amphitheatre, and the Glendon Theatre.” - Winnie

“We peek into the student lounge and hear robust and animated conversations in French. It is so different than the truncated and rehearsed French I use with my own Core French students. Despite French being the common language, the students are racially and culturally diverse, I get the sense that it is very close-knit community. My ears adjust to hearing students converse so naturally with each other in French, each with its unique sonarity and accent occasionally I hear students code-switch between English and French. We saunter past murals of student artwork, posters, and bulletin boards pasted with upcoming events and student council election papers. Diego explains that everything on campus needs to be bilingual to be approved to put on the walls, and sure enough every poster appeared in duplicate. Once in French and once in English. We walk down a narrow hallway of professors’ offices plastered with an assortment of events, research projects, pamphlets and posters ranging from theatre to lectures and poetry in many different languages.” - Winnie

“After visiting Toronto French School, I thought about my own experience in French Immersion and how in 1995, school boards were seeking enrolment and were asking parents to enrol their children in French Immersion. As the desire for French education has immensely increased, today, we see parents competing with each other for a spot for their children in the French Immersion system. There is now a ballot system in place to obtain a spot in the program.” - Sabrina
Les français > Le français

As we explored French culture and la francophonie in the diverse and dynamic city of Toronto, we noticed that there was no “French enclave” or amalgamation of French people, community or society. Instead, la francophonie is spread throughout the region and city. By exploring different hubs and places as examples of la francophonie, and speaking to the people we interviewed, we further gathered knowledge to a known phenomenon; with la francophonie we celebrate les français as opposed to le français. This notion supports the fact that French is spoken in many countries around the world, and when thinking of French, we should not only think of France or Québec. Even within Canada, we see varieties of French culture and language (from Acadian French to Ontarian French to Quebecois French). When we think of those who have brought French to Canada from other parts of the world, we recognize North African French, West African French, Belgian French, and Parisian French amongst others.

“Besides these common cultural symbols of France, I am particularly attracted to a photography exhibition presented in the gallery - The Warriors, by Kathleen Hearn, a Canadian visual artist and photographer. The photos depict Senegalese youth and landscapes. I stare at one picture which captures a group of athletic black young men roller skating. A blast of energy, fearlessness and vitality bursts out of the frame and plunges me into deep thoughts. For a long time, I connected French with delicacy, elegance and refinement. I learned it from the textbooks, from my Belgian and Parisian teachers, from my traveling experience to France. I admired this language as it is the language of arts, fashion, theatre, the boutiques on les Champs-Élysées and the delicate pastel colors in impressionist paintings. My perception about French changed until last summer I traveled to Madagascar. The poor local children stood with their bare feet on the muddy ground, gently knocking on my car windows, “Madame, achetez un souvenir, s’il vous plait.” I suddenly realized that French is not only a language of France, Belgium or Québec. It is also a language widely spoken in Africa, the former French colonies, and some of them are the least undeveloped countries and regions in the world. Francophone culture is more complex and comprehensive than French culture. They have shared features, while they also have inherent diversity.” - Olivia
“To be in the presence of so many francophones and to be able to watch and listen to acts of music, dance, poetry and comedy, all expressing in French, how they each understood and felt about their own intrinsic francophone identity, allowed me observe a variety francophone repertoires. The event also allowed me to further hone my notion of francophonie as an amalgamation of diverse francophone cultures, as opposed to one single, communal grouping of “francophone/francophonie”.

-Sabrina

In our narratives, we all wrote about French and la francophonie based on our perspectives, observations and personal experiences. For example, the linguascaping project allowed Olivia, a Chinese-native, to compare her experience learning French in China with the Alliance Francaise, to being in Canada today, a bilingual country, being married to a francophone from Gabon, who seeks to find opportunities to use his French in Toronto. For Winnie, a Canadian-born Chinese, grew up in a Core French program before studying abroad in France and currently teaches Core French to multilingual Elementary students. Sabrina is a language aficionado who learned French at a young age through the French Immersion program, which was a push from her immigrant parents to have their children learn both official languages of Canada. She also became a French Canada, and is always seeking opportunities to merge experiential learning and bilingualism in an officially bilingual country. Our collective interest in French, varying proficiencies, and diverse range of life experiences shaped our narratives through unique lenses.

We all agree that it is difficult to find la Francophonie in Toronto. Francophones are scattered all over the city, and most of them speak English or other languages apart from French. However, after this project, we are convinced that there is still a vibrant community of people who are fascinated by French and the Francophone culture in Toronto. We also find that French education is gaining in popularity. Parents started to notice the importance of learning French and now are fighting for a spot for their children to get enrolled in the French Immersion program. Studies also verified that “the French Immersion and Extended French programs are considerably effective for promoting students’ academic achievement in both the elementary and secondary school panels” (Toronto District School Board, 2015, p. 1). Given the rising popularity of French, we think that the Francophones and the Francophiles need a gathering area in the city, where French restaurants, cafés and grocery stores, pâtisseries, theatres, art exhibitions and other cultural events can thrive. Building a Francophone neighborhood can rejuvenate French language and heritage, while encouraging people to embrace Francophone culture, which will strengthen Toronto’s biculturalism - a notion our government had for the country in 1971.

References


Today we see a Toronto that is so diverse, hosting boroughs, areas and enclaves with a dynamic linguistic landscape. This is the concept we have used to cater to the teaching of “la francophonie” in Toronto. French Culture is not just about the streets of Paris or about the laws of Quebec. Our concept allows various learners from different backgrounds to become autonomous independent learners, by observing the diversity of Toronto, and how it relates to and reflects la francophonie. Cultures and languages co-exist and this is what we have tried to portray.

With our project “les francarons” we decided to create an authentic design to take language learning outside of the four walls of the classroom and into the enclaves of the Greater Toronto Area, with an exposition into la francophonie. We took the French concept of les macarons, a known French delicacy, which come in a variety of flavours and colours, to explain “la francisation” and “la francophonie” in Toronto. Our design represents multiple linguistic concepts. Our design is a macaron advertisement: twelve colorful macarons, descriptions of different flavors, a pattern of vines circling the product’s name “Francarons”. The first message “Francarons” yields a feeling of France, as it is combined with two French words “Francophone” and “macaron”. Except of connotational meaning of “Francarons”, the font of “Francarons” also reveals the underlying denotational meaning: Frenchy, fancy and dedicated. The other linguistic messages in our design include the names and descriptions of different flavors of the macarons. We wrote both English and French in our descriptions, which shows that it is a bi-cultural product. We also wrote the texts in different font styles: Cursive, Italic, Roman and Boat. The cursive and italic font styles evoke a strong European feeling, which implies that the macarons are of authentic French taste. Putting aside the linguistic messages, the images in our design also provide much denotational meanings. The macaron is a representative cultural image of France. Additionally, the pattern of vines generates a feeling of European classics. And the beautiful colors of the macarons and the texts also give audience a chic and fashionable Parisienne vigor.
Discovering the Unexpected: Linguascaping “Little Ethiopia” on the Danforth

Hamdi Warsame was born in Somalia but grew up in Canada. She speaks Somali, and English, with English as her dominant language. As a child she lived in Ethiopia for a year, which exposed her to the Ethiopian culture and language (Amharic).

Lucheng Wang’s first language is Chinese and she can understand and speak the Nanjing dialect of Chinese. She began her English language studies in third grade. Lucheng also studied French in university for two years and is capable of understanding most informal spoken messages in Japanese.

Dalia Najera was born in Guatemala and Spanish is her first language. Her family moved to a mid-sized city 100 km west of Toronto when she was 9 and English became her dominant language. She studied French in school and Korean while living and working abroad.

Toronto’s Danforth Avenue neighbourhood was named after Asa Danforth whose job it was to cut the Danforth in 1799 (Myrvold 1992). However, the area was not built until 1851, when the Don and Danforth Plank Road Company linked it with Broadview Avenue (Myrvold 1992). This connection made it feasible for people in the surrounding neighbourhoods to get across more efficiently. Historically, the first community to settle in the area was composed of immigrants from England, Ireland, and Scotland. The Italians followed in the 1950s, settling in the east. Later in the 1960s, the area experienced another influx of immigrant communities arriving from other parts of the world, the largest group being from Greece (Myrvold 1992). By the 1970s however, many of the Greeks and Italians relocated to the less dense outer suburbs. In the mid-1960s the neighbourhood once again underwent new changes with the development of the Bloor Danforth subway line which sparked an increase in home renovations and real estate developments (Myrvold 1992).

More recently, Toronto’s Danforth neighbourhood has come to be known by many as “Greek Town,” due to its large Greek community. The neighbourhood hosts one of the city’s more famous food festivals - Taste of the Danforth, which brings the vibrant Greek culture and cuisine on display for everyone to share. However, in the last decade, this east-side neighbourhood has undergone some major changes, with the arrival of new communities. One of these communities is Toronto’s Ethiopian community which is sparsely spread out in the area between Woodbine and Jones, with the bulk of the businesses located in a four-block stretch between Greenwood and Monarch Park Avenue. In 2010, members of the Ethiopian diaspora in Toronto petitioned for the city to formally designate the area as “Little Ethiopia,” however Toronto’s Association of Business Improvement Area (BIA), has formally designated the area as “The Danny,” noting that the Ethiopian community was only one of many diverse cultures that had established roots in the neighbourhood (Mok 2018).
Emblematic presence of cultural markers

This theme is concerned with the presence and absence of markers associated with the Ethiopian culture.

