

LOST IN TRANSLATION: AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH-TO-  
SPANISH SIGNAGE TRANSLATIONS IN DOWNTOWN EUGENE,  
OREGON

by

AZUSENA ROSALES SUARES

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Approved: Assistant Professor, Devin Grammon (Ph.D)  
Primary Thesis Advisor

The translations on signage in downtown Eugene, Oregon are reasonably good but could benefit from more accuracy and consistency. It is essential to understand that translations are not just about word-for-word substitutions; they require thorough understanding of the text, target audience, and context where the message is displayed. Eugene has a substantial number of community members that are Spanish speakers, yet the signage representation is mostly in English and those that have translations do not always embody accuracy. This paper provides an analysis of data collected in 2022 of the linguistic landscape of downtown Eugene. Where it was possible to learn about the signage in the public space and translations that are currently being used in order to complete a preliminary analysis of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Spanish. Based on this analysis, a set of bilingual signs were selected for further evaluation. These signs were presented to Spanish-speaking individuals through one-on-one interviews. During these interviews, it was possible to learn about their opinion on the translations, their level of understanding, and their preference for the use of Spanish or English. This research aims to promote cultural diversity and linguistic inclusiveness in downtown Eugene by analyzing signage and translations; to identify areas for improvement and suggest measures for a more

welcoming environment for Spanish-speaking residents and visitors. The findings will inform stakeholders about enhancing linguistic inclusiveness, improving translations, and creating an atmosphere that celebrates diversity, aiming to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment in the community.

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## Introduction

The idea of linguistic landscape was initially defined within the branch of sociolinguistics in 1997. As Schmitt cites in his book, the linguists Rodrigue Landry and Richard Bourhis defined linguistic landscape as the “language of public road signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Schmitt, 2018, pg. 11). In the words of Schmitt (2018, pg. 22), the linguistic landscape encompasses “manifestations of written language in the public space that are designed to be potentially read by multiple viewers simultaneously.” The main point of analyzing the linguistic landscape of a particular location is to learn about its linguistic diversity, and the ethnolinguistic vitality of a language. This study seeks to explore the quality of English to Spanish translations in the linguistic landscape of downtown Eugene and how these translations relate to ethnolinguistic vitality for the local Hispanic community. There is a particular complexity to analyzing languages in the public space, since it entails the study of signs that contain multilayered attitudes, values associated with languages and social norms from the community in question (Van Mensel et al., 2016). Moreover, the lexical, grammatical, and orthographical data portrayed through the signs provide vital information used to determine the publics’ use of Spanish (Franco Rodríguez, 2009). Understanding how the Spanish language and society are interconnected in downtown Eugene is essential to comprehend the vitality of Spanish and its users (Van Mensel et al., 2016). The ethnolinguistic vitality of a language is intricately linked to its retention within a community. To assess the strength of an ethnolinguistic group, several factors are considered, including the number of speakers, language proficiency, intergenerational transmission, language attitudes, institutional support, and the presence of

language revitalization efforts. These factors collectively determine the resilience and potential for the long-term survival and vitality of a language within its community.

The United States boasts a rich and diverse linguistic landscape, with various languages being spoken across the nation. In “The Language Use in the United States: 2019,” Dietrich and Hernandez (2022) define “foreign language” speakers as individuals who report speaking a language other than English at home, regardless of their level of proficiency. Among these languages, Spanish stands out as the most prevalent, being spoken approximately twelve times more than other commonly spoken foreign languages such as Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese. Furthermore, in 2019 Spanish speakers constituted around 62% of the population speaking a language other than English (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022). However, despite its widespread use, there exists a disparity in educational attainment, “with approximately 33% of Spanish speakers not graduating from high school” (Dietrich and Hernandez, 2022, pg.1). This disparity highlights potential challenges in achieving the expected level of writing literacy in Spanish for college education. Then, based on the Census Bureau, in the Lane County the Hispanic/Latino population has increased the most between 2010 to 2021 by 11, 297. Bringing the Hispanic/Latino population in Lane County to increase a 42.83% resulting in a total count of 37,671 individuals. Considering that the largest racial or ethnic group in Lane County continues to be white (non-Hispanic) with a population of 309,051 (in 2021) after an increase of 3.65% (10,908 people) since 2010 the Hispanic population is substantially increasing. Over eleven years the Hispanic/Latino population has substantially grown, and thus the necessity for accessible and understandable bilingual signage is increasing. Consequently, the lack of full comprehension of translations and signage can lead to misunderstandings and feelings of inadequacy, potentially resulting in identity crises and dissociative opinions. These issues can provide valuable insights

into the linguistic diversity within the United States. Grappling with these issues at a local level can offer additional information about the linguistic diversity within the United States.

In Eugene, Oregon, there exists a substantial population of both English and Spanish speakers, making it imperative to have multilingual signage. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, 10.6% of Eugene's population identifies as Hispanic or of Latino origin. It is highly probable that a significant portion of this population consists of Spanish speakers, with a minority having limited proficiency in English. However, despite the significant presence of the Spanish-speaking community, the author of this study has perceived that it is uncommon to observe or hear Spanish being used in downtown Eugene. This raises concerns as it suggests a lack of presence of the Hispanic community in the area. Thus, the following questions arise: What linguistic factors might contribute to the lack of Spanish speakers downtown? To understand the linguistic factors contributing to this issue, the present study aims to respond to analyze signage and provide insights into the situation.

The analysis of signs in a linguistic landscape can involve examining the type and quality of translations utilized. Literal and pragmatic translations are two distinct forms identified for multilingual signs (Schmitt, 2018). Literal translations are direct translations, word by word, following the grammatical and syntactical norms of English. The preliminary analysis of the signs has shown that the literal translations are resulting in misinterpretations. The use of literal translations could be an indication of the lack of interest for the language the original sign was translated into (Schmitt, 2018). On the other hand, pragmatic translations bring forth cultural and community appropriate translations from English signs (Dayter et al., 2023). These types of translations consider the different dialects as well as the grammatical rules pertaining to Spanish. The use of pragmatic translations displays the presence of the demographic group and their



acceptance by the community (Dayter et al., 2023). The translations used in signage play a crucial role in shaping the ethnolinguistic vitality of the secondary language. When a secondary language such as Spanish is in an English-dominant context, it is actively used or represented in public spaces through signage. It promotes a sense of visibility, inclusivity, and validation for the minoritized language community (Schmitt, 2018). With the Spanish-speaking community, the presence of accurate and well-designed translations allows these individuals to engage with their surroundings, access information, and participate fully in community life.

This study seeks to recognize and respect the linguistic diversity within a society through bilingual signage. This study will provide valuable knowledge as to how the Spanish speaking community in the core-downtown area perceives the existing linguistic landscape through signage in public spaces. To do so, this project analyses images of signs collected in May 2022 in downtown Eugene and three interviews with Spanish speakers from the community. Based on this data, my main research question is: *how can the translations in signage influence the ethnolinguistic vitality of Spanish in downtown Eugene?* This study suggests that acknowledgement of the cultural and linguistic contributions of minority language speakers enhances the status and vitality of the secondary language, fostering a more inclusive and multicultural society. As evidenced in this paper, the absence or inadequate translations can contribute to the marginalization and erasure of the secondary language community. That stifles the community's ability to fully participate and engage in public spaces. Therefore, the quality and availability of translation signage has a significant impact on the ethnolinguistic vitality of Spanish and should be given careful consideration to promoting linguistic diversity and inclusivity in downtown Eugene and beyond.

## Literature Review

Linguistic landscapes can be studied through descriptive and analytical lenses and there is a lot of information that signs can provide. Signs in public space can tell us about the users of the space and their interactions with signs; they tell us stories about the cultural, historical, political, and social backgrounds that can be found (Blommaert, 2013). Public space “is the space that is neither owned by private individuals nor by companies and that can be accessed by anybody who is not for any special reason barred from doing so (e.g., prisoners)” (Schmitt, 2018, p.13). Signs in these public spaces contain words, icons, and assorted colors that co-occur and interact together; however, they all operate in diverse ways. Signs have shown to have different modalities of communicating a message, these modalities are intended to reach different audiences. If a street sign says STOP in English and white color, the sign is in a red hexagonal shape. The STOP is to be read by people who understand English, while the visual sign (hexagon shaped in red) can be associated with the halt action by a larger audience. The different modalities have different semiotic scopes (Blommaert, 2013). Continuing with the STOP sign, its location at an intersection is specific to its space. The placement of the signs is intentional for a desired effect. The effect in this case is to stop at the end of the street for safety. In this manner, signs for this study will be analyzed on their modality, semiotic scope and their effect on the Spanish speakers who can read the translations in the signage.

