

**RESEARCH PAPER****Linguistic Landscape Analysis of Shop Signs: A Case Study****¹Nazir Ahmed, ² Muhammad Zahid, and ³Muhammad Nadeem Anwar***

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***Corresponding Author** unique.studies57@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The present study is conducted in Lahore, a metropolitan city in Pakistan, to discover the language the shop owners use to write the shop signs of their shops. The researchers used an observation sheet and interview to collect data and used analytic induction by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) to analyze the data. The researchers took photos of the shops and interviewed twenty shopkeepers to know the reasons for using English and Urdu. The findings revealed that the overwhelming reason for using the English language was to be unique, followed by the reason that it is a common trend to write shop signs in English. A different finding that did not match the findings of previous studies was the response of the computer shop owners. They said that they use English first because of the customers. They prefer English names because they do not know the translation of English words related to computers.

KEYWORDS Linguistic landscape, Shop signs, Translation**Introduction**

These days, communication and technological advancements allow individuals to quickly and conveniently receive the information they need by sending messages or making phone calls to one another. A wealth of information is readily available on the internet through a variety of websites and social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, YouTube, and others. People read and learn this information that is written down in text or even spoken aloud in any language. When individuals communicate with one another, they employ various languages. The English language is different from local languages.

People speak in their own languages when interacting and going about their daily lives. It is indisputable that language and people are inextricably linked. According to Gorter (2006), textual language permeates everything around us and may be seen in a variety of places, including storefront windows, billboards, posters, government announcements, traffic signs, and more. English, one of the languages that has always been around and is spoken by people all over the world to conduct verbal communication, Additionally, as seen by the widespread usage of it on store signs around the globe, it is employed to convey or provide meaning in the form of text. As Gorter (2006) noted, textual language may be found on advertising signage. Despite being printed in text, shop signs can be categorized as business signs as they convey a message to those who view them.

The availability of English-language shop signs has attracted a lot of attention to their design, which helps create a roadside sign with more color. English-language and bilingual store signage is commonplace worldwide. Zughoul (2007) stated that the usage of English signage on the street was extraordinary and had become a trend. The emergence of English-language shop signs inspires new store owners to include English in their signage. English-language store signage may make a store seem more intriguing since the words are readable and visually appealing.

Lahore is situated in Pakistan, and it is the capital of the province of Punjab. It is the second-largest city in the country. It is also the business center of the country. There are many business centers and shops here. The signs of these shops and shopping centers are either written in Urdu or English or in both languages. The proprietors of mobile shops, electronics stores, coffee shops, paan corners, restaurants, and computer stores use the English language excessively on their sign boards. In this day and age, they appear driven to utilize English or two languages on their store signage. Nonetheless, supermarket businesses virtually never have English shop signage. In Lahore, the majority of food stores and brands dealing in clothes and shoes have signs in Urdu. The researchers observed that there was a scarce body of research conducted in this area. The authors, therefore, intended to fill the existing gap. Therefore, the research question is: Why do the shop owners use English, Urdu, or both languages on their shop signs?

Literature Review

Research on the linguistic landscape (LL) is a relatively new area of investigation. Landry and Bourhis (1997) have defined LL in their seminal work as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (p. 25). According to Gorter (2013), this description of the LL is incomplete because it only enumerates six different kinds of signals. The introduction of other varieties as a result of technical breakthroughs includes other types of signals introduced due to the advancement of technology, such as “electronic flat-panel displays, LED neonlights, foam boards, electronic message centers, interactive touch screens, inflatable signage, and scrolling banners.” The definition of Shohamy and BenRafael’s (2015) includes “representation, meanings, and interpretation of languages demonstrated in public places. Landry and Bourhis (1997) state that these signs may be informative and symbolic. The shop signs in English, for example, may serve the function of providing information to foreign customers, and they may also be a symbol of modernity and prestige (Gorter and Cenoz 2008; Dimova 2007; Friedrich 2002; Griffin 2004; Schlick 2003).

