

A Look into the Linguistic Landscape of Kumasi: The Case of Shop Names

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic landscape of Kumasi Metropolis, the second largest city in Ghana, to determine the languages displayed in the 'texts' of shop names. A total of 285 signs were photographed and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. According to the findings, a significant number of shops employed English other than Akan, either monolingual or in combination with Akan, resulting in a written bilingualism environment with English emerging as the strongest language player. The findings also showed that the bilingual character of business signs is more symbolic than being informative, implying a desire to project a global, sophisticated, and fashionable image. The study revealed that although Akan is a lingua franca and the main language used in transacting business in Kumasi, Akan monolingual text in shop names in the linguistic landscape is rare. This has dire consequences for the future of the indigenous languages in Ghana since Akan was the only indigenous language displayed in the business signage. This calls for proper language planning to consciously promote the indigenous languages as it is done for English.

Keywords: Akan, Kumasi, Linguistic Landscape, Shop names, Visual Semiotic

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INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we use language in every aspect of our daily activities. We use it to express motives, communicate, socialise, and name items, among others. Language, either oral or written, plays a pivotal role in our day-to-day conversations. When we live in our homes for our workplaces or public places, we often come across a number of signage in the public domain giving direction, information and indicating names of both public and private stores. Moreover, the language displayed on public signs could be symbolic in nature (Amara 2019, Shang & Guo, 2017). This is to say, they indicate the language's prestige and importance, and the speakers' social identity and power compared to speakers of other languages (Choi, Tatar & Kim, 2019). This indicates that the power, significance, and relevance of certain languages in society can be shown by their use in the public space. (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). Therefore, the use of a language shows how the speakers perceive language in a given community or how language is used by people, especially in the global context (Lavender, 2019). This may also have a significant implication for the existence of other languages (Amara, 2019).

Linguistic landscape is a term used to describe the objects that define public space, such as road signs, shop names, school names, street names, and any other visible or written form of language. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), linguistic landscape is 'the visibility and salience of languages on public commercial signs in a given territory or region' (p. 23). A significant number of researches have been carried out on shop names in the linguistic landscape. The primary purpose of shop names is to encourage customers to purchase goods or services. This may appear to be an instructive purpose; nonetheless, the signs are intended to affect the behaviour of potential purchasers (Edelman, 2019). They make up the names of stores, locations, brands, and products. These names are chosen to appeal to emotions rather than to offer factual information (Edelman, 2019). Impersonal multilingualism is a phrase coined by Haarman (1986) to describe foreign languages that have nothing to do with 'everyday' or 'real' bi- or multilingualism but are more interested in the symbolic connotations of such languages. Another concept proposed relevant to the study of shop names in the linguistic landscape is language on display proposed by Eastman and Stein (1993). They believed the approach works well in instances when the speakers have little or no knowledge of the displayed language. Rather than having structural or semantic expression, the language presentation is symbolic. Kelly-Holmes (2014) presented a linguistic method to describe commercial text phenomena that uses language for symbolic rather than utilitarian goals. She referred to the approach as a linguistic fetish and according to her, it is best represented by store names emphasising symbolic rather than informational purposes.

Names are significant in the linguistic landscape. Despite this, Edelman (2019) did not include them in their linguistic landscape analysis because he believes that the language they belong to is not always clear. Nonetheless, Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael (2015) advanced the argument by insisting that proper names form an integral part of the linguistic landscape, and excluding them would disrupt the analysis. They have proposed a method known as 'Big Commercial Names,' which refers to business, shop, or boutique names that are generally legitimate without any additional information (Amara, 2019, p. 274).

Ghana is a heterogeneous society where people of diverse ethnicity and nationality who speak different languages live. Despite this, there is apparently no official language policy regulating language use on public signage, especially in the private sector. Kumasi is a heterogeneous society with different linguistic compositions. It was chosen for this study because of its location and cosmopolitan nature. Like all other Metropolitan Assemblies (i.e., the political and administrative authorities for cities) in Ghana, there are no by-laws

regulating the use of languages on official and private signs in Kumasi as there are in other jurisdictions. Although English is the official language of Ghana, and it is used on official signage in the public space, private signs display a seemingly different language pattern from the official (Tuffour & Asamoah-Poku, 2020). This study is a bottom-up approach aiming at discovering the language use patterns on shop signs and offers explanations into the arrangement of 'text' and the choice of languages used in shop names by private owners in Kumasi. Since this area of research has not received much attention in Ghana, this work is intended to fill the lacuna created in the literature by asking which languages are visible in the shop names. How are the languages arranged in the 'text' of the shop names? What language(s) is dominant in the shop names? The researcher chose private shop names because they were the most common type of signage in the research's locations, with only a few (nearly non-existent) government signs. This study is expected to add to the body of knowledge in this field of study, as well as enlighten governments and other stakeholders, particularly in Ghana, about the importance of conscious language planning to promote indigenous languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN GHANA

Ghana's population is estimated to be at 30.8 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021), with a total landmark of 238,305 kilometers (92,660sq/mile). Ghana is ethnically heterogeneous with divergent languages despite having a relatively small landmark. It is composed of over 40 mutually intelligible languages. The exact number of languages spoken in Ghana is not yet known. There is much controversy surrounding the precise number of languages spoken in Ghana by different authors. According to the 2010 population and housing census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010), the native speakers of Akan alone constitute 48 percent, followed by the Mole-Dagbani 17 percent, Ewe (14 percent), Ga-Dangme (7 percent), and others.