In the field of sociolinguistics, studies that focus on the linguistic landscape of areas in the United States are few compared to those conducted in Europe (Schmitt, 2018). The studies that have been done in the United States mostly focus on metropolitan cities and have broad conclusions. Research on the linguistic landscape of Spanish in the United States often investigates language contact, language maintenance, language shift, language ideologies, and

language policy. Scholars analyze the use of Spanish in signage, advertisements, other public displays in urban areas, examining its relationship with English and other languages. They investigate how the linguistic landscape reflects the linguistic diversity, language attitudes, and power dynamics in various communities across the United States.

There are different reactions individuals can have in response to the linguistic landscape. Their firsthand experiences and different demographics impact said reactions (Garvin, 2010). In "Introduction: Discourses and counter-discourses in linguistic landscape analysis" Malinowski (2009) explores the relationship between discourse, identity, and linguistic landscapes, highlighting the importance of analyzing counter-discourses in the study of language in public spaces. In his study Malinowski's challenges linguistic landscape scholars to situate and contextualize their studies in the lives of the community, those who read, write, and live their life amongst the signs (Garvin, 2010). I am taking this challenge on by conducting surveys which will provide not only a Spanish-speakers' perception of translations in signage, but it will be possible to determine what translations are most appropriate. Focusing on translations is a decision that will allow the author to analyze the data thoroughly to provide viable conclusions. Translations in signs can be either labeled as pragmatic or literal, as mentioned previously (Schmitt, 2018). The implementation of pragmatic translations is important to sustain the multilingual diversity of Eugene, and to support bilingualism in the community that continues to grow with two languages.

In "Responses to the Linguistic Landscape in Memphis, Tennessee: An Urban Space in Transition," Rebecca Todd Garvin explored the linguistic landscape of Memphis, Tennessee, and investigated how the city's residents responded to the presence of multiple languages in public spaces. The study focused on the changing nature of the urban environment and the implications

of linguistic diversity for community dynamics. Through interviews and observations, Garvin analyzed the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of individuals in relation to different languages, shedding light on the complexities of language use and identity in a city undergoing demographic and cultural transformations. The research contributes to our understanding of how linguistic landscapes evolve and how language impacts urban experiences in a diverse and dynamic context like Memphis.

Then, more locally Robert A. Troyer, Carmen Cáceda and Patricia Giménez Eguíbar (2015) published a study conducted in Independence, Oregon of the linguistic landscape which aimed to understand the meanings and functions of language in public spaces, particularly in multilingual contexts. The research initially focused on quantitative data analysis to examine the number and types of language displays in public places within the town. It sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the linguistic landscape by documenting the visible presence of various languages. To complement the quantitative analysis, the study also incorporated qualitative data gathered through interviews with residents of the town. This ethnographic approach aligned with the calls from LL scholars for more qualitative methodologies that can effectively capture the roles and interactions of different languages. Interviews were completed with commercial entities to understand their use of multilingual signage, and community members to understand their viewpoint towards the use of Spanish in signs. The commercial use showed the importance of connecting with their clientele for profit, while the community members transmitted a fear to be recognized because they know the views of the people towards the Hispanic community. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study provided a more comprehensive understanding of the role that Spanish plays in the life of the community. It

delved into the complexities of multilingualism in a seemingly monolingual context and explored how different languages compete and coexist within the linguistic landscape.

The studies conducted by Rebecca Todd Garvin and Robert A. Troyer, Carmen Cáceda, and Patricia Giménez Eguibar have greatly influenced this project on the linguistic landscape. Garvin's study on the linguistic landscape in Memphis, Tennessee, has provided insights into how residents respond to linguistic diversity in public spaces and the implication of such diversity on community dynamics. Her focus on attitudes, perceptions, and interactions related to different languages has inspired me to explore similar aspects for this project. Additionally, Troyer, Cáceda, Giménez Eguibar's study conducted in Independence, Oregon, has served as a valuable reference for understanding the meanings and functions of language in public spaces, particularly in multilingual contexts. Their use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as analyzing the number and types of languages displayed as well as conducting interviews with community members and commercial entities, has informed my approach to data collection and analysis.

Moreover, both studies have highlighted the complexities of linguistic landscapes in urban settings undergoing demographic and cultural transformations. Thus, there is a connection between how languages impact urban experiences. Such as the importance of considering the attitudes and perspectives of both community members and commercial entities in shaping the linguistic landscape. Overall, the studies by Garvin and Troyer et al. have provided valuable insights, methodologies, and perspectives that have influenced the direction and approach of this research on the linguistic landscape.

## Objectives

The overarching objective of this study is to identify how Spanish-language signage in downtown Eugene can better support ethnolinguistic vitality for the local Hispanic community through pragmatic translations. To do this, the current study focuses on existing Spanish language signage in Eugene, the quality of English to Spanish translations and the way that members of the local Spanish-speaking community perceive these signs and translations. My specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the quality and accuracy of English to Spanish translations on signs documented in 2022.
2. Describe and scrutinize the general perceptions of Spanish-language signage in downtown Eugene by members of the local Hispanic community.
3. Identify ways to improve Spanish translations on signage to better support ethnolinguistic vitality according to suggestions from the interviewees.

## **Method and Design**

The proposed study has been designed in two parts. The first part examines the use of Spanish on public street signs in downtown Eugene and will focus on the difference in the quality of English to Spanish translations. The data used for this was collected during field work in 2022. University of Oregon students in a Spanish sociolinguistics and linguistic landscape class, taught by Dr. Grammon, collected this data. The author of this paper was enrolled in this class and participated in the data collection. The data analysis of the photographed signs shows some form of translations from English to Spanish and vice versa. The analysis consists of scrutinizing a total of seventy-five images with signs.

The images of the signs were collected majorly by students using their personal phone. The collection of the data took a few days, where students were divided into groups. These groups all had a particular section of downtown's core which they went around collecting data. In Appendix I, the downtown core area is highlighted into sections and the numbers represent the groups and the area they covered. All types of signs were collected including those without any translations, but for the sake of this project the authors' data set contains the images of signs with translations.

The author arranged the signs into two categories, based on their representation of macro-multilingualism or micro-multilingualism (Schmitt, 2018). Macro-multilingualism is where there are two signs, one for each language, and a sign is representative of micro-multilingualism if it contains both English and Spanish in one sign. When there is more than one language in a sign, there is one language that is more prominent than the other. The position of the language within a sign (or a unit of signs in the case of macro-multilingualism), the sizing and color of the text (Schmitt, 2018). All these characteristics are important when looking at multilingual signs in

order to determine the significance of the languages used and how much thought was put into the translations derived from the more prominent language.

Subsequently, this study delved into a detailed analysis within each category to determine whether the signs in downtown Eugene indicated literal or pragmatic translations. This examination aimed to differentiate between translations that strictly adhere to the original language's literal meaning and those that consider the target language's communicative intent and cultural context. By scrutinizing the translations, the author aimed to gain insights into the effectiveness and appropriateness of the signage in facilitating communication and creating a welcoming space for the Hispanic community. The participants assessed whether the translations accurately conveyed the intended message, while also considering the cultural nuances and pragmatic aspects that might impact the comprehension and reception of the signs. From this analysis of literal versus pragmatic translations, it provided valuable information about the quality and functionality of the signage in downtown Eugene. It shed light on the extent to which the translations addressed the specific needs and preferences of the Hispanic community, contributing to the broader goal of improving accessibility and inclusivity in the urban space.

Similarly, the author also categorized the signs in downtown Eugene into two text typologies based on whether they were public or private signs. The classification aims to examine the distinct functions and intentions behind the signs, which could include providing information, issuing prohibitions, or recruiting individuals for certain purposes. During the analysis process, the author paid close attention to the functionality of each sign. They assessed how effectively the signs fulfilled their intended purpose, whether it was to inform the public about certain services or events, to prohibit certain actions, or to recruit individuals for specific activities or organizations. By considering the functionality and intention of each sign, the author



gained a deeper understanding of the diverse communicative purposes and goals behind the signage in downtown Eugene. This analysis allowed them to identify any gaps or areas where improvements could be made to enhance the effectiveness and clarity of the signs for both the Hispanic community and the wider public. Furthermore, this classification of signs into public and private categories provided insights into the different contexts and stakeholders involved in the creation and placement of the signage. It highlighted the varying levels of control and regulation in different settings, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic landscape and its implications for accessibility and inclusivity in downtown Eugene.