The two categories of signs are bottom-up and top-down (Backhaus, 2006; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Cenoz and Gorter, 2006; Huebner, 2006). Top-down signs are official government signs shown in public areas, and language selection follows linguistic guidelines. On the other hand, non-official signs are more adaptable in terms of language selection and usage patterns and are erected in public areas by private persons or groups. The primary distinction between these two broad categories of LL elements is that the former [top-down] are expected to reflect a general commitment to the influential linguistic culture, whereas the latter [bottom-up] are designed much more freely in accordance with individual strategies, as Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) demonstrate. A linguistic landscape, according to Blommaert (2013), is a brief passage of written language. Furthermore, Moriarty (2014) defined the term “linguistic landscape” more generally as a location where language is used in conjunction with other semiotic resources to form multilingual spaces symbolically. Furthermore, Nikolau (2016) distinguishes between two kinds of store signs: major texts and secondary texts, depending on the style of textual arrangement that

is visible. He proposes that primary texts are texts that only include the name and kind of store, while secondary texts contain additional information like address, opening hours, and special deals.

The formation of store signs that reflect the significance of the languages being used is greatly influenced by the linguistic landscape (LL). They also succeed in achieving important business objectives that benefit the owner and the client. The power and circumstances of every language utilized in a certain sociolinguistic environment are also reflected in the linguistic landscape.

According to Gorter (2007), the linguistic environment has an impact on how language is used. For example, the fact that English is widely used in the area of LL in Lahore, a metropolitan area of Pakistan, may have an impact on the language's acceptance and publicity. In general, the language landscape serves two distinct purposes. The primary purpose of the product's information is conveyed in the first function, which is informative. The second is symbolic and has to do with how languages are regarded. "The use of different languages in the signs also reflects the status, power, and economic significance of different languages," notes Akindele (2011).

Public Signs

Individuals in public areas used text-language public signs (Qiannan, 2012). Numerous phrases are interchangeable, such as sign language, logos, signs, slogans, and so on. Furthermore, he (2019) said that the most prevalent practical language in human existence is found on public signs, or written language that is visible to the general public in public areas. These unique writing styles aim to accomplish certain communication objectives by being accessible to and confronting the public.

Additionally, Ko (2010) cites Ding (2006) as a "public sign," which is any language used in public spaces to indicate information that the general public needs to know. Examples of this language include road signs, instructions, signs, slogans, public announcements, and warnings. Furthermore, Luo and Li (2006), referenced in Ko (2010), said that the language used in public spaces is referred to as public signage. It fulfills unique communication purposes and offers guidance and information. Road signs, commercials, product brochures, travel guides, propaganda materials, and public announcements all use this language.

Commercial Shop Signs

One type of public sign that is written in many languages is the shop sign. The language used on a business sign varies depending on the locality in which it is located. Shop signs can be written in a variety of languages, including monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Additionally, those walking around the core business district may see the store signs. It presents itself in front of the store as an extension of its identity, adding to its allure. The harder a store sign tries to draw people, the more appealing it is. Shop names are part of the advertising signs that aim to draw in clients, according to Oktaviani (2019).

Signs are mostly used for communication, specifically to transmit information intended to help the recipient make decisions based on the information received. According to Sebeok (2001), signs have a variety of uses in human existence, including helping individuals identify patterns in objects, acting as action plans or predicting guides, and serving as examples of certain occurrences. In Pakistan, which is a multilingual country, Urdu is the national language and English is the official language. Pakistan has

been a British colony, and after getting independence, English was adopted as the official language. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees that the English language will be replaced with Urdu in fifteen years, which could not materialize. This is why, usually, both languages are used on the signs.

Language Policy and Historical Background

The English language has a colonial background in Pakistan. It has strong roots in many spheres of society. Coleman (2011) and Wedell (2011) have recently identified three primary functions of the English language: functional, utilitarian, and practical levels. These functions have positive, negative, and neutral connotations, respectively, and are carried out in countries that are making great efforts to modernize their scientific and technological infrastructure. English serves two main purposes in multilingual contexts like Pakistan: first, it is recognized as an official language; second, it is utilized by the populace for communication (Kachru, 1985).