“Most of the Ethiopian restaurants on Danforth Avenue such as Zobel, Lalibela Restaurant, Blue Nile, Sora restaurant, Rendez-vous also wrote their names in English, but not all of them used Amharic letters at the same time. If the sign was bilingual, the font of the English letters was significantly larger. I was surprised to notice this phenomenon because in Chinatown area the Chinese characters on the shop signs were usually much larger than the English. I presume the reason might be that there are fewer Amharic speakers than Chinese or English but the owner hoped to attract more guests from different cultures. Considered that English is one of the languages that have most speakers all over the world, writing the name of the restaurant in English might be much easier to understand for most people. “- Lucheng

“Next is the Abyssinia Restaurant, advertising fine Ethiopian Dining. There is Amharic on the sign ኣበስንያ, which upon checking, just translates to “Abyssinia”, I imagine it is probably a name since there is no translation. The logo has the Ethiopian flag colours and the Lion of Judah in the middle. This might be the most overt representation of “Ethiopian-ness” I have seen so far.” - Dalia

“I came across a restaurant called “Hirut”- in all honesty, nothing about the restaurant was overtly Ethiopian, since both the name and address were written in Latin script. What caught my attention, however, was its sandy coloring that reminded me of the African desert. This is what initially prompted me to stop walking and led to my discovering the smaller Latin print on the bottom left-hand side that read “Fine Ethiopian Cuisine.” As I took a picture, I wondered if the inside of the restaurant looked, and felt different than the outside that looked devoid of any “Ethiopian-ness”. - Hamdi

Cultural markers such as language, can help identify the presence of a particular culture in a space. The presence, or in this case absence, of cultural markers was observed by all three participants. There was a noticeable lack of markers representing the Ethiopian culture and the markers that were visible included only the use of Amharic on signs and the occasional flag or flag colours. For example, in scene 1, Lucheng describes the use of Amharic and English on signage, and explains that English is the more dominant language and even notices that some of the restaurants do not use Amharic at all. In scene 2, Dalia describes the use of cultural markers on one sign as being the only overt use of such markers. Finally, in scene 3, Hamdi observes that a restaurant claiming to be Ethiopian looks devoid of any cultural markers associated with the Ethiopian culture. The space did not exhibit a lot of “Ethiopian-ness”. There was an absence of other cultural markers such as sounds or smells that were distinctly Ethiopian.
Generational and cultural transitions

This theme is concerned with the sharing of space along the route and the generational and cultural transitions observed in the area.

“There were only two tables were occupied in the Lalibela restaurant, but what surprised me was that a couple of Chinese couples were sitting not far away from me. I also saw many Chinese restaurants on Danforth Avenue.

“On the first morning, I come across an Italian café, with several older gentlemen sitting outside smoking, speaking Italian. On the second walk, I start to pass the Italian cafés again, and now armed with the knowledge that this was once considered a “Little Italy”, I see them from a different perspective. I can imagine that the Italian people that frequent these places, must really want to hang on to them. I hear a man yell out in Italian. Again, it is an older gentleman. Next door is G.M Billiards Café, an Ethiopian business. There is a Canada flag outside and Amharic on the sign. On the window, they are advertising products such as macchiatos, cappuccinos, and espresso. A quick peek inside shows me that there are pool tables and of course a tv showing a soccer game. I realize that these drinks being advertised on the window, are just leftovers from a previous Italian owned business. The new owners probably took over and didn’t bother to remove the drink names from the window.” - Luchong

“Many of these businesses were placed next to other cultural restaurants and businesses. “Merhaba Bar and Café” was right next to a Mexican restaurant called “El Sol Mexico” whose sign was draped in a bright yellow background and bold red letters, complete with the Mexican flag and an illustration of a cactus tree-native to the Mexican desert. This restaurant, which promised a “northern Mexican cuisine with prehistoric recipes” overwhelmingly, stole the attention away from the more subdued existence of the Merhaba Café, which could’ve been mistaken for a Middle Eastern restaurant if one just caught sight of the name “Merhaba” and missed the tiny Amharic script on top mostly covered by tree branches.” - Hadji

A space is never static, with businesses changing and new people arriving every day, cities and neighbourhoods are dynamic and constantly in transition. Participants noticed a cultural and generational shift in this neighbourhood. The cultural shift is evident in the sharing of space. Scene 4 describes the presence of the Chinese culture in the neighbourhood, both through businesses and people. Scene 5 describes the generational and cultural shift from Little Italy to a more shared space consisting of a variety of multicultural businesses. It was also noted that the majority of the patrons of the Italian businesses were an older generation, reminiscent of a previous time in this space. Finally, scene 6 describes the shared space between an Ethiopian and a Mexican business. It also notes the dominance of the Mexican culture in comparison to the more subdued Ethiopian next-door.
Expectations and Unexpected

This theme is concerned with the expectations the observers had prior to conducting the phenomenological walks and the unexpected finds.

“I noticed that the first page of the menu wrote that "Lalibela Dictionary", which briefly introduced several traditional Ethiopian foods such as Injera, Kitfo and Tibs, as well as the legend of Ethiopian coffee. For people like me who were having Ethiopian food for the first time, this introduction was very considerate and unexpected. I was surprised to notice this phenomenon because when I have had meals in Chinese restaurants in Chinatown, I did not see an English page that introduced traditional Chinese dishes on the menu. The reason might be that businessmen who run restaurants in Chinatown believed that their consumers are mostly Chinese or foreigners who are familiar with Chinese culture.” - Lucheng

“I finally come across an Ethiopian business on this side of the road, at the corner of Danforth and Linnsmore. I am now within the four-block stretch that is supposed to be ‘Little Ethiopia’. The place is called Jimma Coffee Ltd. and there is Amharic on the sign. On the window, there is a large picture of an Ethiopian coffee pot and a sign advertising breakfast. There are also pictures of some dishes, including eggs. I wonder if eggs are traditional breakfast in Ethiopia, or if they are catering to non-Ethiopian clientele as well. I decided to go in for a cup of coffee. When I enter, I notice about 7 or 8 men sitting around on some red leather couches eating snacks out of plastic Ziplock bags and drinking a variety of soft drinks and Perrier waters. They look at me with curiosity in their eyes. I ask if they sell coffee and one man gets up from a table and says yes. He asks if it is for here or to go. This is the first time I am hearing Amharic; I think. The man starts making the coffee, not from a traditional method, but from what looks like a fancy Keurig machine. The TV comes back on and they appear to be watching boxing. I stand awkwardly at the counter waiting for my coffee, but I can feel the men’s eyes on me. This was not the experience I was expecting” - Dalia

“One of the restaurants that I came across towards the end of my walk, called Al Mandi Restaurant, claimed to serve both Middle Eastern and East African cuisine. Like most of the establishments I came across thus far, the name Al Mandi was written in a white Latin script, with a yellow Amharic script written in a smaller font on top. Furthermore, in a slightly bigger font Arabic script was used on the far-right side in green. The overall background color of the display was red. Intrigued by the fusion of the colors presented in just the display I went inside to discover more. Inside the restaurant, I was greeted by the familiar smell of cooking food, Middle Eastern food, in particular, so I wasn’t surprised when the employee at the front told me that they weren’t an Ethiopian restaurant; they were Yemeni. I made a note of telling her that the display outside of her business had Amharic script incorporated with the Arabic and English, but she still insisted that they were Yemeni. This was something that I did not expect, considering the restaurant had Ethiopian elements incorporated into its display.” - Hamdi

All three participants had expectations prior to completing the walks. Most of these expectations were based on their previous experiences and backgrounds. Scene 7 describes Lucheng’s experience eating Ethiopian food for the first time. She was surprised to find a “dictionary” describing Ethiopian dishes. Compared to her experiences in Chinatown in Toronto, she felt this was more inclusive of the diverse customers this restaurant might encounter. In scene 8, Dalia describes an unexpected situation is an Ethiopian café, both she and the men in the store were surprised by her visit and she was surprised to see what looked like a group of friends hanging out at home, rather than a business advertising breakfast and traditional coffee. Finally, in scene 9, Hamdi describes her surprise when she visited a restaurant expecting to find a fusion of Middle Eastern and East African cuisine but instead found that they were strictly Middle Eastern.
The themes which emerged from this study were as follows: emblematic presence of cultural markers, generational and cultural transitions, and expectations and the unexpected. Although these common themes emerged, our interpretations and interactions with the space were influenced by our personal experiences, cultural backgrounds and linguistic profiles. The unique characteristics of each of the participants became the lenses through which the space was interpreted and it yielded equally unique results. This study allowed the participants to interact with a diverse and complex space in a meaningful way.

References


The product description is written both in English and French, in accordance with Canadian language policy and written in a font that mimics Amharic (the main language of Ethiopia) script. In the background is the Ethiopian landscape where coffee has been known to grow wild, and in the foreground is a traditional Ethiopian coffee pot. The design on the coffee pot incorporates the colours of the Ethiopian flag. In addition, we have included the national emblem of Ethiopia but turned the disk into a shape outlining the map of Ethiopia.

Along the bottom of the packaging, we included standard information found on a variety of coffee packaging samples. This information also follows the Canadian language policy. Canadian symbols were included via the maple leafs found at the bottom and the top of the packaging. Buna (ブーナ) is the brand which in Amharic means coffee. The letter <B> represents a cup of coffee and the letter <A> a coffee bean, to strengthen the connection between the word buna and its meaning. According to Ethiopian ancient history, the first Arabica coffee was found in a southwest region of Ethiopia and was called Kaffa.
Identity and Faith Meet Economy:
The Nuances of Arabic Script

Krystal Selbee is a M.Ed Language and Literacy student at OISE. She is an L1 English speaker, an L2 Spanish speaker and currently learning Arabic. Krystal has had encounters with speakers from many languages and has learned high frequency words from languages such as: Ukrainian, Tigrigna, Amharic, Bambara, Wolof, and Somali.

Ilvaad Yusuf is an L1 English Speaker, an L2 Somali Speaker and an L3 Arabic Intermediate Learner. As a child of Somali refugees, she learned to read and write in Somali and Arabic at a young age. This has helped her gauge her identity and communicate with a plethora of people across varying countries and continents.

Ying comes from China and speaks Mandarin as her mother tongue and English as a second language. She has a BA in English Language and Literature.

Our field work took place in Scarborough and more specifically the business district of Wexford Heights. We walked west from Birchmount Rd to Victoria Ave and back. The total walk was approximately 4.4 km.

Wexford Heights is a commercial district that cuts through a residential neighborhood in Scarborough. The neighborhood was first established as a small village around 1848, with the erection of The Church of St. Jude. However, the business district wasn’t formed until 2004, by Councilor Michael Thompson, in an attempt to unify the business community and the residential community. Claiming the status as the most “diverse area of the Greater Toronto Area”, Wexford Heights offers a community league with over 245 business members. According to a 2016 census, it has a population of 27,917, with 48.2% of residents whose L1 is not English, and 29.7% of people speaking a language other than English at home.

Sources:
https://www.wexfordbia.ca
Transliteration: Reflecting Hybridity

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘Transliterate’ (verb) as the process of writing or printings (a letter or word) using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language.

In our field work, we noticed a number of occurrences where Arabic was presented in an English Alphabet. We understand this phenomenon to represent a new generation of customers who have complex, hybrid, linguistic and religious identities.