All the attained information was arranged on an excel sheet to facilitate the process of quantifying the data. The images were coded into an excel sheet and given a name for identification during the analysis. The analysis of the images was completed in the spreadsheet, and as previously mentioned there were details that the author wanted to make sure to identify. Thus, the following questions had to be answered for each different kind of sign:

1. How many of these signs are there?
2. Is the sign put on or owned by a public or private entity?
3. What is the functionality of the sign?
4. Is the image of macro-multilingual signs or a micro-multilingual sign?
5. Does the sign(s) contain literal or pragmatic translations?
6. What is the position of Spanish in relation to English?
7. What is the color and size of the text in the sign(s)?

After answering all these specific questions, the author focused on responding to the following question: which language is more prominent and how is this prominence seen? Is the same information conveyed in the two languages? If not, how are they different? In all

the author assembled a list of patterns based on the analysis of the signs with translations. By scrutinizing the images in this manner, the author determined what images could be used during the interview process to encourage the participants to speak about what they perceive. The images used are included in Appendix II.

The second part of this projects' design examines perceptions of Spanish language signage in downtown Eugene by members of the local Hispanic community. Within COVID-19 regulations, the data collected for this second part included in-person interviews. The interviews were conducted, with Spanish speakers from Eugene to further understand their sentiments towards the incorporation of linguistic policies for signage. To enhance the accessibility of downtown Eugene for the Hispanic community, it is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing barriers that hinder accessibility. By conducting interviews and analyzing signage translations in downtown Eugene, specifically from the year 2022, certain challenges and issues were identifiable. This research will provide valuable insights to the city of Eugene, enabling them to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment that addresses the needs of the Hispanic community. As Garvin and Troyer et al. have contributed to a broader understanding of how linguistic diversity and language use intersect with urban spaces and community dynamics.

The participants were recruited through an acquaintance that knew people in the community, and the author relayed the requirements for the participants and asked people they knew for their help. The information that was provided to these individuals who connected the author with the participants was the following:

My project is regarding Spanish in Eugene and how the Spanish speaking community perceive the language. Unfortunately, I cannot interview UO (University of Oregon) students or people who have prior knowledge of sociolinguistics, particularly linguistic landscape. I am looking for people who are 18+ and are bilingual or at least have a

connection to Spanish and English. They do not need to be proficient in both languages, I can interview in either language.

With only these guidelines, three people agreed to participate, who will be called Andrea, Maria, and Rosa for sake of anonymity. By using a predetermined criterion, the study aimed to recruit participants who had a direct connection to the linguistic landscape in downtown Eugene and could offer firsthand knowledge and experiences related to the use and perception of Spanish in the area. This approach helped ensure that the data collected would be relevant and insightful for addressing the study's research questions and objectives.

### **Participants**

The author collected this data by conducting in-person interviews and recording the interaction with permission or the participant following the Institutional Review Board requirements. The interviews began with questions about their background and their relation to Spanish (Appendix III). Then the questions were guided open-ended questions that allowed a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee about the general feel of downtown Eugene (Appendix III). Thereafter, the interviewee was presented with signs that are identified in the initial analysis to provide their opinion on the translations used and what they feel would be more appropriate. The participants for this study are residents of Eugene who can comment on the use of multilingual signage. The author recruited participants by reaching out to people they knew in the University of Oregon and asking them to connect them to people they knew that met the requirements, as mentioned above.

- 1) Andrea was born and raised in Colima, Mexico until the age of eighteen. She then migrated to California where she lived for ten years before moving to Eugene. At the age of forty-eight Andrea has been living in Eugene for twenty years now. She is a mother to three children, all which majorly speak English but do understand Spanish. So, with the

years she has been exposed to English she has grasped a good understanding herself and uses it daily at work alongside her Spanish with friends and family.

- 2) Maria has been living in Eugene for sixteen years, and before 2007 she lived in Los Angeles, California. Currently, she works at a non-profit in downtown, Eugene that serves underrepresented youth. Before this, she had held multiple jobs, some of which include a pharmaceutical technician, tutor for K-12 students, note taking, and more in the medical field. Maria expressed how her presence in her jobs has “attracted people,” her name and her ability to speak Spanish make this possible. She was raised speaking Spanish and learned English in school, so she is bilingual.
- 3) Now, the third participant is Rosa, forty-five years old and has lived all around Eugene and Springfield for thirty-three years. Before living in the United States (US) she lived in Mexico, where she started to learn English in School, but her fluency improved until she was in the US. She has a son to whom she speaks Spanish to as well as her parents, but with her husband and siblings she speaks majorly in English. She currently works as a college advisor for a program that aims to help underrepresented students. Since Rosa has lived in the North, South, and West side of Eugene for many years she has experience firsthand the influx of more Spanish-speaking individuals in the community.

The interviews were meant to provide an idea of whether the community members were aware of the miscommunication and misinterpretation of the signage. Interviews were analyzed using the recorded data and field notes made during and after the interview. The recorded audio was reviewed and transcribed, and then compiled with the field notes to produce qualitative data that will allow the author to figure out whether the downtown area of Eugene feels welcoming to the Spanish-speaking community and how they envision the future for them.

Particularly, to transcribe the recorded data, the author utilized a foot pedal to play, pause, and rewind the audio files. Additionally, the author utilized noise-canceling headphones while transcribing. The author first completed a run-through summary after listening to the audio once, then for the second listen, the author focused on identifying responses of interest. By the third listen, the author transcribed, word by word parts of the interview. Then, the field notes were taken during the interview, making sure to consider timestamps of interests, as well as emotional and facial expressions from the interviewees. Once the interview was finalized, the author added additional notes about how the interview went and what ideas were brought up within 30 minutes of the interview's finalization without talking to others. The author used the word documents created for each interviewee's recording summary and transcription with the field notes to write the analysis portion of this research.

Thus, the initial analysis allowed the author to identify persistent issues with the multilingual translations in signs and the surveys showed how the translations are affecting people and their view of downtown Eugene. The end goal is to use both analyses to discuss the ethnolinguistic vitality of Spanish in downtown Eugene and how important the Spanish language is to open the downtown area of Eugene for the Hispanic community.

### **Authors' Positionality**

My interest in this project as well as my data analysis and interpretation of findings are intricately tied to my identity as a Mexican American first generation bilingual woman. I was raised in Salem, Oregon as a monolingual Spanish speaker, before being exposed to English as my second language in school. Today, I identify as a bilingual person. Being raised in a home where it was emphasized by my father to "not lose [my] Spanish," he began a simple game of identifying obvious Spanish-language errors on signs in public spaces. As he only read and

spoke Spanish, he would focus on the translations only, but since I was able to read both Spanish and English, I found myself noticing how some translations did not make sense based on the English counterparts. After several years of seeking these multilingual signs, I became used to seeing translations that were misspelled. Also, that made no sense and were even missing information. Initially this was just a game, that is, until I learned about sociolinguistics and the linguistic landscape. I noticed the importance of translations, and because of who I am, my ability and experience helped me identify problems within the community of downtown Eugene. These problems included signs having inconsistent and wrong translations that can affect the understandings by monolingual readers, something that I had overlooked most of their life.

My identity and experiences lead me to focus on specific aspects of the signs downtown than what other people might have focused on. As I was collecting examples of signage in downtown Eugene, I found that I was quick to notice the signs that had some Spanish in them. Similarly, it occurred during the interviews, I was able to interview members of the community who are regularly non-accessible. Then on the analysis, I focused majorly on issues affecting readability, understanding, visibility, and whether all the necessary information was translated. These issues are important for me because there are multiple people in the Hispanic community that I personally know that are monolingual Spanish speakers, do not have much education and struggle to navigate public spaces in the United States.

## **Analysis**

The analysis and findings for the current study are presented in two sections. The first section focuses on the modalities on signs exhibited a wide range of characteristics, encompassing various aspect such as the absence of translation, a requirement for high literacy proficiency in Spanish, perplexing sentence structures, inconsistent use of negation, influences from the English language in the Spanish translations, crowded Spanish translations, and errors in spelling and grammar. These modalities highlight the significance of meticulous translations on signs, as they play a key role in facilitating effective communication and preventing any potential misinterpretations. Then, for the second section several themes emerged from the interviews. The perspective of community members who are rarely interviewed and contribute to the understanding of the issues surrounding bilingual signage were incredibly important. The participants compared Eugene to their previous places of residence or to Eugene more than ten years ago. Similarly, the perspective on inclusivity of the Spanish language in the community varied based on participants previous experiences.

### **Signage**

From the seventy-five images it was found that two-thirds of the images consisted of signs that fit into the private category, about three-fourths of the signs' functionality is to inform and prohibit. It was identified that approximately 31% of the signs explicitly contain the word "no" as a prohibition. The use of prohibiting language is associated with the exclusion of individuals, which refers to mostly the homeless population. Yet, it has been identified that there are signs that contain the prohibiting wording "no" in both languages and the exceptions are included in English but missing in Spanish.