One of the legacies Pakistan inherited from the subcontinent's division is the English language. The British colonists, who governed the subcontinent for more than a century, used this language. Pakistan was a part of the subcontinent prior to independence. It lived through the Mughal era and was administered by both Muslims and English. Muslim emperors oversaw the flourishing of Muslim customs and culture. Persian was the official language throughout the Mughal era and was used to address topics related to state politics, business, and other contemporary issues. English was introduced by the British under the pretense of civilizing the Indian subcontinent, even though the locals did not see the necessity for a language shift (Mehboob). This linguistic shift was entirely the result of British language policing, which attempted to affect Indian behavior regarding language acquisition, learning, structure, and functional allocation (Cooper & Cooper, 1989). During their reign over the subcontinent, the British brought about significant changes. Many sociolinguists have sought to explain why English continues to have a high status even after the colonists divided the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. Mehboob (2002) notes that political power – more especially, military power – puts language on a pedestal above all others. An abrupt shift in the mother tongue will coincide with a shift in the hierarchies of a society as a whole. In the subcontinent, the linguistic transition occurred in 1835. This language shift signaled a shift in the masses' perceptions of English and resulted in a transformation of the power structures.

The three-language policy was put into effect as a result of the division. This policy designated English as the official language and Urdu as the national language. It also designated a provincial language for each province in Pakistan, such as Punjabi for the province of Punjab, Balochi for Baluchistan, Pashto for Khyber Pakhtunha, and Sindhi for Sindh. In 1948, the three-language strategy was changed to a two-language policy, with Urdu serving as the official national language and English as the secondary language. Urdu is expected to overtake English over the next ten years. English is now the language of instruction in educational institutions, and proficiency in the language is required of those holding high and important governmental positions. The first constitution to be ratified nationally was the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's 1973 Constitution, which states unequivocally in Article 251 that Urdu is the official language and English is the national language. The following are the provisions pertaining to national and official languages.

- Clause 1: Within fifteen years of the commencement date, plans must be prepared for the use of Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, for official and other purposes.

- Clause 2. Subject to clause (1), official communications may be conducted in English until plans are made to switch to Urdu.

In 2015, the esteemed Supreme Court of Pakistan issued a notice to all government agencies directing them to utilize Urdu in all official papers and public areas throughout Pakistan. However, after doing research, Zaidi and Zaki (2017) decided that the aforementioned sections are void. This is only a regulation designed to make a distinction between the learned and the uninformed. The ability of the Pakistani people to speak English is a signal of supremacy and the status quo.

Materials and Methods

This research is qualitative and descriptive. The goal of descriptive qualitative research is to accurately and non-manipulatedly characterize naturally occurring events. Descriptive research, according to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), is a set of methods used to define, characterize, or explain naturally occurring events without the need for experimental tampering.

In carrying out this investigation, the researcher followed certain scientific protocols that were suggested and advised by earlier studies. Using an observation sheet as a reference, the researcher generally saw store signage in various parts of Lahore city. The researcher created the observation sheet by modifying a few of Nash's (2011) questions. The researchers conducted in-person interviews with the store owners using an interview guide, whose questions were modified from those published by Nash (2011) and Nofal and Mansour (2014).

Research Instruments

Observation Sheet

The researchers employed field observation as one of their study tools. The researchers were able to get the data right away because of this observation. The researchers utilized an observation sheet to collect data through observation. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), one unique aspect of observation as a research method is that it gives researchers the chance to collect data in real time from social events that naturally arise. There are two types of observation, according to Hopkins (1993): organized observation and unstructured observation. When doing structured observation, the observer prepares ahead of time by making a timetable and a list of the actions of the individuals they will be observing. Conversely, unstructured observation refers to observation that entails tasks like noting down and documenting the findings that align with the current study's objectives without consulting a predetermined list. The researchers took photos of the shop signs with the help of observation.

Interview Guide

The researcher did the interview in order to collect the main data for this study. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), interviews give participants the chance to describe how they see circumstances from their own perspective and to talk about how they understand the environment in which they live and grow. Consequently, it is evident that the purpose of the interview is to learn the interviewee's opinion on the subject and the rationale behind it. The Nash (2011) observation sheet was modified.