“I stepped into a store called ‘Al Isra: Islamic Superstore’. On first glances the products for sale connoted that this was a store for Muslim women. Some of the items for sale were various garments, texts, and Islamic art. As I exited one store, I noticed a sign that had “thank you” in English and “Jazak Allah” (may God reward you) in Roman alphabet. This indexes that the clientele that would appreciate a religious blessing and that might speak Arabic but not read it Arabic orthography.”  - Krystal

“None of the other store fronts went the extra mile to signify the presence of a bilingual or multilingual society … when looking closely at the sign, I noticed that all the words are actually just transliterated from Arabic and not actually English words. I would argue that the reason this particular shop is so popular, aside from what it sells, is because people are very much familiar with the terms ‘yala’ and ‘habibi’ and even ‘halal’ that they would know or at least can guess what they mean … because the verbiage is so normalized most people, including myself, wouldn’t even notice [that it is in English] on first glance.”  - Ilwaad

In this image you see a hand written sign that says “thank you” along with some flourishes that divide English from the transliterated Arabic blessing “Jazak Allah”. And lastly, in tiny letters at the bottom, the store’s name Al Isra. This sign was hung on the door facing a customer that would be leaving the shop. Hanging alongside the sign is a hanging lantern, which was one of the products for sale.

This is the external sign for a hookah business with hybrid English Arabic words ‘halalicious’ which means “permitted deliciousness” and habibiz which has the parts of “habibi” (darling) truncated with “biz” for business. Reading as “dear one’s business”.

These excerpts reveal there is a link between Islam and the Arabic language which transcends ethnicity and cultural background to unify people with diverse ethnic identities. Furthermore, the excerpts illustrate the importance of making language accessible for a multitude of Arabic language users in the Canadian context. The observer (a beginner Arabic speaker) in the first excerpt noticed a difference in the meaning between the two texts and who they would be intended for. While the observer (a fluent Arabic speaker) in the second excerpt found the text to perform as an additional language, a “wink”* (Lamarre, 2014), that communicated simultaneously in Arabic and English.

*A “wink” is a word play intended for readers with a “complex language repertoires, but also of a bilingual aesthetic that revels in disrupting and claiming space.”
Non-Singular Arab Culture

This theme explores the differing aspects of Arabic as a language versus “Arab” as a culture. It addresses the varying countries that speak Arabic, yet have different customs and ways of life. It focuses on the differences rather than the similarities.

Another interesting point that I noticed in my second walk, is the difference in the types of Arab cultures in this area. Arabic is a language spoken across the Middle-East and all over northern and Eastern-Africa. It encompasses more than 22 nations with its official language, yet this language is spoken in multiple dialects. Some terms in Arabic are specific to a particular region. For example, as I was finishing up my second walk, I noticed a few store fronts hidden in a side street, just off the course of the map. It was no more than a two-minute walk down this street, and it turned out these store fronts were connected to the larger plaza which had Habibiz and Sahan. As I explored this area, I found three different references to Arab nations in either the name of the shop, the words and/or the symbols. In the first shop, named Aleppo Kebab, I noticed term ‘Aleppo’ which is a major Syrian city. Next to it, I noticed there was a law office with the term ‘Bedawi’ which also can be spelled and pronounced ‘Bedouin’ and refers to the nomadic Arabs who speak the purest and most unadulterated dialect of Arabic in comparison to the majority of speakers within their region.

“Lamerre (2014) mentions that “there is a wide range of ways for playing with language on signage […] and that different strategies are being deployed and quite probably, different types of functions, beyond informational and symbolic, being met as well as different imagined audiences being targeted” (p. 139). With these small winks to the varying differences within the Arab community, signalling a play on distinctive symbols that relate to national pride, we see that certain signage offers more information and audience targeting.” - Ilwaad

“When I stepped into the shop, the salesgirl greeted me with sweet smile and asked me what I was looking for gently. She wore a traditional national dress with a beautiful kerchief (but I was not sure where she came from). I asked her “Is it an Arabic shop?” She said it was a Turkish store and I was surprised at that. When I looked through the stuff on the shelves, I did find several characteristic products from Turkey, such as blue eyes beads, Turkish tapestry, and colourful handicrafts.” - Ying

These examples of difference in and among Arab communities, and Arabic dialects shows the amount of ethnic diversity present within this multilingual society. The different symbols (such as the Lebanese tree) made analyzing text and semiotic structures easier. Further exploring this linguistically diverse space, it was easy to visualize the emergence of different groups of people, who may or may not share the same nationality, faith or dialect, but converse in the mutual intelligibility of a language that spans over a millennium and across two continents and over twenty-two modern nations today. Entering these stores, and greeting every single one of the workers, or owners with the same greeting of ‘As-Salaam-Alaikum’ was the connecting factor that brought together a stranger navigating a familiar place, and the people who welcomed that stranger in using a single common language.
Economic Benefits of Diversity

Economic benefits can be the driving force for economic development. This force can influence and create hybrid linguistic and ethnic identities (Mohsin & Hameed, 2018). In our fieldwork, we noticed various shops and restaurants which were marked by specific cultural and linguistic characteristics. We believe this phenomenon demonstrates a shared solidarity among visible minorities, but also serves to promote business under the banner of Canada’s multicultural mosaic identity.

“I walked into a Somali restaurant that was advertised in both English and Arabic on their marque. The Somali language, since the 60s, has been read and written in the roman alphabet. The name of the restaurant is “Sahan”, which means “plate”. This sign attracts three different potential clients through its use of language. The menu presented dishes with pictures, short descriptions and the Somali name of the dish beside it. The menu is accessible in English and Somali but not Arabic, which leads me to believe that the Arabic on the exterior serves a marker which supports the claim to Halal food (associating Arabic with Islam and Halal).” - Krystal

“Looking at the photos below, we can see that one space involves a multitude of semiotic symbols, and languages including Chinese, English and Arabic. This has to do with the nature of the cuisine that is being offered. The sign caters to three different populations, including the Arab/Muslim community. The symbolism and art work demonstrates a mix of Indian and Chinese cuisine which caters to the Muslim community given that the food is ‘permissible’ to eat. While English text is the most dominant on the sign – and as a result demonstrating the official language of Canada –, Mandarin and Arabic seem to be on an equal playing field in terms of size. This is but one of the examples of a hierarchy of language that I came across on this first linguascaping walk”. - Ihwaad

“Nearly every sign I met is either monolingual with English or bilingual with English and other languages such as Arabic, Korean, Chinese. However, I am sure that there must be some residents know little about English. The staff in the Crown Pastries I have mentioned above is a perfect example. This reminds me of my experiences in Chinatown. Nearly every week I go to the supermarkets in Chinatown to buy food and ingredients for cooking. I notice that most people in Chinatown speak Mandarin or Cantonese, I feel like I am not abroad when I am walking around Chinatown. What surprises me is that once I walked on the Spadina Street, two foreigners passed by me and I heard they spoke Chinese to communicate with each other. It seems that even you do not know English at all, you can still live in Chinatown at ease.”
Admittedly, residents need to grasp basic and daily expressions to help them communicate with local people. More importantly, they need to improve their language ability and skills to become competitive in the workplace and for their business.”

-Ying

These excerpts indicate how economic benefits shape the cultural and linguistic identity in a district. Economy boosts the development of language and culture, and vice versa. The main residents here are from Asia and Africa, such as Indian, Pakistani, Turkish, and Somalia. The semiotic and linguistic elements help to integrate different cultures harmoniously. Although owners might not be proficient in all the languages used in their signs, they incorporate English, alongside other languages, as a way to attract potential customers outside their linguistic community. In a diverse linguistic landscape, presenting multiple languages not only benefits the maintenance of a linguistic identity but also advertises to specific people with complex identities. Driven by the economic benefits, the neighborhood unfolds into a diverse web of interconnected cultures and languages.

From our fieldwork, we understood the phenomenon of linguistic and cultural diversity to be initiated by independent, non-government affiliated, people (Backhaus, 2006). Furthermore, language functions to build economies, reinforce identities, challenge the status quo, and create community. For us, this exploration of linguistic landscapes revealed the complexity of the semiotic deciphering we perform daily. In Wexford Heights, the variety of signs, symbols, and businesses, demonstrates how the intricacies of language can frame a clear image of the multilingual society which Canada claims as part of its national identity. While this area is only a snapshot of the many different varieties of multilingualism in Toronto, it shows in great detail how language acts as a means of connection and representation. This connection is not just between speakers of the same language, or conversely for people who do not share the same ethnic background, but for those who share the same faith. In this instance, Arabic script continues to work as a symbol which is easily identified by all those who practice Islam.

References:
his multilingual/multimodal design project is aimed at improving learners’ understanding about multilingualism, enhancing their creativity, and honing their decoding abilities. In addition, by designing the product, students can correlate what they learn about linguistics, semiotics, and culture, with material objects.

Our packaging combines characteristics of language and design in the form of a water bottle. The brand name is Blue Nile. To symbolize the water of the Nile we used various blues, while the pyramids are icons to represent Egypt (where the Nile is located). We made the font of the brand name in English mimic Arabic text. Moreover, we have the Arabic version of the brand name in the middle of rivers on both sides. Considering this product is exported, we designed the packaging to factor in Canada’s language policies. In addition to the subtle language policy elements, we intertwined the maple leaf with the colours of the Egyptian flag.

The multilingual/multimodal packaging activity offers infinite possibilities for representation and meaning making. It provides learners with the opportunity to examine their social reality, in the material objects that surround them, through an analysis of language, culture and design.
Russian Treasure Hunts in North York

Jessa Banton earned a BA from Dalhousie University in 2009 with a major in Russian History, and a BEd from Lakehead University in 2011. Despite that link to Russia, she cannot speak Russian! Jessa is plurilingual in English, French, and Korean, and spent 6 years teaching English Immersion Kindergarten in Seoul, South Korea.

Khaula A. Khan is an English graduate and teacher. Her research is in South Asian adaptations of Shakespeare, and she is passionate about extending this to her students. Khaula is proficient in Urdu, English, and Punjabi, and Russian is not on her language radar.

Tiancheng Li (Cytti) received her BA in Russian studies from the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in 2009. She speaks Mandarin, English, Russian, as well as some Cantonese and Japanese.

Toronto’s Russian community goes back to late 19th CE, though historical documentation can only be dated back to early 20th CE, especially around the time of the first World War. Early Russian settlers were mostly Orthodox Christians and planned their community around their faith. Perhaps this is why some contemporary Russian stores feature several aisles of Orthodox artefacts. Post World War II, and later following Cold War, Toronto received massive emigrant settlements from Russia, including Russians of the Jewish faith, who speak Hebrew as well as Russian.