In the case of Figure 22, the “NO SMOKING” is translated to “NO FUMAR,” but the subheading of the sign says in a smaller font “WITHIN 25 FEET OF THIS ENTRANCE.” but this is not translated into Spanish as well. The readers of this sign who do not have a good understanding of English believe smoking is not allowed at all, or just inside but it is allowed twenty-five feet away. The exception to the prohibition is not translated, and therefore if someone wanted to smoke, they would assume that it is only prohibited inside and go ahead and smoke outside. In turn, could result in a fine or an arrest that began with a misunderstanding. Similarly, in Figure 13, there are two signs whose content is about prohibiting camping and trespassing, but just below it there is a joint-third sign. This sign is a notice to the people in the premise that they should “Smile” since they are being recorded, but this information is only presented in English. The big yellow smiley face seems friendly, but because of this friendliness people would misunderstand the tone of the signage and believe a different message is being conveyed. Then since their actions are being recorded, they could face charges and an arrest

The initial analysis revealed a significant characteristic of the signage in the area, where most of the Spanish translations were below the English text. In fact, this accounted for 84.9% of the signs analyzed. In contrast, only an exceedingly small percentage of signs (1.4%) had Spanish text presented above that of English. Additionally, only 2.8% of the signs had Spanish text presented first, whether that be above or to the right, while the majority of signs (87.6%) had English text presented first, comprising of about 66 of the signs in total. This disparity in the number of signs presenting either language first can be attributed to the power dynamic between languages and since English is the unofficial language in the area that is why it is more prominent on the signs. It is worth noting that there are a few signs where Spanish text is presented first, indicating a recognition of the growing Spanish-speaking population in the area.



Hence, the fact that Spanish is the language the signs are translated into, indicate that people are aware of who are reading these signs. In other words, the linguistic landscape reflects the linguistic diversity of the area. Finally, the remaining 9.6% of the signs analyzed were A-frame signs or signs with multiple versions, making it difficult to determine the relationship between the languages presented. This highlights the need for consistent and clear bilingual signage in the area to ensure effective communication and accessibility for all.

Within the 75 images, it was determined that the signs fall into six categories. The categories were created if there were 6 or more images that were part of said category. Out of 75 images about 33 (44%) belong to the “Camping/Trespassing” category while 21.3%(16/75) are about “Smoking”. This goes to show how more than half (65.3%, 49/75) of the images are about smoking, camping or trespassing. Then “COVID-19” related signs are only about 8% like the number of signs that serve as “Notices” (8%, 6/75) and are related to “Public Transportation” (8%, 6/75). In total eight (10.7%, 8/75) images were not allocated into a particular category and so the “Other” category was created. These categories allow us to distinguish between the several types of signs and how their translations are and what they need to improve.

During the analysis it was determined that 56 of the 75 falls into the micro-multilingualism category, that is there is both English and Spanish in one sign as in Figure 3. In other words, only about 25% of the images contained two signs, one for each language like in Figure 14, characterized as macro-multilingualism. Therefore, the public, businesses, and the city are more prone to use a singular sign with both languages and space becomes more limited. There were several occasions where the Spanish translations appear to be cramped and messes up the visual aspect of the sign, making it at times harder for people to read from a far, (Figure 3). Furthermore, it promotes a notion that Spanish should fit in the same area as English, when it

is known that Spanish tends to use longer words and more complex grammatical structures than English. Moreover, Spanish words often carry multiple meanings depending on the context, which makes the language more nuanced and sophisticated.

Due to Spanish being a complex language, it proved a challenge to label some translations as either being pragmatic or literal. This resulted in the creation of a third category, “undetermined” and thus seventeen (~22.7%) of the images were labeled as such. The gray area between determining if a sign has literal or pragmatic translations depends on the context and interpretation of the sign. In many cases, signs have a straightforward and literal translation, such as "No Smoking" or "Stop". These signs convey a clear message that is understood universally. However, some signs may have a more complicated meaning that requires a pragmatic translation. For example, a sign that reads "Employees Only" may have a literal translation that refers only to people who work at a specific location, but it also has an implied pragmatic meaning. The sign may be warning customers or visitors that they are not allowed beyond a certain point. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic differences can also affect the interpretation of signs. A sign that is easily understood in one language or culture may not have the same meaning in another language or culture. This leads to a gray area in determining the pragmatic translation of a sign, requiring a deeper understanding of the context and the intended audience. So, determining if a sign has a literal or pragmatic translation can depend on various factors such as context, interpretation, language, culture, and intended audience.

There are many instances where subheadings or additional text on signs are not translated as mentioned previously, which can lead to confusion and misinformation for people who do not understand the language of the sign. This is especially problematic in areas where there is a large population of people who speak different languages. For example, downtown has a sign that

reads “Downtown Watch” (Figure 2). If the subheading that explains that if you are seeing a crime in progress to go to a safe area and call 911 is not translated into Spanish, non-English speaking individuals may not fully understand the how to report a crime nor what to do and could mistakenly stay in the area and put themselves in harm way. Other examples of signs that require full translation include warning signs on hazardous materials or safety instructions on to use certain equipment or machines. Without proper translation, not only does this increase the risks of safety hazards, but it could also lead to a major misunderstanding of the intended message on the sign. A misinterpreted sign can have negative consequences including the spread of false information, wasted resources, and loss of trust in the authorities responsible for creating the sign. In conclusion, omitting translations on signs can result in misinformation, misinterpretation, and potentially hazardous results. It is crucial to ensure that all crucial information is translated properly to avoid any confusion and prevent any accidents.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that the Spanish translations are more complex and require a higher level of literacy than their English counterparts. This suggests that the translations are intended for individuals who have a higher level of education and reading skills in Spanish, (Figure 25) One reason for this difference could be the fact that English and Spanish are two different languages with different linguistic structures, grammar, and vocabulary. As a result, translating from English to Spanish often involves re-structuring sentences in a more complex way to convey the same meaning in Spanish. Moreover, the literacy rates among Spanish speakers in the United States tend to be lower compared to those who speak English. According to the National Center for Education Statistics approximately 34% of the population with poor literacy skills in the United States comprises of non-U.S. born individuals. Among U.S. born adults with low levels of English literacy, White and Hispanic ethnicities have the highest

representation at 35% and 34% respectively. In terms of race/ethnicity and nativity status, White U.S.-born adults constitute one third of the low-skilled population, while Hispanic adults born outside the United States account for around a quarter of such individuals in the country. Thus, the higher level of literacy required to read and understand Spanish street signs is likely due to the complexities of translating from English to Spanish, but this is not helping Spanish speakers with lower literacy levels. These translations are intended to cater to the needs of the Spanish-speaking population, but they may also hinder their understanding when the translations are at higher reading levels than the English counterparts.

Spanish translations can sometimes pose a challenge to readers due to the order of words used. This is because the Spanish language has a different syntax than English, which makes translating from one language to the other challenging. The differences in the positioning of words or phrases can affect the coherence of the message's coherence and make the reader a particular passage more than once to get its intended meaning (Figure 21 and 24). In Spanish, the subject and the verb can be separated by other elements, such as adverbs, objects, and adjectives. Most times, these elements come after the verb. This means that when someone tries to translate English sentences or phrases into Spanish, they may need to rearrange the word order to ensure that the sentence follows the syntax rules of the Spanish language. This alteration in word order may cause ambiguity or confusion, making it harder for the reader to follow along. Therefore, the word order in Spanish translations can hinder readers from understanding the message in one read or without reading the English version, particularly when there is an alteration in the word order, and when there is a need to rely on synonyms and context to convey meaning.

Another characteristic about the translations on the signs was that despite efforts to use pragmatic translations, some translations still retain English influences. For instance, many

translations continue to use capital letters where there should not be any. In some languages, capitalization is only used for proper nouns, but in English, it is also used for the first letter of a sentence or for emphasis. This can lead to confusion and misunderstandings, particularly about resources or instructions. In conclusion, the efforts to use pragmatic translations are evident, however, there are still areas where English influences continue to affect translations. It is essential to consider cultural differences and the target audience's needs to create accurate and effective translations that are accessible to all.

When it comes to color and size of text on signs, the importance lies in their ability to convey information quickly and effectively to their intended audience. For example, brightly colored signs with large text can grab attention and communicate important messages to drivers on the road. Yet, there are translated signs in downtown where the color of text in Spanish is not as visible as that of the English (Figure 3). As visibly in Figure 8, the subheading highlighting what type of smoking instruments are prohibited is hard to see in Spanish. That is, without considering its understandability, the color itself is hindering the main purpose (to inform) for the text to be included in the sign. On another note, for Figure 9, the color of the text that highlights negation is the same color of text used for the translation in Spanish. It makes it seem like the Spanish section is explaining the English “NOT,” but, it is the full translation of the sign. In this case, not only the color is confusing, but there are words that are not easily understandable for Spanish speakers, an example of a literal translation. Color and size of text on signs is important, and for translations from English to Spanish, the Spanish seems to be at a disadvantage.