The researchers inquired about the store owners' readiness to allow the researchers to perform the investigation in their establishments. The store owners then gave their

permission to the researchers to perform the investigation in their establishments. After that, in order to get primary data, the researchers conducted interviews with the store owners. Some questions regarding framework categories were asked of the business owners throughout the interview (Nash, 2011; Nofal & Mansour, 2014).

Results and Discussion

The Display of English Shop Signs

The researchers observed shops in various parts of the city and took pictures of these signs. These shops comprise a variety of shops. These areas are Allama Iqbal, Johar Town, Gulberg, Mughalpura, and the walled city of Lahore. The researchers collected 300 photos of the shop signs. The researchers endeavored to maintain a balance in the selection of signs from these areas so that the result produced could be more objective and transparent. The shop signs are collected from computer shops, mobile shops, restaurants, automobile workshops, grocery stores, pathology laboratories, photo studios, schools, shoe shops, tobacco shops, sports clubs, fast food shops, real states, and one shop that exclusively deals with the wares and outfits used and worn by pilgrimages. The researchers approached the owners of shops, told them of their purpose, and took photos of their shops with their consent. Two owners from each shop category were interviewed to extract information regarding the usage of language on the sign boards.

The researchers asked the shop owners five questions. One question was to know the shop owner's reason for using English or Urdu on the signs. The owners' responses were noted and manually analyzed to identify the emerging themes. The shop owners gave the following reasons to use English and Urdu, respectively.

To Be Easily Remembered

The responses of shop owners regarding the usage of both languages were different. The owners of computer shops replied that they use the English language because it is easy for the customers to read and remember the names of the shops. Moreover, they found it difficult to find the Urdu translation of the computer-specific words. Likewise, the names of computer games could not be translated into Urdu, and the customers were usually teenagers who were not good at Urdu.

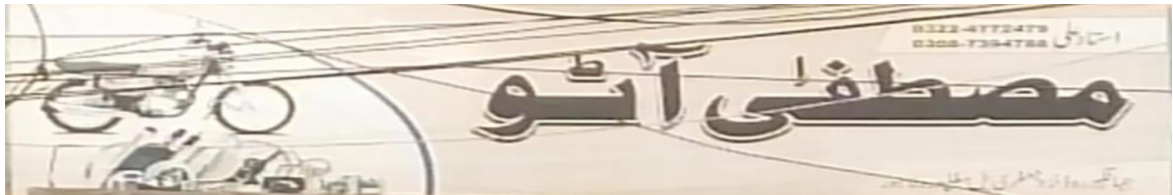
R (1): "We use English on signs because it is easy for customers to remember the names and read the accessories, etc. We do not know the translation of the computer-related words. The names of the games are in English. Customers are young lads belonging to burger families (elite and middle class)."



Brands shops in any part of the city mainly employ the English language, and that comprises single words. "They do not use secondary texts. They assert that their name demands that the names be written in English. Their customers belong to a class that feels allured by the English language."



The researchers also visited shops for auto mechanics. They chiefly used the shop signs in Urdu. Their responses suggest that they use shop signs in Urdu because their customers are usually drivers who are not well educated, and it is easy for them to learn the names.



Food shop signs use English and Urdu. The primary text is in English, and the secondary text is in Urdu. The name of the shop is in English because it is trendy to write the name in it. The names of the products are written in Urdu because it is easy for all customers to know what products are served at the outlet.



To Follow the Trend

The shopkeepers use English on the shop signs because they think it is a trend to use English on signs. They follow the trend. This corresponds with what Oktaviani (2019) states: the trend is dynamic and keeps changing. Trends move forward with the change of life. The shopkeepers in the city believe that using the English language on shop signs gives them a sense of living in the present and newness.

(R1) "I feel motivated to use the English language to write the name of my shop on the sign board because *computers* belong to modern technology. Writing the name of the shop in English gives a message to the customers that I sell the latest things and provide services related to computers."

(R2) "The reason why I use the English language on my shop sign is very simple. I wrote the name of my shop in English because it is a modern trend to use the English language in communication. However, I also use Urdu in secondary texts when I write the names of the products."