In fact, North York features Russian and Jewish populations adjacently, as a good portion of Jewish populations share their ancestry with Russian peoples. The neighbourhood of North York in Toronto, our group’s target location for linguascaping, became the hub of Russian community and settlement, and to this day it caters the community and its culture. As per 2011 census, 30% of the neighborhood population has Russian as the unofficial mother tongue.
Treasure Hunt

The meaning of “treasure hunt” is to search for precious items that are hidden. Russian was not immediately visible in the area, and there was a feeling of searching or “hunting” for the prize: Russian.

“I had to explore through many plazas to find the Russian businesses, largely as a result of it being a driving based location rather than a more pedestrian friendly one [which put me at a disadvantage as a pedestrian]. When describing it to my fiance upon arriving back home, I told him that it had felt kind of like a treasure hunt. While other cultural neighbourhoods, such as Chinatown of Koreatown, might be highly walkable and immersive in their cultures, this Russian neighbourhood felt more like any other typical residential area of the city; but once you started to dig through the plazas and hike across the parking lots, you discovered a whole linguistic and cultural landscape hidden under the average looking Canadian exterior.” - Jessa

“I made my way to the start location and saw the plaza and was immediately relieved – there was visible Russian on shops. Finally! It had taken a good bit of exploration to get to this, and I could not be happier. I was in fact very pleased to have found what I had come for; even if these places were sporadic and unlike the Jewish community I had driven by. If only my target community could be the same … The first plaza had two Russian commercial shops amidst other seemingly English places. I was a bit upset about the small representation, but then settled for having something at least. At that point, these two shops were all I needed! I had walked so much for them.”

- Khaula

“At the beginning of my first walk, I kept walking for like about one hour to pass the big “parking area”, feeling a bit of isolated from what surrounded me. Because almost no one was walking by foot but me. It was like a driving main road area. I noticed what I passed by were some parking squares, driving services centres, trunks renting companies, energy factories, some driving-through fast food stores, three to four Tim Hortons (which characteristically appealed very Canadian style to me, personally), and the Reformed Hungarian Church. While doing my second walk, I walked much faster than the first time, since I already knew what I should put more energy on with intention to spend more time on my destination-the bookstore.”

“Along the long first walk way, I heard no Russian language at all but an uncertain European language once, then the other linguistic phenomena that I have been exposed were all English-related. From my perspective, I assumed that perhaps other people reckon I was a tourist in Canada since I occasionally stopped and took pictures out of the blue while the others who were just going on without a doubt. However, nobody seemed consider me to be awkward or something, in fact, it looked fairly natural to do that.” - Cytti

The feeling of having to search for Russian linguistic presence was frustrating at first. At the beginning of the task, Jessa felt a little angry that Russian was so difficult to find. Khaula was a bit upset to have to work super hard to find something Russian amidst an array of multicultural places. However, the feeling of reward that came after the hard work was a definite bonus. Every time we discovered something Russian hidden behind something that appeared Canadian or European from the outside, like Yummy Market or Ve Ta Boutique, it was like we had uncovered a secret, hidden treasure. As soon as we walked into all of those places, we let go of all the frustration. It was as though that hunting had been recognized; it was acknowledged. The exploration and act of seeking out what was not immediately noticeable really characterized the entire experience. All the shops were increasingly immersive, even if they were spread out and exacting of hard work. Each aisle had a new thing to offer: culture, heritage, diversity, language. Ultimately, we likely walked for longer and explored deeper as a result of this feeling of added challenge, whereas if we had been tasked with a more immersive language, we may have not pushed ourselves as hard as we did; in the end, all the hard work paid off! Ypa!
Suburban Atmosphere in North York

“Suburban” is an adjective to describe a residential neighbourhood, especially one that is not particularly pedestrian friendly, while “atmosphere” denotes an overall feeling of a space, in this case the suburbs of North York.

“Internet searches revealed that the largest population of Russian speakers in Toronto, according to the most recent census, was located in North York, specifically in the Westminster-Brandon neighbourhood. Google maps however, revealed that this is a highly residential neighbourhood, which made us slightly wary of what kinds of businesses or physical representations of Russian we would find there. I chose to avoid the most residential area, and instead moved a bit south, where I could see on online maps there were several businesses, including some Russian restaurants and stores. The points A and B of the walk may seem random, but they were the logical choices in regards to public transit, as well as cutting right through the more business area of the largely residential North York community. The walk was also not a straight stroll along main streets; due to the nature of the neighbourhood, the exploration involved a great deal of heading into plazas, across parking lots, around side alleys, and so forth”. - Jessa

“At the point that I just got outside of the Finch West Station, I felt it was a place that so different from “Toronto” even if I pretty much know where I was. This was the overall sense of feeling. It was completely and utterly strange, like a huge and broad parking area without boundaries. At the beginning of my first walk, I kept walking for like about one hour to pass the big “parking area”, feeling a bit of isolated from what surrounded me. Because almost no one was walking by foot but me. It was like a driving main road area. I noticed what I passed by were some parking squares, driving services centres, trunks renting companies, energy factories, some driving-through fast food stores, three to four Tim Hortons (which characteristically appeared very Canadian style to me, personally), and the Reformed Hungarian Church”. - Cytti

“As much as I was dressed for the weather, the place was rather suburban and humongous. The roads were not downtown-ish: They were spacious, large, and occupied in a scattered way. It was an icy, slippery trek to cross over to the exact location! What was a 22-minute walk on Google was a 222-minute walk or more … I carefully treaded across the icy streets to the adjacent block. This took me a good ten minutes or so. Our chosen location is a suburban place that is more scattered than what a proverbial community would look like. The landscape is more of a driving zone. It takes more time walking between places than a stroll in the cultural places themselves. I was a bit put off by this, as I wanted more cultural places than roads to be trekked.” - Khana

Thinking and looking back on our walk, the thing that continues to stand out in our memories is the parking lots. Just so many parking lots! It was both puzzling and upsetting to behold Russian community’s suburban locality. It was upsetting because there was a lot of walking to do on a cold day, and it was puzzling because a cultural locality was suburban. ‘Community’ evokes feelings of closeness and proximity, and this was rather absent in our target locality. We kept thinking back to other cultural communities in GTA and this was not a good match. Not only did we have to trek extra long and hard but also strive toilsomely to find anything Russian.

We tried hard to keep our feelings out of it and focus instead on what the Russian community might look like from this kind of setting. Perhaps there is something comforting about the suburbs to this community. Maybe Russians enjoy the freedom that comes with a car, the open spaces that come with parking lots. Maybe this is a wonderful place to have a family, in safety and comfort, in the city but not really immersed in the busy feelings of the more crowded downtown neighbourhoods. A place where neighbours could feel comfort in sharing the same linguistic background, but also enjoy a feeling of independence and privacy. Just a theory, but one that helped us overcome our personal feelings and look at it from a more professional viewpoint.

Поблагодарить за внимание!
Hierarch/y.end o f Languages

Hierarchy of Languages refers to the location of Russian as being located above English, or without any English at all. There was also a lack of French completely or French was posted as an afterthought.

“I noticed that while the sign was in English, as were the door labels, there was one specific post beside the door; with a single sentence translated into Russian, I assume matching the English below. This location seemed important, Russian above English, as it seemed to be based on the idea that the people who would need the information would require Russian first. On the other hand, the fact that everything else about the store was English is telling. My guess is that this is a Russian business, but one that is not only marketed to Russian clientele; they are attempting to attract customers from all linguistic backgrounds.” - Jessa

The first thing that caught my attention was the tags on the clothes that were mostly catering the current weather of Canada: the tags were all in the print, block Russian script, and instructions for cloth handling and washing were primarily in Russian and then followed by English text. There was a word of French on some tags. As I stood observing the Cyrillic tag, the sales-rep explained how all the clothes were not necessarily Russian in origin. In fact, they were from Asian and European countries; however, since this is a ‘Russian’ shop, the tags are Russian and this attracts customers. This was very insightful and iterated our design packaging task. Indeed language representation and cultural connotations are emphatic!” - Khaula

“On the right hand of the entrance there were stands of gift cards written in Russian and a few in English, the majority of them were for Russian traditional festivals, whereas others were for international holidays and important days universally. Looking aside, on the wall besides the stands, there were two posters with Russian sarcastic words written on. On the left hand of the entrance there were a series of mugs, some with Russian poems printed on, and some with Soviet Union slogans printed on, some with random Russian characters to show the uniqueness of buyers’ aesthetic appreciation.

It was like a hidden sanctuary of the world, beautifully crafted at the corner of the store and calling for attention silently. On the shelves, there were tons of books in a wide range of genres: philosophy, history, art and design, architecture, fantasy and sci-fi fictions, novels, poetry, classic literature, children’s literature, and CDs.” - Cytsti

Ultimately, language was what made the cultural experience of our walks more immersive. Oftentimes, there was hardly any English presence in the shops. For instance, Troyka was thoroughly Russian in its language immersion; even its sign boards were Russian. Its huge library solely carried Russian books. No exceptions were made. The locations of languages on signs was pretty revealing about the kinds of businesses that we discovered. In Yummy Market, for example, there was English and Russian side by side on all aisle signs, but on actual products there was often only Russian, with just the legally required sticker of nutrition information in English and French, often stuck to the bottom, out of sight. At other times, Russian was placed above English, showing that they primarily worked with Russian clients, though they were open to English speakers as well. In the boutique, tags were often Russian, and if there was any English or French, it was placed after Russian. The main interpretation we took from this was simply that they were unapologetically Russian. They were Russian stores, they were not going to make concessions for anyone else, other than the legal requirements, or in the case of hoping to attract business.

Россия вперед!!
Our task of mapping Russian in Toronto was an interesting one from start to finish. None of us had any idea what we were going to find in North York, and all of us gained a new perspective on this different area of the city, far from where we normally go. The Russian community in Toronto may not be as immediately obvious, or as famous and well known as other linguistic groups in the city, but they make their mark all the same, with stores and restaurants in plain sight … once you know where to look! While hiking through a Toronto suburb during late winter may not really be anyone’s idea of a good time, it is safe to say that we learned a lot from the experience, including a new idea of what a cultural or linguistic community in a humongous city can look like.

Спасибо!!

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Russian Style Caviar, made in Canada!