For specific signs that read “No Trespassing,” there are multiple translations in downtown signage. The translations range from literal to pragmatic translations, the same words

spelled differently and then an ‘extreme’ translation. In Figure 16 and Figure 18 here the translations are both meant to be literal, yet there is a letter difference. “Traspasar” is a word that indicates passing from one point to another, while “Trespasar” is not exactly a word. There is a possibility that “Trespasar” derived from the English word “trespassing,” or there was a slight mistake when printing the sign where the /e/ was substituted for the first /a/. This is not the only time this characteristic surface in the signs of downtown, vowel substitutions are present in the Spanish translations (Figures 27 and 28).

Here the word “consumer” is not correct, it should say “consumir,” the vowels were once again wrong. These signs could have been bought by a private party, but they are part of the linguistic landscape that people see around downtown, so even though it might of not be intentional, the “No Trespasar” sign is promoting incorrect Spanish. Now, the pragmatic translation that is utilized on some signs is “Prohibido El Paso”, a translation that is more appropriate than “No Entrar Illegalmente” as in Figure 19. The use of ‘illegal’ to indicate prohibition to the Spanish-readers has a negative connotation because of its association with a persons’ citizenship status in the United States. Therefore, even though there are multiple translations for one sign, I believe that there is a good translation (“Prohibido El Paso”) that should be used.

Overall, the modalities of translations on signs vary and can include missing translations, high literacy competence, confusing syntax, inconsistent use of negation, English influences, cramped Spanish translations, design issues, and potential errors in spelling and grammar. These modalities highlight the importance of careful and accurate translations on signs to ensure effective communication and avoid misunderstandings.

## Interviews

Through the interview process, data from three different individuals was obtained within Lane county. The three participants were middle aged females. All the participants spoke Spanish as their first language and English as their secondary, but unlike Andrea and Maria, Rosa was fully bilingual and was confident in both languages. Andrea was fluent in Spanish and not so much in English, while Maria was more fluent in English and was re-learning Spanish. All the participants are working mothers. Andrea was a cook at a restaurant. Then, Maria worked in the medical field for approximately eight years before getting to her current job serving underserved youth at a non-profit and being an accountant. Rosa was an advisor at an accredited four-year university and serves recognized underrepresented students including those of Hispanic descent.

After the careful review of the interview audio, a few themes kept surfacing throughout. All of the participants compared Eugene to where they had lived or to Eugene over ten years ago. In comparison to California, there are relatively less bilingual signage and more use of the English language; in California as Maria said, “there everyone speaks Spanish, everywhere.” For the individuals that lived in California previously, Eugene is less inclusive for them, but Rosa who has only lived in Eugene, Oregon in the United States they said “I have lived here so long that I have seen it shift, I mean when we first moved to Eugene in ninety-four, you would rarely hear people speaking Spanish. If we would go to the store and we hear anyone talking Spanish, we would whisper within my family and then muster up the courage to go introduce ourselves.” In this regard it is possible to understand how the perspective to inclusivity of the Spanish language in the community is strongly related to previous experiences.

When asked about the spaces they feel comfortable using Spanish, they all expressed similar sentiments that what matters is the people around them more than a particular location.

As Rosa so well summarized, “[we] are more comfortable wherever there are more of us because [we] feel liberated, [we] feel free,” when they can speak Spanish. Similarly, when initially asked about their opinion on whether downtown Eugene was welcoming Maria expressed how they “hope Eugene is welcoming, but that it does not feel like it,” and Rosa said, “I want to think it is welcoming.” Both of their testimonies point to the notion that they are aware of how downtown Eugene is not welcoming for the Spanish speaking community. Then the author introduced the second part of the interview, with actual examples of the signs. Once Rosa was able to review the signs, they mentioned how they have normalized the ineffectiveness of the translated Spanish parts of signs. This goes to show how members of the community can sense the Spanish translations are not accurate and or helpful, so they disregard them if they are able to understand the English section. Another interesting theme that all the participants brought up was how there is no reason to visit downtown Eugene other than the public library because everything is closed. This characteristic shows the ripple effect of not having community members visit downtown so businesses close and, in the end, there is not enough encouragement to visit.

Similar inconsistencies were pointed out by the participants when they reviewed the pre-selected images. Inconsistencies that were common for them to distinguish. One is that the Spanish is hidden, it is hard to read at times and overall, just not as visible as the English counterparts. For example, for Figure 3 the text in the sign appears to get smaller from the English to Spanish translation, it is important to also take into consideration that the English text seems to be bolded because of the size difference in text. Additionally, in Figure 8, the interviewees pointed out how there are two lines that they assumed was part of the Eugene City Code information in Spanish, but it was the Spanish translation of the prohibition. Hence, viable solutions were offered such as making the text bigger, using better contrast colors, and making



the sign as concise as possible. Most of the signs with this problem were signs from the city of Eugene, which were micro-multilingual square shaped signs with a small amount of space. Thus, if the signs were to have more space, then the text would be more visible and readable.

Another characteristic they noticed was how there were words in the signs they did not understand at all, and once I explained what they meant they offered alternative pragmatic words. For example, when it came to “vaporizadores” the translation for “vapes” in Figure 7 they mentioned “cigaros vape (vape cigars), or “cigaros electricos (electric cigars)” as an alternative. Similarly, for Figure 13 the word “instruido” was not understood, this resulted from the literal translation of “instructed.” In general, the sign of no trespassing in Figure 13 is a literal translation using formal Spanish. In conclusion, the participants' observations and suggestions regarding unfamiliar words and alternative pragmatic translations highlight the importance of linguistic accuracy and cultural relevance in multilingual signage. Their feedback emphasizes the need for a nuanced approach to translation, considering local dialects, cultural contexts, and the intended audience to ensure effective communication and comprehension in diverse linguistic landscapes.

Then, it was also highlighted how there needs to be more descriptive words on some signs since they aid in its understanding, it is better to explain well than to vaguely give a translation that is not helping anyone. In Figure 23, when asked about what they think the sign is promoting they were unsure what it was being said, is the academy of Eugene and online? Or was it an academy about Eugene and online? Andrea mentioned how it could be either one, or that if the words were switched around in the translation it could also give another way to interpret the text. When Rosa saw this sign, she assumed that the academy was from Eugene and that it was online, another interpretation of the translation. The participants' observations

highlight the importance of clear and descriptive language in signage to ensure accurate understanding. The ambiguity of certain translations, as demonstrated in Figure 23, underscores the need for precise wording that conveys the intended message without confusion or multiple interpretations. By prioritizing clarity and specificity in translations, signage can effectively communicate its purpose and avoid potential misunderstandings among diverse language users.

Finally, they expressed how the lack of translations for some signs made them feel like they are not significant enough to know all of the information present on the sign; that what they can read is because that's all others have decided they need to know. Maria particularly delved into this idea when looking at the sign on Figure 22, about not smoking within 25 feet. In general, the participants' experiences and reflections shed light on the emotional impact of the lack of translations on certain signs, generating feelings of exclusion and insignificance. Their response to the sign in Figure 22, which lacked a translation, underscores the sense that limited access to information can create a perception of being deliberately kept in the dark. This highlights the importance of inclusive linguistic practices that prioritize equal understanding and empower individuals by ensuring they have access to all relevant information, regardless of their language proficiency.

All these different problems on the signs were pointed out by the participants, and because of this one participant was inclined to say that “even if Spanish was readable first and it was not understandable, they would then opt for reading the English even if it came second because the first option was not good.” This highlights how bilingual signs are viewed as ‘correct’ in English only, no matter its position in a sign. The interviewees even had questions of their own: was it that the esthetic of the sign was more important than making the sign understandable? Another question that was asked more than once was, who oversees the review

of the translations and why are they not putting much effort into it? These questions are important to keep in mind as they are questions posed by members of the community that are rarely interviewed.

## Discussion

The preceding analysis highlights the importance of careful and accurate translations on signs to ensure effective communication, accessibility, and the prevention of misunderstandings. It emphasizes the need for consistent and clear bilingual signage, taking into account language complexities, cultural differences, and the specific needs of the target audience. The analysis of signs reveals disparities in the presentation of English and Spanish text, emphasizing the necessity for equal visibility and prominence of translations. Then the interviews shed light on the challenges faced by the Spanish-speaking community in Eugene and the importance of addressing issues related to language inclusivity, accurate translations, and creating a welcoming downtown environment. Their insights provide valuable guidance for improving bilingual signage and fostering a more inclusive community where all individuals feel respected and represented. By addressing the issues identified in the study, such as hidden translations, design issues, and prioritizing aesthetics over understanding, the city can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment that supports the linguistic diversity of its residents and visitors.