The names of hair salons and beauty parlors are usually written in the English language. They mostly use a single language on shop signs, which is English. They are of the opinion that using the English language gives their shops a modern trend.



(R1) "When I write the shop sign in English and particularly use a word in English, it gives my shop a stylistic and modern touch. Having used English, I feel elated. It gives me enormous satisfaction. Besides it, modern touches help attract customers."

Private schools and real estate are sprawling businesses in the town. These **businesses sometimes** use only the English language on sign boards and sometimes both English and Urdu. They relate the reason to the following:



(R1) "We, the schools, cater to the educational needs of the masses. The people are much more concerned about the language of their children. They want their young ones to speak English fluently. This has become a trend. So, we also follow that trend. In addition to it, it helps attract people."

There are some schools that use Urdu to write secondary texts. These schools claim that they prefer to write the name in English but think it is better to write other details like affiliation, etc. in Urdu.

To Enhance Prestige

Sixteen respondents reported that they used the English language on their shop signs because it imparted a sense of prestige to them. They also used Urdu in writing secondary texts.

(R) "We use English on our shop signs because this gives them a sense of prestige. We feel more prestige and elevation when we use English. We also use Urdu in writing addresses, etc."

To Be Unique

Being unique often involves embracing individuality and addressing one's authentic self. It means to try to do a work in a different way from the way it was done in the past. It also means an effort that makes one distinctive from the rest of the people. The effort to try something in a distinctive way may attract others. When the shopkeepers were interviewed, they gave the following responses:

(R1) "I want to be looked at as unique. I want my shop to look totally different."

(R2) "I write the name of my shop in English because it will give my shop a distinctive look. It will make it a unique one. This may help make it more attractive."

(R3) "Writing my shop sign in English makes it different. It gives it a modern feel and adds a touch. It is easy for customers to remember it."



The results are based on the interviews of shopkeepers. These shopkeepers belong to different areas of the town. The justifications that the shop owners provided to use the English language to write the shop signs are to follow the modern trend, to look unique, and to be remembered easily.

Out of the information collected from the interviews of the shop owners, it was discovered that the most important reason for using the English language is to go with the modern trend and to look more unique. Oktaviani (2019) also reported this finding in her study. She investigated the reasons why shop owners use the English language on the shop signs. She interviewed shop owners at Gresik Kota Baru (GKB), Gresik, East Java, and discovered that they (the shop owners) use English for four reasons. These reasons include: to look unique; to follow the trend; to be remembered easily; and to use their own names.

In the findings of this study, there were seven shop owners who said that it was easy for customers to remember the names of the shops. It is in line with the findings of Oktaviani (2019). Her findings revealed that there was one shopkeeper who said it was easy for customers to remember the shop if the shop sign was written in English.

Oktaviani (2019) found that shopkeepers use English shop signs because it is a modern trend to write shop signs in English. One of the findings of the present study is in line with her investigation. Eleven shopkeepers responded that they employ the English language on shop signs because it is a common trend these days.

The last but not least reason the researchers found in the study was "to be unique." This finding corresponds to that of Oktaviani (2019). She reports in her study that the shop signs are written in English because this gives a unique touch to their shops. The present study found that thirteen shopkeepers reported that they used the English language on their shop signs because it imparted uniqueness to their business.

One finding of this study also matches Hussein, Nofal, and Mansour (2015). They discovered in their study that using foreign languages on shop signs is a source of prestige.

Conclusion

At the outset of the study, it was stated that the purpose of it was to find out why English or Urdu was used by the shop owners on their shop signs. In light of the findings of the study, it may be said that the overwhelming number of shop owners use English on the shop signs because it helps the customers "to remember the name easily," "it gives a unique touch to their business," "it increases prestige," "it is not possible to find Urdu translations of the words," and it is a tendency to write signs in English.

The data for the present study comprised only one city, Lahore. The researchers neither have sufficient financial resources nor time to collect data from numerous cities. This study may have implications for researchers who intend to conduct future research on the same topic. They may extend the data to more than one city. They may expand it to

the whole province or the country and discover the influences of language that shape the linguistic landscape and linguistic attitude.

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