Our packaging design was for Russian Style Caviar. We named our company Volga, after the famous river in Russia, which we wrote using the Cyrillic alphabet. When writing our product name, “Russian Caviar”, we played with the writing a bit, using the Latin script as inspired by Cyrillic cursive writing, and we substituted the Cyrillic letter Я in place of the Latin R. Deciding our product is mainly for sale in English Canada, we have the English text on top, and the French on the bottom, slightly smaller. Along the sides of the caviar can, we have the Russian words Россия Стиль, which translate to “Russian Style”.

For colours, we chose blue, red, and white, as the Russian national colours, and our images were simply the Canadian maple leaf, representing that the product is from Canada, and a sturgeon, representing the most common source of caviar. For the logo of our company, we wanted to have something that immediately makes people think about Russia. We felt that St. Basil’s Cathedral in Red Square is a very recognizable symbol of Russian identity. Finally, we added a visual representation of water (the Volga) at the bottom of our logo, flowing over the company name.
The Complexity of Chinese Identity - A Phenomenological Walk in Chinatown, Toronto

Mengdie Wang is from China. Her first language is Mandarin, and English is her second language. She is focusing on curriculum studies, and she also interests in LGBTQ rights and positions.

Xue Yu comes from Shanghai, China. Mandarin is her first language and English is her second language learned from five years old. She can also speak a little bit French because French is her third language learned in university, and Korean which she learned by herself because of the interest in K-POP.

Rachael Xu was born in China and is a fluent speaker of Mandarin, the Zhejiang local dialect and English. She also has a limited knowledge of French, which she studies for two years, as well as bits and pieces of Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Italian.

你未看此花时，此花与汝同归于寂；你既来看此花，则此花颜色一时明白起来，便知此花不在你心外。---王阳明

If you keep your eyes away, the flower falls to quietude along with you; Once you have your eyes on it, the flower gets brightened up so that you realize that it is inside your heart. - Wang Yangming

The area we covered is also called Western Chinatown, which appeared in 1950s. Chinatown runs primarily north-south along Spadina Avenue to College Street to Sullivan Street, and east-west along Dundas Street West from Augusta Avenue to Beverley Street.

The dominant residents here in Chinatown are immigrants from Hong Kong, while recently there are also more immigrants from mainland China here. Since it is located near some universities, there are also some students living in Chinatown now, which contributes to the diversity of this place.

A search of “Chinese Canadians in the Greater Toronto Area” on Wikipedia told us that in the 1950s-1970s, the use of Mandarin (simplified Chinese) in Toronto Chinese community was only an occasional and rare case. But starting from 2009, Mandarin was becoming the dominant language spoken by the Chinese community as a result of the increase of immigrants from China’s mainland.
Simplified Chinese vs Traditional Chinese

The theme is about the relationship between the choice of the use of writing forms in Chinese, i.e., traditional vs simplified, and the two parameters: the addressors and addressees.

Non-Chinese normally won’t bother to get to nuances such as the different forms of Chinese characters. For the Chinese born and raised in mainland China, like the three of us, it is something we cannot just notice and let go. Actually, in our narratives, all of us have mentioned this linguistic phenomenon.

“I was surprised to see that most of the Chinese language used in Chinatown is traditional Chinese. Because in China, we seldom use traditional Chinese other than Hong Kong and Macau.” (Mengdie)

“The shopfront sign of Yunshang Rice Noodle caught my attention. It’s bilingual, or should I say it’s trilingual? The Chinese part consisted of four characters, three in simplified Chinese, one in Traditional Chinese. It’s not a rare case. Many shopfront signs, menus, notices are a combination of Simplified and Traditional Chinese characters.”

- Weiqiong

“However, to my surprise, the frequency of using Traditional Chinese characters in Chinatown is overwhelmingly higher than that of simplified ones.” - Yu Xue

Right: an array of signs written in both simplified and traditional Chinese (picture by Weiqiong)

A search of “Chinese Canadians in the Greater Toronto Area” on Wikipedia told us that in the 1950s-1970s, the use of Mandarin (simplified Chinese) in Toronto Chinese community was only an occasional and rare case. But starting from 2009, Mandarin was becoming the dominant language spoken by the Chinese community as a result of the increase of immigrants from China’s mainland. This could be the reason why the relatively newly-decorated restaurants in Chinatown have higher possibility to use simplified Chinese or a combination of simplified and traditional Chinese. Since most buildings in Chinatown are old and time-honored, traditional Chinese is still the dominant written form used in government properties, commercial and cultural/religious properties in Chinatown.

Observation 1: traditional Chinese is mostly used in public services (road signs, public transportation, banks, drug stores, etc).

“To illustrate, when I passed by a streetcar station, I saw a poster pasted inside written in English and traditional Chinese, but to my surprise, there were some Chinese words that I could not understand.” - Mengdie

Observation 2: in private shops and organizations, the selection of language could be random and more customer-orientated. What we see is a combination of traditional and simplified Chinese.

“I also noticed that the Chinese language use seems to have no unified standard, since some stores have their signs in traditional Chinese, some use simplified, while others traditional and simplified Chinese mixed. Through analyzing their business content, I realized that most stores and restaurants using traditional Chinese are from Guangdong Province, Hong Kong, and Macau, who are early migrants in Canada.” - Mengdie
Observation 3: Sole Simplified Chinese Phenomenon. There were cases where we saw only simplified Chinese, and this is what we call Sole Simplified Chinese Phenomenon. It is not an isolated linguistic island but rather, demonstrates the growing influence of mainland China in the globe. The picture below is that these new payment methods and delivery services are all posted in simplified Chinese, some with English translation but mostly without.

Simplified or Traditional, this is a question. The two writing forms are actually a harmonious co-existence in the melt pot of multilingual Toronto. It is either the sign addressors (public bodies or private shop owners) or the addressees (clients, consumers) that matters.

**Material culture of multilingualism**

According to Aronin (2013), material culture refers to the material objects or artefacts produced by human beings which have interconnection with the thinking, traditions, culture, and social life of the outside world. It is the most essential and inevitable part of human life. The objects or artefacts can be any physical items like buildings, paintings, and even weapons. While material culture of multilingualism emphasizes the multilingual way of existence of these objects and artefacts. So, in this article, the material culture of multilingualism in Chinatown mentioned in narratives will be analyzed and discussed.

“There is a Chinatown Shopping Mall on Dundas St, where I saw some Chinese featured products like Chinese knots, lanterns, and Spring Festival couplets are sold. As customers buying commodities or passers-by looking at these products, they all have interactions with these material representations of the multilingualism in Chinatown.” (Mengdie)

Mengdie’s narrative has talked about the Chinese featured products
that contain Chinese traditions and culture, therefore the existence of these products sold here is also representing the multilingualism of this place. And she believes that the customers who buy these products are having interaction with the material culture of multilingualism. Similarly, as she said the wall paintings have attracted the attention of passengers, the person who looks at these wall paintings and is also having interactions with the culture shown by these artifacts. Thus, the material culture of multilingualism not only represents the multilingualism of a certain place, but also provides people with a context wherein they can establish direct connections between cultural, linguistic diversity and the person.

“These two wall paintings suddenly make me feel that I’m closer to the Chinatown. It’s not about eating or buying things, but it’s a sense of closeness to the culture and the people who made these two paintings. There are a lot of wall paintings in Toronto, but I've never seen paintings which make me feel intimate and delightful.” (Xue)

Xue’s narrative also mentioned the wall paintings in Chinatown. She expressed her sense of closeness to the culture represented by the paintings and also the person who made the paintings. The wall painting as a form of material culture of multilingualism has become a link that connects herself and her cultural identity. As she said, there are no other wall paintings in Toronto that make her feel intimate and delightful; these wall paintings contain unique meanings for her because of its cultural feature. Thus, from Xue’s narrative, it can be seen that for the person who is from the same cultural background as shown by the material culture of multilingualism, a connection of one’s ego and cultural identity can be built.

To sum up, the material culture of multilingualism perceived in Chinatown has different meanings for different beholders. To illustrate, it can provide the opportunity to establish interactions between the cultural, linguistic identity and the audience or customers. Besides, it can be regarded as a connection that links one’s ego with his/her inner cultural identity.

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**Cultural identity in Chinatown**

The theme of cultural identity contains the feeling of both familiarity and inclusion as a Chinese feels in Chinatown of Toronto. The focus here is not only on what kind of cultural identity Chinese get, but also on why or from what cultural symbols they get the feelings.

Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. Usually it’s a part of a person’s self-conception and self-perception, which is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, locality of a distinct culture (Mohu, 2005). Three members in China Group are all native Chinese and come to Toronto for less a year, which means that they must
be familiar with Chinese cultural symbols and still have deep cultural identity.

“Except for what has been mentioned above, another feeling that accompanied me throughout my walking is the sense of familiarity. Walking along the street, I could hear lots of people passing by speaking Chinese, and the signboards on the road are all written in both English and Chinese. The familiar language and culture gave me a feeling of inclusion, finally I am the same as most of the people in this community, while outside of this community, I always different from others as an Asian.” (Mengdie Wang)

Mengdie Wang feels familiar while walking in Chinatown because people around her speak the same language and the signboards are written in Chinese. Language is an obvious representative of a distinct culture and nationality, which as mentioned before, are closely related to a person’s cultural identity. She also feels a sense of inclusion as in the community. Here the community reflects her ethnicity, religion and locality as a Chinese.

“I find a lot of wall paintings that do not contain any Chinese characters but express Chinese culture extremely well. The painting shows the august Tiananmen Square in the capital city Beijing.

The two stone lions are not actually exist in Tiananmen Square, instead, there’re made up by the unknown artist. It’s ingenious to combine the most typical Chinese landmark with the cultural symbolic animal. Lions in China represent the most majestic and magnificent image. Drawing stone lions in the painting echoes the atmosphere of Tiananmen Square in cultural dimension. The main color of this painting is red, green and yellow, which are the representative colors of China. The artist also adds some traditional Chinese elements in the painting, such as auspicious clouds, the rising sun, the bridge, the river and the mountains.” (Xue Yu)

Different from Mengdie and Weiqiong, Xue Yu feels closer to Chinatown when she sees the paintings on the walls in Chinatown which illustrate some typical Chinese cultural elements and symbols. Various cultural elements embody the specific Chinese culture and make her perceive the internal nationality and ethnicity. People always feel a sense of inclusion and familiarity when they enter a certain area which warps them with familiar cultural symbols and elements. The symbols can be linguistic, both spoken and written language, and non-linguistic like paintings. Both linguistic and non-linguistic symbols embody the indwelling nationality, ethnicity, locality of a special culture and can only be perceived by people in that cultural community, which is a person’s cultural identity.