The analysis of the signs reveals several key findings. First, mostly of the signs analyzed fall into the private category, and a significant portion of them are intended to inform and prohibit. Additionally, it was observed that there is a disparity in the presentation of English and Spanish text on the signs, with a large majority of signs having Spanish translations below the English text. This highlights the need for consistent and clear bilingual signage in the area. Furthermore, out of the 75 images analyzed, the categories with the most signs were "Camping/Trespassing" and "Smoking," accounting for more than half of the total. These categories indicate the prevalence of issues related to camping, trespassing, and smoking in the area. However, there is also a need for attention to other categories such as "COVID-19,"

"Notices," and "Public Transportation" to ensure comprehensive communication through signage. The analysis also revealed that micro-multilingualism, where both English and Spanish are present on the same sign, is more common than macro-multilingualism, where separate signs are provided for each language. However, the use of singular signs with both languages can lead to limited space for translations, especially for Spanish, which tends to require more space due to longer words and complex grammatical structures.

The interviews with three individuals from Lane County provided valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences related to language inclusivity, downtown Eugene, and the translations of signs. The participants shared their personal backgrounds, highlighting differences in language proficiency, cultural origins, and length of residency in Eugene. Their experiences shaped their views on inclusivity, both in terms of language and community reception. One recurring theme was the comparison of Eugene to their previous places of residence or to Eugene in the past. Participants noted a relative lack of bilingual signage and a greater predominance of the English language compared to their experiences in California. This influenced their perception of inclusivity, with participants from California feeling less accommodated in Eugene. However, the participant who had only lived in Eugene observed the gradual shift towards more inclusivity over time.

The interview findings shed light on how the vicious cycle of decline can impact the appeal of downtown Eugene, specifically in relation to signage and the linguistic landscape. The cycle of decline refers to a recurring pattern or process in which a decline or deterioration in a particular aspect or area leads to further declines or deteriorations, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. The cycle of decline can occur in various contexts, such as economic decline, urban decay, or social deterioration, and it can be difficult to break without proactive interventions or

measures to reverse the downward trend. The cycle of decline, characterized by a continuous deterioration or decline in various aspects, can hinder the attractiveness and vitality of a place. In the context of downtown Eugene, a decline in visitor numbers can trigger a chain reaction where local businesses may choose to close or reduce their services, leading to a diminished appeal and further decreasing the number of visitors. This decline in visitor numbers subsequently reduces revenue and profitability for local businesses, making it challenging for them to cover operating costs and potentially forcing difficult decisions such as temporary or permanent closures. As businesses close, the overall visitor experience suffers, with fewer options for dining, shopping, or entertainment, further discouraging potential visitors and perpetuating the cycle of decline. Breaking this cycle requires proactive interventions and support from various stakeholders, including the local government and community organizations. Efforts such as targeted marketing campaigns, infrastructure development, revitalization projects, and collaboration among local businesses can help stimulate visitor interest and reverse the decline. By revitalizing the local economy and enhancing the visitor experience, there is a greater likelihood of developing a positive feedback loop, where increased visitation leads to thriving businesses and attracts more visitors. Given the growing Hispanic community, prioritizing the enhancement of ethnolinguistic vitality, particularly in relation to the Spanish language, can be a valuable step towards the prosperity and revitalization of downtown Eugene.

Inaccurate translations, missing subheadings or additional text, and design issues can lead to confusion, misinformation, and potential safety hazards. It is crucial to ensure that all crucial information is accurately translated and presented on signs to avoid misunderstandings and promote safety. The translations on signs also exhibit variations from literal to pragmatic translations, and English influences can still be observed in some translations. It is important to

consider cultural differences and the target audience's needs to create accurate and effective translations that are accessible to all. Finally, the color and size of text on signs plays a significant role in conveying information effectively. In some instances, the color and visibility of the Spanish text are not as prominent as the English text, hindering the intended purpose of the translations. Careful consideration should be given to ensure that translated text is easily visible and accessible

The participants emphasized that it was the presence of other Spanish speakers that made them feel liberated and free to use their native language. They expressed a desire for downtown Eugene to be welcoming but felt that it fell short of their expectations. In their review of signs, they identified inconsistencies, such as hidden or hard-to-read Spanish translations and a lack of descriptive language that hindered comprehension. By implementing bilingual signage, the city can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment that caters to the linguistic diversity of its residents and visitors. The participants offered suggestions for improvement, including larger text, better color contrast, concise translations, and more descriptive language. Importantly, the participants raised questions about the oversight and effort put into the translations of signs, as well as the prioritization of aesthetics over understanding. These questions reflect the perspectives of community members who are often underrepresented in research and decision-making processes.

To deal with a few of the issues in the signage in downtown Eugene, it is sufficient to have a person or a group of people who can review the translations or the signs before being put out in the streets and businesses windows/doors. But finding the appropriate individuals who can review the translations and want to will be challenging to some extent. Translation requires cultural awareness, and if the translators are not familiar with the culture of the source text, some

information may be missed or mistranslated. Also, if the translators do not have enough context about the text/sign, they may not be able to understand the full meaning to convey it accurately in languages different from the original. Then there might be words and phrases that are ambiguous and thus the translators may interpret them differently than the public and result in incorrect usage of terms. Similarly, wanting to use colloquial expressions for pragmatic translation can lead to misinterpretation by the intended audience. These reasons are why translating is not an easy task, and the translator(s) must have a deep understanding of both the source and target languages to avoid missing any critical information.

### **Limitations**

For this research project, there are several limitations that need to be addressed. This project recognizes five primary limitations: resources, research design, participants' selection, sample size and data collection. Through this section the limitations will be explained in detail.

First, the resources available to the author to conduct this research were limited. One notable limitation was the lack of funding, which had implications for participant recruitment and data collection. With sufficient funding, the author could have provided incentives to encourage a larger pool of participants to engage in the study. This, in turn, could have resulted in a more diverse and representative sample, enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the author's time constraints were another factor that affected the scope and depth of the research. Juggling responsibilities as a student worker and family contributor placed limitations on the amount of time that could be dedicated to the project. With more dedicated time available, the author would have been able to engage in a more extensive data collection process, ensuring a richer dataset and enabling a more comprehensive analysis of the linguistic landscape in downtown Eugene.



Second, the design of this project was shaped by the availability of resources. Due to limited funding and time constraints, the project was intentionally designed to be on a small scale. As a result, two sets of data were collected, capturing the signage from both 2020 and 2022. However, due to time limitations, only the data from 2022 was analyzed for this study. The decision to focus on the 2022 data set was made to ensure that the analysis would be based on the most recent and up-to-date information available. Although the data from 2020 could have provided valuable insights, choices had to be made based on the available resources and the specific objectives of the study. While it would have been ideal to analyze both sets to observe any potential changes or trends over time, the decision to prioritize the 2022 data allows for a focused analysis within the given project constraints. This approach ensures that the findings and conclusions drawn from the study are based on the most relevant and up-to-date information, providing a snapshot of the current state of the linguistic landscape downtown. It is worth noting that future research endeavors could consider incorporating the 2020 data or conducting a longitudinal study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the changes and developments in the signage and linguistic landscape over time. Such an approach would provide a broader perspective and enable a deeper analysis of the dynamics within the community.

Third, as outlined in the methods section, the participants for this study were selected through a criterion established by the author, with the assistance of other individuals. The selection process was carefully designed to ensure that participants who met specific criteria were included in the study. The author's established criterion served as a guide for identifying individuals who could provide valuable insights and perspectives on the topic at hand. However, the involvement of other individuals in the participant selection process would have helped to ensure a diverse range of voices and experiences were represented in the study. In other words,

having a wider range of participants would add a layer of objectivity and reliability to the study which should be considered for further research.

Fourth, the number of participants was small for a typical social science study, but these provided important responses for this project's development. Including participants who are usually underrepresented in interviews offers several advantages and contributes to a more comprehensive and inclusive dataset. After conducting the interviews, specific themes and issues emerged, but due to the limited number of participants, further research is needed to validate whether the sentiments towards Spanish in downtown and Lance County are shared by the broader Hispanic community. To enhance accuracy and validity it is recommended to incorporate a diverse range of participants, which would also help mitigate the risk of biased or skewed results that may arise from relying on a homogeneous sample.

Fifth and finally, the data collection process presented the author with certain challenges and uncertainties due to their first-time experience conducting interviews on this scale. The author encountered unfamiliar situations, such as navigating how to avoid leading the interviewees' responses and how to appropriately conclude the session when interviewees continued speaking beyond the intended scope of the interview. These uncertainties highlight the learning curve inherent in conducting interviews and the importance of gaining experience in this research methodology. Moreover, since both the quantitative and qualitative analyses relied on observational methods, there is a possibility that the author's biases as an observer inadvertently influenced the data without their awareness. Being the sole analyst for both types of data may have introduced inherent subjectivity, underscoring the need for external validation and multiple perspectives to mitigate potential biases. Despite these challenges, the author found valuable guidance in the form of resources such as "Research Methods in Anthropology," by Russell

Bernard which provided insights and strategies for conducting interviews and navigating the research process. It is worth noting that the author's initial experience in scholarly research serves as a catalyst for their ongoing growth in the field. The uncertainties and challenges encountered during this study provide valuable lessons for future research endeavors, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and refinement of research skills.

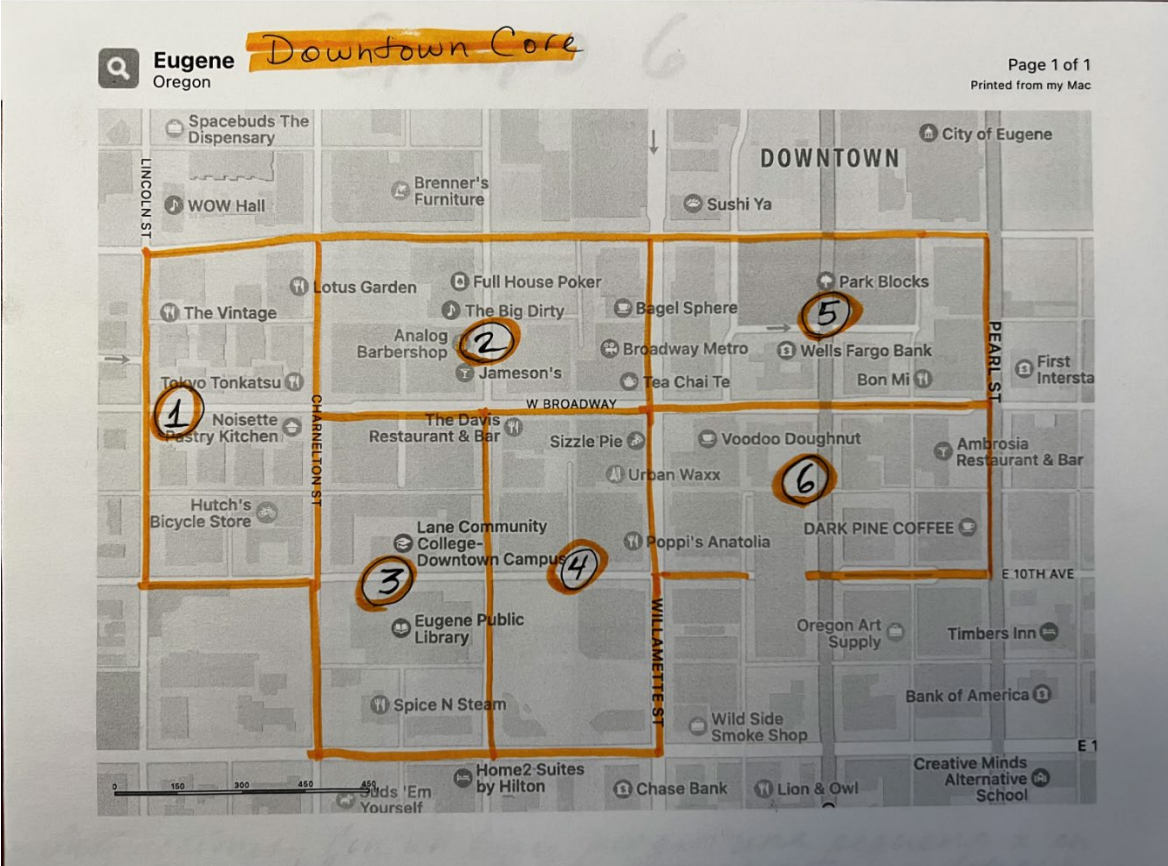
## **Significance and Conclusion**

The field of sociolinguistics continues to grow, particularly most studies are conducted in the Southwest of the United States, yet the Pacific Northwest is gaining interest from sociolinguist because the Hispanic population continues to increase. (Rivera-Mills et al. 2020). There is a need for more studies conducted at local levels. In the region of Oregon, there is little to no knowledge about the ethnolinguistic vitality of Spanish regarding small towns like Eugene. Even though it was not possible to conduct a mass investigation, by completing a study downtown, the author is contributing to future discussions about how multilingual references such as signs are important in Oregon. The findings of this study contribute to the advancement of ethnolinguistic vitality for Latinos and Spanish speakers in Eugene by highlighting the importance of linguistic inclusivity and representation. The participants' experiences and perspectives revealed the significance of accurate and culturally appropriate translations in public signage. By recognizing the impact of translations on language use and identity, the study emphasizes the need for linguistic practices that value and validate the Spanish-speaking community. The identification of challenges, such as the use of literal translations and the lack of descriptive words, provides insights for improving the linguistic landscape in Eugene and creating an environment where Spanish speakers feel valued and empowered. The study's findings support the goal of fostering a vibrant and thriving linguistic community by advocating for comprehensive translations, promoting accessibility, and ensuring equal access to information for all residents.

This study will also aid in making the public aware of issues related to the use of Spanish in public space to incite their involvement in the community. Thus, the conclusions I have produced will hopefully support the implementation of appropriate signage in the future.

To promote ethnolinguistic vitality, making Eugene more welcoming and inclusive of Spanish speakers.

# Appendix I



## Appendix II



Figure 1: Sign “Park Blocks”



Figure 2: “Downtown Watch” sign



Figure 3: "Welcome to Downtown Eugene" Sign



Figure 4: Trip Planner Warning





Figure 5: Public Transportation (A-frame) Spanish



Figure 6: Public Transportation (A-frame) English



Figure 7: “Tobacco-free” Community Sign



Figure 8: “Smoke-free Space” Sign



Figure 9: “Not part of Smoke-free Zone” Sign



Figure 10: “Smoke-free Downtown” (A-frame from 2020)