References:
The language of Chinese, English and French are used in the design. The brand name and the product name are demonstrated in the form of Chinese calligraphy, while the lettering of English and French is in their “plumpy” form, resembling the shapes of dumplings.

We also use icons, or symbols to signify a particular culture. In this case, panda is the icon for China, while the maple leaf, for Canada. The panda holding a maple leaf in hand signifies that the product is sold in Canada. Other Chinese elements include auspicious cloud (Xiangyun, meaning good luck) in two different forms, chopsticks in pair, and the frame-like edges of the package. In terms of colors, blue is for China (a color commonly used for Chinese ceramics), and red and white, for Canada. The QR Code in the lower right corner refers to the homepage of this brand, which is commonly used in Chinese product packaging.
A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Jewish Community

Karine Costa de Castro, is from the Northeast of Brazil and she speaks Portuguese as her first language. She has a degree in education from Brazil and speaks English fluently as well as Portuguese.

Yiwen Cai comes from Chongqing, one of the municipal cities that located in southwestern China. She speaks Mandarin as my mother tongue and English as a second language, as well as some Japanese.

Sophia Wang was born in Shanghai, China and raised in Vancouver, Canada. She speaks English, Mandarin, and French fluently. She has always had a passion for language learning and teaching.

The history of Jewish settlement in Toronto began in the early 19th century. The community grew considerably larger in the wake of immigration from Europe, where Jewish people had suffered terribly from persecution and imprisonment. This huge influx of Jewish immigrants eventually made their homes in Toronto, establishing new synagogues, Jewish schools, and other cultural institutions in the city. For our fieldwork, the area we will be exploring is a neighbourhood called Bathurst Manor, which is located in the North York district of Toronto. It is one of the heavily Jewish-populated regions in Toronto where approximately 30% of the population is Jewish (Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population). Also, there are Filipinos, Russians, Italians living around the area. Most Jews in this region have resided at Bathurst Street, and so Bathurst Street has been the heart of Toronto Jewish community for decades.

Prior to the fieldwork, we had different memories and expectations about the Jewish community in Toronto; and during our walks, we have oriented ourselves with different commercial signs and religious symbols related to the Jewish culture and Hebrew. In the end, we discovered more than we anticipated. In this section, we will be sharing our fieldwork under three major themes: community centeredness, bilingual education, and signs of religion.
Community centeredness

By community centeredness, we mean that the area we visited is a typical Jewish neighborhood where Jews have established their own cultural institutions, such as schools and synagogues. Therefore, we have experienced a sense of feeling unwelcome. We feel that we are perceived as outsiders in this community. We felt ourselves stand out when we were around that neighborhood. We all had an experience of people staring at us on the streets and asking us questions in the store, which gave us the kind of feeling that we were uninvited there.

Sophia shared her feeling when she was at a kosher market and was questioned by a Jewish man. She said, “It was very clear that I do not belong to this place. I do not look Jewish in any way nor do I speak Hebrew. It was even possible that I was the first non-Jewish customer in this store. I understand that people, in general, show a tendency to develop a special bond with those who share the same beliefs and culture as well as those who speak the same language with them. I am not linguistically and culturally connected to the Jewish community; it was fairly normal for them to have suspicions about me and express an uneasiness with my presence.”

Yiwen talked about her encounter with a woman questioning her about why she took pictures of their property. She wrote, “I stood in front of the store and noticed that even the note hanging inside was written mostly in Hebrew. I found this extremely interesting and decided to record everything I saw in this store. When I was about to finish taking pictures, an old lady wearing bashlyk came out of nowhere and started to ask me a series of questions in a quick and angry tone, ‘Why are you taking pictures? Why? Why are you doing this?’ I thought that this lady might be the owner of the store, I immediately explained to her that I was doing my fieldwork of Hebrew culture for one of the school assignments. She made me feel that I was being interrogated by an authority figure. Despite this feeling, I tried to ask for further clarification, ‘What do these Hebrew words say? do you mind tell me a little bit? I would be appreciated.’ ‘You know what? I just want you to know that from my eyes, you look really suspicious.’ I was surprised by what she said. I was astonished that she was a stranger on the street, just someone who passed by. I felt completely terrible at that time.”

Similarly, Karine had a similar experience, “I passed by a few schools and stores which of course, were closed on Saturday. On one of the school’s doors, there was a sign saying to keep the door closed due to robberies in the area. I understood that sign because it was written in English too. It did not seem like a dangerous community at all, but it did not feel like a friendly one either. People would pass by me and look as if I was doing something wrong.”

The semiotic and linguistic landscape present Jewish culture - their language and religion. Jewish people in Toronto show their identity and they are a united group of people. The study of Trumper-Hecht and Nira (2008) demonstrates that the presence of linguistic landscape in the public space relates to the existence of the collective identity. We consider that the community centeredness of the Jewish neighborhood in Toronto probably has some historical reason. They suffered terribly during the Holocaust and many Jewish people fled to North America to start their new life. Goldberg (2015) concludes that the postwar Holocaust survivors that reached Canada became engaged “new Canadians” and maintains their own identity as Canadian Jewish. They transformed various aspects of Jewish life in this new nation. To some degree, we consider the community centeredness as a positive thing since this kind of centeredness contributes to a culturally-diversified city of Toronto.
Bilingual Education

As we collected the data for our fieldwork, we became increasingly aware that although Jews have resided in Toronto for many decades, while embracing Canadian culture, they have also maintained their own culture very well by promoting bilingualism and biliteracy in their descendants. For example, Sophia found a leaflet on the door of Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue. It seemed like an advertisement about a Jewish learning school named Aleph Beit Chadash. In Hebrew, Aleph is the first letter of the word emet (אמת); literally, it can be translated into English as truth. The school offers traditional Jewish learning for children who are in elementary and middle school. Its overall mission, as stated in the leaflet, is to connect Jewish children with their traditional conservative Judaism and live an ethical and purposeful life guided by Jewish laws. This sign made Sophia begin to wonder about how Jewish communities show care, love, and pride for their Jewish ideals and identity, and engage in traditional Jewish learning programs at the synagogue. Then, inside the synagogue, there was a small collection of books with a note saying, “Please help yourself.” Most books looked like vintage books, either in English or in Hebrew. They became an epitome of Jewish appreciation and love for knowledge and wisdom.

Similarly, Yiwen described such bilingual education for Jewish children as “preservation of Hebrew culture.” She was impressed by how much Jewish people care about educating the next generation about the culture of Hebrew when she visited a shop called Miriam’s Judaica. She found a lot of interesting items in there which intend to teach children about the Jewish culture. There sell both English and Hebrew books as well as Chanukah candles and menorah. Yiwen opened an English book. The book records a series of dialogues that take place between a rabbi and a child. On one page, the rabbi is teaching the child, “We light 8 candles during Chanukah to remember the miracle of that one jar of oil only enough to burn for one day, yet it burned for 8 days.” Certainly, these books serve an important educational purpose for Jewish children, reminding them of their ancestors’ roots and history.

According to the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, identifying as a Jew is a choice for the younger generation. Thus, they have been putting a lot of efforts to establish Jewish schools and learning programs in order to inspire youth to embrace Jewish life while also enrolling in the mainstream curriculum in Toronto. Overall, it was a huge relief to know that the Hebrew language is not going to die out here in Toronto, such a multilingual and culturally diverse city. Jews are trying to promote bilingual education for Jewish children, which I believe will shed a new light on the multilingualism and multiliteracy practices in Toronto.
Signs Of Religion - The representation of the religion through signs

The Star Of David

The Star of David is a symbol that was present in most of the signs along Bathurst and the synagogue area. The Star on the picture was located on the top left side of the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto School. But that was not the only place we saw the five-point star. We also saw it in different buildings in both areas we covered. It is also important to mention that in all of these places the start was usually positioned on the higher parts of the buildings.

We then started to wonder why the symbol is so important for the community. The explanation for that is on their religion. The symbol was named after one of the most famous kings from the book of Samuel, the third book of the Nevi'im Rishonim. According to the book, David was anointed by Samuel (the high priest) to substitute Saul, a king who was no long in God’s favor. Many believe that when Solomon anointed David, he gave him a necklace with something that looked like the five point start as pendant (The seal of Solomon). Since then, the five-point star has been seen as a symbol of protection and approval.
Both signs on the images are advertising the Purim. The picture on the top was taken at the Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue. The sign is advertising the festival, which will contain live animals. The sign also says the date of the celebration and the site of the organization that is organizing it.

The picture on the bottom was taken at a School on Bathurst Street. Zichron Binyomin is the name of a non-profit charitable foundation responsible for raising money for Toronto Jewish organizations. Observing the sign we would suggest that the school is hosting an event to raise money for the foundation. The date of the event would be the 21st. Underneath the date you will find the organization’s website.

As we shared our walks we started to ask ourselves what Purim was and what it meant. We also wanted to know if there was any correlation of the celebration with the religion. We found out that Purim (which means “lots”) begins at sunset on Saturday, March 11, and lasts until nightfall on Sunday, March 12. Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Haman. Haman was an advisor of the king of Persia. “After he becomes angered by a Jewish man named Mordecai who refuses to bow down to him, Haman devises a plot to exterminate all the Jews. Haman gives an anti-Semitic speech to the king about how different the Jewish people are and offers the king money in exchange for permission to kill the Jews. The king takes the money and tells Haman he can do whatever he wants with the country. Haman immediately sends out an official order across the country to kill the Jews.

But Mordecai discovers Haman’s plans and goes to his cousin, a young and beautiful woman named Esther who was a favorite in the king’s harem, and asks for her help. Despite the fact that she could be put to death for seeing the king unsummon, Esther agrees to visit him. After honoring the king with two feasts, Esther begs him to have mercy on the Jewish people who are being threatened by Haman’s genocidal impulses. As a result, the king orders that Haman be hanged on the same gallows Haman had prepared to use for Mordecai, and the Jewish people defeat those trying to follow through on Haman’s orders” (strack taken from https://mic.com/articles/170587/what-is-purim-the-history-and-meaning-of-the-jewish-holiday#.RqInWV6EA). The story is written on the Megillah, the book of Esther.