Figure 11: “No Smoking or Vaping” 2020 Sign, Version I



Figure 12: “No Smoling or Vaping” 2020 Sign, Version II



Figure 13: No Trespassing, No Camping, Smile Sign



Figure 14: "Camping Prohibited" Sign



Figure 15: No Trespassing, Orange Letters Sign



Figure 16: "No Traspasar" Sign





Figure 17: No Trespassing, On Wall Sign



Figure 18: "No Trespasar" Sign



Figure 19: No Trespassing – Illegal Sign



Figure 20: No “Thank You” in Spanish Sign





Figure 21: Audio Notice Sign



Figure 22: "Within 25 Feet" Sign

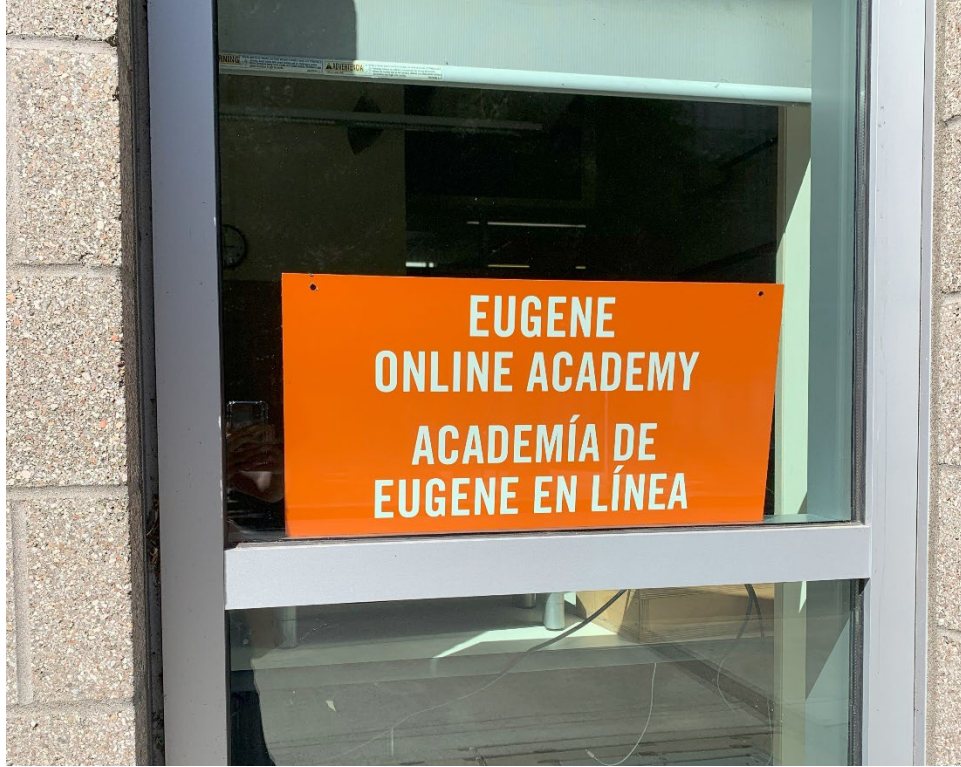


Figure 23: “Eugene Online Academy” Sign

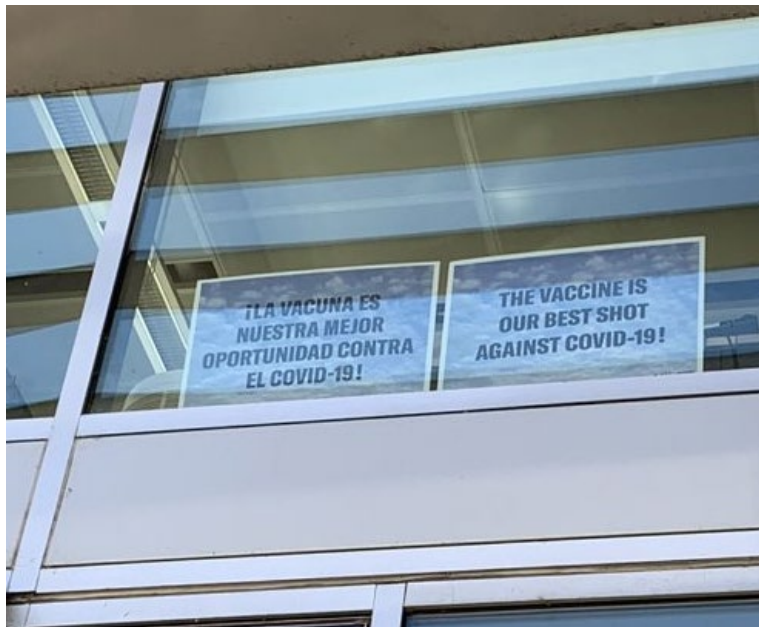


Figure 24: “Best Shot Against Covid-19” Sign



Figure 25: “5-language Bus” Sign







Figure 26: "Social Distancing" Sign



Figure 27 & 28: Business Door

## Appendix III

### **Background Questions:** “Tell me about yourself”

If not already answered, ask the following questions.

1. What is your name?
2. Can arrange people based on context clues into age-groups<sup>4</sup>.
3. Were you born and raised in Oregon? If not, specify please.
4. What language is your first language (language you grew up speaking)?
5. How long have you lived in Eugene?

**Perception of Signs in the Community Questions:** Lead with saying that my project is about Spanish in Oregon and that I am interested to know more about their experience. (Keep the questions open ended)

1. Do you speak Spanish in a daily basis, where and whom?
2. Where do you feel the most comfortable speaking Spanish, and with whom?
3. Are there areas in Eugene you feel the most comfortable<sup>5</sup>? Are there areas you avoid?
  - a. If not brought up, ask about downtown Eugene: What about downtown Eugene?
4. Do you often see signs in Spanish around Eugene? Tell me more...
  - a. Where do you usually see them?
  - b. How often would you say you notice these signs?
  - c. What about the signs that make you notice them?
5. Do you think Eugene is a welcoming place for Spanish speakers. Why or why not?

**Introduce the next portion of the interview:** I have here some examples of street signs written in Spanish from downtown Eugene. Would you mind looking at them and commenting on anything that sticks out to you about the signs?

Allow the participant to take the binder with the printed signs.

In general<sup>6</sup> seek for the participant to answer the following:

1. What stands out to you? Could you tell me more about it?
2. Have you noticed anything about the quality<sup>7</sup> of the signs?
3. Comparing Spanish and English is there anything you notice?

After going through all the signs...

4. What emotions do the signs make you have?
5. What do you think the signs or similar signs tell us about downtown? Why?

## Appendix IV

### Verbal Permission Script (English)

I am asking for your permission to participate in a sociolinguistics study authorized by the University of Oregon on the use of Spanish in Eugene, Oregon. Your participation will entail an interview about the use of English-to-Spanish translations on public street signs from Eugene.

If you choose to do an interview with me, it will last approximately 30 minutes and, with your permission, I will record it with a digital audio recorder in order to help me with my data analysis. You can choose not to have something recorded or request that I delete something from a recording at any time. If you accept, you will be asked to discuss topics about your experiences with and perceptions of the use of Spanish in the Eugene area.

It is important that you know the risks and benefits of this study. First, your participation is strictly voluntary. You can decide not to participate at any time and / or not answer questions during the interview without suffering any type of penalty or loss. The recorded information is absolutely confidential and will not be used to damage your reputation. I will use a different name to refer to you in future professional presentations or publications related to this study. The benefit of this study is that it will help us to better understand how Spanish is used in public spaces and what can be done to support and encourage such usage. You may ask me anything about the details of the investigation and I will respond to the best of my knowledge.

I am giving you a sheet for you to keep, as well as contact information in case you have further comments or concerns related to this investigation. Recordings of interviews and digital copies of assignments will be stored afterwards in encrypted files on a computer for future analysis. Your information will remain anonymous, and I will destroy the recording if you do not want me to use it. Do you have any questions or doubts? Would you be interested in participating? Thank you very much!

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team:

Research Assistant: Azusena Rosales Suares

Email: [arosales@uoregon.edu](mailto:arosales@uoregon.edu)

Telephone: 971.720.6587

Principal Investigator: Dr. Devin Grammon

Email: [grammon@uoregon.edu](mailto:grammon@uoregon.edu)

Telephone: 541.346.4070

If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Research Compliance Services

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5237  
541.346.2510

### Verbal Permission Script (Spanish)

Solicito su/tu permiso para participar en un estudio de sociolingüística autorizado por la Universidad de Oregón sobre el uso del español en el centro de Eugene, Oregón. Su/tu participación implicará una entrevista sobre el uso del español en los carteles públicos de Eugene.

Si elige/s hacer una entrevista conmigo, durará aproximadamente 30 minutos y, con su/tu permiso, la grabaré con una grabadora de audio digital para ayudarme con mi análisis de datos. Puede optar por no tener algo grabado o solicitar que elimine algo de una grabación en cualquier momento. Si acepta/s, se le/te pediré que discuta/s temas sobre sus/tus experiencias y percepciones sobre el uso del español en el área de Eugene.

Es importante que conozca/s los riesgos y beneficios de este estudio. Primero, su/tu participación es estrictamente voluntaria. Puede/s decidir no participar en cualquier momento y / o no responder preguntas durante la entrevista sin sufrir ningún tipo de penalización o pérdida. La información registrada es absolutamente confidencial y no se utilizará para dañar su/tu reputación. Usaré un nombre diferente para referirme a usted/ti en futuras presentaciones profesionales o publicaciones relacionadas con este estudio. El beneficio de este estudio es que nos ayudará a comprender más cómo se usa el español en los espacios públicos y qué se puede hacer para apoyar y fomentar dicho uso. Puede/s preguntarme cualquier cosa sobre los detalles de la investigación y yo te las responderé lo mejor que pueda.

Le/te doy una hoja para que guarde/s, así como información de contacto en caso de que tenga más comentarios o inquietudes relacionadas con esta investigación. Las grabaciones de las entrevistas y las copias digitales de las tareas se almacenarán luego en archivos cifrados en una computadora para su posterior análisis. Su/tu información permanecerá anónima y destruiré la grabación si no desea/s que la use. ¿Tiene/s alguna pregunta o duda? ¿Estaría/s interesado en participar? ¡Muchas gracias!

Si tiene/s preguntas, inquietudes o ha/s experimentado una lesión relacionada con la investigación, comuníquese/te con el equipo de investigación:

Asistente de investigación: Azusena Rosales Suares

Correo electrónico: [arosales@uoregon.edu](mailto:arosales@uoregon.edu)

Teléfono: 971.720.6587

Investigador principal: Dr. Devin Grammon

Correo electrónico: [grammon@uoregon.edu](mailto:grammon@uoregon.edu)

Teléfono: 541.346.4070



Si tiene/s preguntas sobre sus/tus derechos o desea/s hablar con alguien que no sea parte del equipo de investigación, puede/s comunicarse con:

Research Compliance Services

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5237

541.346.2510

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