In conclusion, we believe this type of fieldwork is very valuable and important. It’s a powerful pedagogical tool to answer questions about language awareness, identities, ideologies, and functions of signs. It also provides us with great opportunities to get to know Jewish culture, and further increases our awareness of multilingualism as well as our understanding of hierarchies of language use and prestige. We knew that most Jewish people have been living in that area. When we visited there, we saw a totally different neighborhood from where we live. All these become our knowledge and understanding about Toronto - this culturally diversified city. We think that we are more aware of the linguistic and semiotic landscape surroundings. As a result of this fieldwork, we have formed a habit of searching any culture-related or semiotic-related things that we are not familiar with.

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Inspiring Young Generations to Embrace Jewish life and to Ensure a Jewish Future. (2016, March 26). Retrieved from
Our packaging design is made for a Dead Sea soap and integrates specific language policy elements in Canada as well as symbolism essential to Israel. Here the word “sea salt” was written in Hebrew, which indexes Israel as the country of origin. In addition, since the product is sold in Canada, the product’s name and the generic word for soap are also written in English and French.

The symbolism in the packaging combines a variety of cultural elements reflecting the Jewish and Canadian cultures, respectively. At the top-left corner, the logo is designed in half Maple Leaf and half the Star of David. At the bottom-right corner, we drew a representation of the Dead Sea because it is an important salt lake bordering Israel. On the bottom left we drew the menorah. It is Israeli national symbol and it represents universal enlightenment.
Linguascaping the St. Patrick’s Day Parade Route

Ikram was born in Somalia, grew up in Canada, and entered adulthood in Egypt. She speaks predominantly English and Somali. She is able to understand and read Arabic more than she can speak it mainly because of the Holy Quran.

Janet is an English L1 speaker who was raised in Edmonton. She has acquired some knowledge of Greek and German, her heritage languages, through study, travel and time spent with extended family. She is also fluent in French and has studied Spanish as an additional language.

Shiqi Zhu grew up in mainland China with Chinese as her first language, and went to Canada for graduate education. Since English is one of the compulsory subjects of compulsory education in China, she is also fluent in English.

As there is no Irish neighborhood in Toronto, we decided to follow the route of the 32nd annual St Patrick’s Day Parade in the downtown core. This area covers the Church Yonge and Bay Street corridors, where the main languages spoken apart from English are: Mandarin, Chinese n.o.s., Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Korean, and Cantonese.

Irish immigrants came to Toronto in the 17th and 18th centuries from the early period of European settlement, primarily due to the famine in Ireland. The majority of them settled in the east end of the city, leading to the development of Irish-centric ghettos, such as Corktown, Cabbagetown, and the Ward. As time passed, Irish families scattered and integrated in different parts of the city; however, some Irish businesses can still be found today in the east end. Toronto’s Irish community continues to promote Irish culture through its many social clubs and associations.

Despite the long history of Irish Canadians in Toronto, we noticed that the material presence of Irish culture in the city was scarce and often impermanent. The relative lack of Irish text that was observed along the walking route might reflect the linguistic landscape in Ireland. Thistlethwaite (2015) suggested that the “public policy of putting Irish on all official signage ... [has led] to complacency and to a passive approach on the part of those who could, if they wished, bring Irish into the public gaze” (p. 48). Without a more concerted effort, glimpses of Irishness are but fleeting in a multicultural context such as Toronto.
Irishness lost in diversity

The presence of Irishness when lost in the diversity of multicultural Toronto.

“At first I thought the participants would all be from civil groups or clubs in colleges, but in fact there were some teams from official groups such as TTC, GO Transit, Toronto fire service and so on.” - Shiqi

“The Chinese float caught up with me again and I felt that the magnificent, yellow lion was staring down at me in anger. I let it pass me by. The next thing that I noticed was the food trucks by Nathan Phillips Square, which have always reminded me of summer festivals. On that first day of daylight savings time, I looked forward to returning to the square to weave through the festival pavilions in the bright, summer sun. From the time that I spent working downtown, I vaguely remembered that a multi-ethnic food festival was held weekly in the summer in Nathan Phillips Square, maybe on Tuesdays. Had I ever seen an Irish food pavilion in that space? Not that I could remember” - Janet

“I noticed people from the Islamic, Sikh, and Jewish faiths and I assume various denominations of Christianity wearing green clothing and St. Patty’s day apparel and party accessories. I found this to be interesting because St. Patrick’s Day is a religious holiday in celebration of an Irish-Catholic Saint. I realized St. Patrick’s Day, like Christmas and other holidays based in religion is celebrated by many as a cultural event rather than a religious event.” - Ikram

None of us had attended a St. Patrick’s Day parade before but we all expected to find more explicit displays of Irishness throughout. We wished that we could have immersed ourselves more fully in Irish culture, including their music and dance, and national symbols and colours. Given that the parade route was in Toronto, we expected a certain level of multiculturalism, but not to the point that it would eclipse the Irishness of the event. Local Irish organizations were interspersed with other cultural groups, for reasons that were unknown to us.
The fleeting nature of Irishness

This denotes the nods of acknowledgement to Ireland that were experienced as fleeting sights and sounds of Irish culture.

“At Bedford street, I was happy to find a large shamrock with directions attached to the signpost. I assumed that the arrow on the sign was supposed to be pointing eastbound in the direction of the parade, but it was actually pointing southbound, to the Starbucks that I sometimes go to when I want to escape the hustle and bustle of OISE. Had I been persuaded to go southbound to escape the crowd for a moment, I might have missed some of the magic. A Cirque du Soleil inspired vehicle with many cyclists suddenly appeared. It was following a leprechaun who had no neck and whose large face rested on its chest. I was eager to see more.”

- Janet

“Then a unique float came following those Leprechauns which I thought to be the most gorgeous decorations I had seen during the parade. Two people rode the bike at the front and two people played the drum at the back and they all wore festival costumes. The scene made me think of the circus and Alice in Wonderland because of the flowers and lines full of rhythm of the float, which was a typical north European style according to my knowledge from art courses and movies.”

- Shiqi

“On one side of Nathan Phillips Square, beside the ice rink, I was happy to finally find a banner with some Irish text. In the centre, it had “St Pats” and on either side was a picture of a maple leaf with a shamrock. Underneath the leaves, it said “LEAFS go brách”. I had no idea that this message related to hockey. It was only when I looked it up afterwards that I discovered that the Toronto Maple Leafs were preceded by the Toronto St Patricks from 1919 to 1927. They actually won the Stanley Cup in 1922. This year, the Toronto Maple Leafs honoured their Irish heritage by wearing retro St Pats jerseys for two games in March. In the short video that the Maple Leafs made about the St Pats, “LEAFS go brách” magically changes to “LEAFS FOREVER”. There are hidden stories everywhere.”

- Janet

“Besides the content of the parade, I also took some time to observe the shops on the both sides of the road. Unfortunately, there were few stores decorated for St Patrick’s Day. One store was for selling theatrics costumes and one restaurant had special discount for St Patrick’s Day. The last one was a bar on Yonge and the window on its second floor had been decorated with Irish symbols of green hats and clovers. Several people sat behind the window, looking down to watch the parade. I was confused about this phenomenon that few stores prepared themselves for St Patrick’s Day. Was St Patrick’s Day not that important to people here? Or the target customers were few? On my second walk along the route, festival decorations were rare to see as well. Only 2 bars, 2 clothing shops and a toy store did some decorations or promotions for St Patrick’s Day.”

- Shiqi
The St Patrick’s Day parade that we observed on March 10th, 2019 was a spectacle that incorporated brief flashes of Irishness. The streets along the parade route were mostly void of Irish decorations, and it was only when the parade passed by that onlookers would catch a fleeting glimpse of Irishness in the downtown core. Once the parade participants moved on, the scene immediately reverted to the status quo. Similarly, we noticed temporary gestures of acknowledgement to Irish culture during our second walk on March 17th, St. Patrick’s day. The bilingual hockey banner contained “a message which demonstrate[d] the simultaneous creation of safe exoticism for the foreign tourist [among others] and textual authenticity for those who know Irish” (Kallen, 2008, pp. 278-279). At the same time, viewing the temporary display of the hockey banner and the St Pats jerseys in March felt a little bit like catching a glimpse of a shamrock shirt peeking out from the open coat of a passerby. Toronto’s Irish roots might last “forever”, as the Toronto Maple Leafs have implied, but they are not always visible.
Insider/outsider

From religious, political and cultural standpoints, participants might have felt a sense of belonging or exclusion depending on how they self-identified.

“Being Muslim and knowing St. Patrick’s Day is a Irish Catholic holiday in its essence, I felt like I would look out of place and stick out. I was uncomfortable in the beginning when the parade first started but as I walked the route and observed the diversity of the people who were watching and participating in the parade I started to feel more comfortable and like I also belonged.” - Ikram

“When the cars of Toronto fire service passed with the sound of alarm, the mascot spotty dog waved his hand to me, which delighted me soon and made felt that the distance between me and those staff working in Toronto fire service had been narrowed. Also, I felt that I was a part of Toronto at that moment though I didn’t know how this happened. All in all, the parade was fascinating with so many Irish and Canadian cultural symbols and exciting people. Though I used to know nothing about Irish culture, I could still soak in the festival atmosphere here.” - Shiqi

“The Association of Cork’s beautiful banner included a picture of Blarney Castle, which indicated that some Irish Canadians identified with historic spaces in Ireland. Others, such as the Friends of Sinn Fein (Canada), identified more with an idea. The Friends of Sinn Fein (Canada) added a political dimension to the parade with a banner promoting a referendum on the reunification of Ireland.” - Janet

“One thing I experienced during the parade made me felt extremely uncomfortable, which I thought to be an implicit discrimination. When some teams were distributing souvenirs, they would ignore me deliberately. I tried to give reasons for the ignorance at first but finally learned that the discrimination did exist as they distributed gifts one by one, people on my left and right all got gifts except me. After I realized this ignorance, I began to behave active to people who were distributing souvenirs. I tried my best to make eye contact with them. If they continued to ignore me, I would say “may I have one?” aloud and held out my hand to them. However, there were still some people passed me. After the parade, I told some of my Chinese friends who were also at the parade about this experience and they all felt the same way as I felt.” - Shiqi

The divide between inclusion and exclusion was perceived along different lines, depending on the person. Janet noticed the representation of political and geographic borders that divided people, whereas Ikram was sensitive to the place of religious groups at a celebration for a Catholic saint. Unfortunately, Shiqi experienced a moment of discrimination against her ethnic background. To some extent, we felt like outsiders because we were not of Irish descent. However, the St. Patrick’s Day parade was full of diversity, both in terms of the participants and the spectators, which made us feel more included in the multicultural nature of the city.

References


Irish Brandy

This design incorporates Canada's two official languages, English and French, with a hint of Irish (Gaelic) script, reflected in the lettering style. In English, "eau-de-vie" ("water of life") refers to a distilled beverage made with fruit other than grapes; in French, the term is used more broadly to refer to distilled spirits, often brandy (distilled wine). Today, the Irish term "uisce beatha" (water of life) is used to denote whiskey and can be seen in small banners on Irish whisky bottle labels.

The theme of water is reinforced by the rendering of a river running down an Irish hill. In this multimodal landscape, the image of the floating shamrock containing a Trinity knot design connotes both Ireland and the imaginary space of legends and fairy tales. Furthermore, the shamrock is associated with St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, and his teachings of the Holy Trinity. On the neck of the brandy bottle, the image of a traditional Irish Claddagh ring incorporates symbols of loyalty (the crown), love (the heart) and two hands (friendship). The motif of friendship is extended directly below in a reimagined Canadian flag using the colours of Ireland, which is another way of indexing Canadians with an affinity for Irish culture.
The consolidation of individuals’ phenomenological narratives of landscaping in Koreatown

Aixin was born and raised in a Szechuan family which only speak a local dialect. While Mandarin is her dominant language, she studied in English in school since elementary school.

Areum Jo is a newcomer to Canada. She as born and grew up in South Korea. Her first language is Korean and she also speaks English as a second language.

Boyan is an international student from China. Her mother tongue is Mandarin, and she is fluent in English. She also writes and reads Cantonese.

Two Koreatowns exist in the city of Toronto. One of them is located in the downtown area, specifically from Bathurst to Christie Station. This is the location we chose to visit. The other Koreatown is placed from Finch station to Sheppard station. Due to a liberal immigration policy by the Canadian government in 1967, it led to an influx of Korean immigrants, many of whom settled in the Toronto area. Indeed, Toronto has the largest single concentration of Koreans in Canada with almost 50,000 living in the city according to the 2001 Census.

The old Koreatown still has the old, classic style of Canadian town atmosphere, which is unlike Yonge and Finch area. To briefly compare the two Koreatowns, one in the downtown area was developed and populated by Korean immigrants first. It is a residential community which is quite contemporary in style. Such a community evokes an authentic atmosphere of a western country, and is therefore immediately different from the culture’s Asian origin. There are, however, commercial stores and businesses in these buildings, making it a community that is as residential as it is commercial.
Presence of a particular language

Due to its linguistic nature of landscaping, the priority in observation was to explore the salience of languages on public signs in Koreatown. The theme “presence of a particular language” is primarily concerned with the external linguistic factors as they influence our perceptions and understandings about the cultural space.

Chinese characters on the menu

“It was interesting to note that sometimes the menus or storefronts had Chinese translation following Korean or English. For example, in this picture, there are Chinese names under the English ones, which gives a strong sense of welcome and also inclusiveness.” - Aixin

“Continuing to walk on the right sidewalk on Bloor West, I figured that some restaurants had Chinese alphabets as well as Korean and English on their signboards and menu cards. The pictures of food were stuck on the windows, and the names were written in Korean, English, and Chinese, and in that order. It shows the language hierarchy and their targeted customers as well.” - Areum

“The restaurant beside the clinic had English, Korean and Chinese on its sign while its menu was all in Korean.” - Boyan

We all noticed and mentioned that there are some restaurants in Koreatown using Chinese characters to explain what they serve on its menu or storefronts. It is understandable and reasonable to see Chinese characters in this particular area, especially on restaurant menus, as Chinese people share a similar preference for food with Korean people. There are particular language orders on the menu of the restaurants which shows prevalent language hierarchy and their targeted customers.

Multilingual inscriptions on the same building

One building consisting of several companies including BMO, 多伦多雅思学校 (Global Education) and other Korean businesses, is quite conspicuous in my walk. These multilingual inscriptions deepen my knowledge and understanding of the phenomena of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the city of Toronto.- Aixin

Continuing to walk on the left sidewalk, I find that I missed the Bank of Montreal located on the right sidewalk. Looking at the building from the opposite side, I can see the BMO sign written in Korean and English, which implies that there are employees who can speak Korean for Korean customers. On the same side of the building, I also notice three other business names on it. One of the businesses is only written in Korean; it says Lee Gun Young’s Realtor, if I were to translate it. Another sign is written in English, which is Global Education, and the other one is only written in Chinese, which I cannot understand at all. It was interesting to see three different languages on the same side of the building. - Areum

Excerpt: As I crossed the street, I saw several Chinese characters on a glass wall. The meaning of them is “IELTS Learning School in Toronto”. I also found English and Korean words on the wall. The English words are not the direct translation of that Chinese sentence, and this makes me confused. - Boyan
It was fascinating to discover how different perceptions of all three members were, even though they were looking at the same building. This was due to the influence of our individual language awareness. For example, we found a very interesting linguistic feature in which three languages were displayed on the same side of a building. These languages were Korean, English, and Chinese. This linguistic information, even though this information was puzzling, was interpreted differently by two members who knew Chinese and English and even more differently by the member who knew Korean and English. When looking at the building, Aixin and Boyan, who know Chinese and English but not Korean, thought that the signs of three different languages are all for an English language school for Chinese and Korean students who want to learn English. On the other hand, Areum, who knows Korean and English but not Chinese, interpreted that these three languages are for separate businesses: a Korean Realtor, an English school, and a Chinese business. Thus, this can be a good example of how individuals can perceive and interpret the world on their own due to their cultural inheritance and language awareness.

Memories and connections

We possess different identities, cultural backgrounds, and languages, which will influence us to have various reactions and reflections towards what we see and hear, and where we are.

Similar features shared by Asian cultures

“There is a clinic which has written across it “ACUPUNCTURE & HERBS WELLNESS CENTER.” It also lists many common health problems on the window, such as weight reduction, digestive problems, etc. All these problems are written in English. I also found Chinese characters on the window. It is a famous herb called “Korean Red Ginseng”. This herb brought back to me my memory from when I went to Korea with my family in 2012. We bought some Korean ginseng for my grandparents, as these herbs are very effective in treating heart disease.”  
- Boyan

“Besides spa and massage, medicine stores in Koreatown also provide different kinds of health products like acupuncture and some treatment to ease back pain, migraines, sports injuries, etc.. I am quite familiar with some health services written on the window because when I was in China I usually accompanied my grandma to receive some of these treatments in the clinic.”  
- Aixin

In our phenomenological experiences, we have noticed that Asian cultures, such as Chinese Japanese, and Korean cultures, are mingled together. These three cultures share a lot in common. Therefore, it is understandable for us frequently to associate Asian objects and characters with our own cultures and traditions. This inspired us to bring our own memories, identities, and previous life experiences into the linguascaping endeavor. For example, in the personal narratives of Aixin and Boyan, both of them associated the acupuncture clinics in Koreatown with their past experiences of accompanying their grandparents to receive acupuncture treatments back in China.
The feeling of inclusion and exclusion

Being surrounded by a particular environment where I stand at the moment can give me internal judgment, interpretation, and emotions about how I grasp myself and space.

The sense of Inclusion and exclusion

In some Chinese shops in Koreatown, customers can use Alipay and WeChatPay to pay their bills through their mobile phones. I like to use this kind of easier and safer way of payment for several years in China and their existence in Toronto helps me to live more conveniently and also creates an illusion for me that I am still in China. Apart from Chinese shops, I have noticed that nowadays many western stores such as Sephora and Nordstrom also support Alipay and WeChatPay. I am proud of this phenomenon as it can be inferred that Chinese people are getting richer and richer; but at the same time I feel that we are only considered as a strong buying power and Chinese people are crazier about purchasing than other people (Aixin).

This time, when I pass by the same stores again, I feel like I am much closer to them despite not knowing them well. This familiarity I feel makes me believe I now actually belong to this town and to this Korean society in Toronto. When I visited Korea town before, despite my ethnicity and nationality, I really didn’t feel included, since the buildings and features were different from where I grew up. However, through this phenomenological walk and deep, thorough observation of Korea town, I feel more bonding (Areum).

Except for the clothing shop, I also found that many shops here sell toys, cards, pens, cups and decorations for the home. I never see stores like this in Chinatown. I went into a store selling toys, and I saw a cushion with many Chinese characters on the cover. Some toys have tags that read “made in China” (Boyan).

When we walked in Korea town, objects we saw or language used on signs rekindled our own memories and enabled us to find connections between our own cultural background and with Korean culture, thus giving us a strong feeling of inclusion. Apart from the sense of inclusion, we also felt exclusion while seeing some particular signs. Therefore, the cultural factor is an essential factor to influence us when we encounter the same and different things in our life. For example, when Aixin and Boyan walked in Korea town, the Chinese characters we saw helped us recall our memories in China and made us feel comfortable. Indeed, after people have a deep understanding of an area, they will feel a deeper bond.
We believe that individual phenomenologies are indeed influenced by our experiences, backgrounds, cultures, knowledge, and belief systems, and also play an important role to be aware of things around us. However, we found out through the phenomenological walk that those factors will not entirely determine how we perceive objects in a particular way. For example, between two sub-group members in Korean group who have different nationalities we still have the same consciousness towards objects that we observed when walking in Koreatown, Toronto. Moreover, two Chinese members had different perspectives and interpretations as they encountered the similar situation. Therefore, it should be said that all those factors, such as individual experience, background, culture, knowledge and belief systems, are crucial to determine one’s phenomenological understanding even though they are significantly affecting one’s judgment, awareness, and emotions. It is clearer to say that when people associate with what they see and relate to what they have experienced before, we can see very different results in each narrative of Korean group members.

References:

The Korean Community in Canada
http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-621-x/89-621-x2007014-eng.htm

For the product’s packaging design, firstly, we chose a shampoo bottle. Since Korea is well known for beauty products and is the industry leader in the world. With respect to the semiotics of the design, the shape of the shampoo bottle resembles that of a Korean traditional ribbon normally used to tie the hair of young girls, called ‘Dang-Gi’. Moreover, the top cap of the shampoo bottle also represents the pattern of Korean traditional accessories for young ladies.

The name of the product comes from the authentic Korean name and sound called the hair ribbon, which is called ‘Dang-gi’ and ‘댕기’ in the Korean alphabet. Lastly, the colors chosen in the design stand for those of the Korean flag, which consists of black, white, red, and blue. With extra colors such as yellow and pink added as well as the main colors, it is also aiming for targeting young customers.