Other foreign languages are spoken for various reasons (Ansah, 2014). Hausa, a West African language spoken in the northern part of Nigeria, is widely spoken by a section of Ghanaians. This has resulted in the use of Hausa by the Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation, the only electronic media outlet owned by the Government of Ghana.

This is largely possible because Ghana is a member of the Economic Community of the West African States, which allows for free economic movement. As French-speaking countries surround Ghana, French is taught as a topic in schools from elementary to university level. Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso are east, west, and north. This is to ensure smooth communication among the citizens of these countries. Recently, Arabic, which was mainly used for religious purposes and used to be studied by some selected schools at the various levels of education, is to be made a subject to be studied at the primary school level to the university level. Finally, for all government work, English, a colonial language, is the official language. Ghana is a multilingual country in this regard. The informal sector's language usage is influenced by social factors such as the speakers' backgrounds. In Ghana, English, Akan, and Hausa have evolved as lingua franca and create a kind of diglossia in the country (Obeng, 1997).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AND GHANA LANGUAGE POLICY

Although there is no national language policy in Ghana, English is promoted by the government as the official language (Aboagye & Adade-Yeboah, 2019). However,

according to Dzameshie (1998), “Whatever guidelines the government lay down concerning language use in the country constitute the language policy for the country” (p. 16). Therefore, English is the main language for government business in Ghana. Meanwhile, government communications – announcements, education, information, and even laws may be communicated in any selected Ghanaian language, or spoken language in an area through the National Commission for Civic Education (Dzameshie, 1998). And while English reigns in official government communication, the indigenous languages, especially Akan, are used widely in the media space. There is a conscious policy by the government to promote the indigenous languages. As such, it has established the Bureau of Ghana Languages for the sake of publishing literature about the Ghanaian languages. In short, while the government uses English as its official language, it recognises the role played by the local languages and Hausa for national communication (Aboagye & Adade-Yeboah, 2019; Dzameshie, 1998).

Due to frequent changes in the government, Ghana’s official language policy in education has been inconsistent (Anyidoho, 2018; Owu-Ewie, 2006). From 1925 to 1951, Ghanaian languages were utilised as the medium of teaching in lower primary 1 to 3, i.e., the first three years of education, while English, the colonial master’s language, was used from the fourth year onwards. However, between 1951 and 1955, the policy was changed so that the Ghanaian language was only utilised in Primary 1, and English was used from Primary 2 onwards as a medium of teaching. According to Owu-Ewie (2019) in 1957, when Ghana gained independence, there was complete disdain for the Ghanaian languages as a medium of instruction. At all levels of education, the Ghanaian language was eliminated as a teaching medium. From 1957 to 1966, solely English was used as a medium of education. Despite this, another change occurred between 1966 and 1969, when the policy was reversed to that which existed between 1951 and 1955 when the Ghanaian language was only employed as a medium of teaching in Primary 1 (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Owu-Ewie, 2019). In the period between 1970-1973, the country saw a complete shift from the English language to the Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction at all levels of education. This policy was later altered. Between 1974 and 2002, the Ghanaian language became the medium of instruction from Primary 1 to Primary 3, while English was also used from Primary 4 and above. Again, from 2002 to 2007, the government scrapped the Ghanaian language. (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Owu-Ewie, 2019)

Currently, the policy states that during the first five years of teaching, from Kindergarten to Primary 3, a familiar local language, i.e., the major Ghanaian language in the community where the school is located, should be utilised as the medium of instruction, while English is taught as a subject (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). However, beginning from Upper Primary 4, English is used as the primary medium of instruction for the remainder of the child’s education, with one of the eleven indigenous languages that have achieved literary status Akan (Fante, Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi), Dagaare, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, Ga-Dangbme, Kasem, Gonja, and Nzema being taught as a subject. Like most other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana has embraced English as the official language and as a language of instruction in schools (Yevudey & Agbozo 2019). This behaviour can be traced to causes such as prior political history and the colonial masters’ bond (Aboagye & Adade-Yeboah, 2019).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The linguistics landscape (LL) is an area of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics that has seen a conspicuous upsurge of research interest in the past decades by focusing on how multilingualism is reflected in public signage (Backhaus, 2007; Gorter, 2006; Marten, Gorter, & Mensel, 2012; Hult, 2014; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). According to Coluzzi (2009), research on languages on the sign can be traced to the 1970s but gained much

attention after Landry and Bourhis (1997) published a seminal paper presented in 1997. In this work, they have coined the term linguistic landscape that has since received much attention in the field of sociolinguistics as well as other aspects of academics across the globe. Landry and Bourhis (1997) have defined LL as the visibility of language on objects that mark a public space in a given locality. They further have given the example of linguistic landscape in the most quoted portion of their work as:

“The linguistic landscape of a certain territory, region, or urban agglomeration is formed by the language of public road signs, billboards, commercial shop signs, advertising, places, street names, place names, and public signs on government buildings.” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 1).

Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) defined linguistic landscape as 'any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location' (2006, p. 14). Gorter (2006) defined linguistic landscape as “the usage of its written in a public environment.” (p. 2). Landry and Bourhis (1997) argued that the linguistic environment, rather just the languages spoken territory, might reveal a language’s position and level of prestige. That instance, relative to other languages, the prevalence of one language on public signage can reflect the status of the competing languages. In cases when some of the languages have official status, the linguistic landscape can provide insight into the region’s or state’s actual language policy and efforts to promote the official languages in particular (Coluzzi, 2006).

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AND SHOP NAMES

According to Köhnlein (2015), names are an essential linguistic category. Aside from reflecting the geographical environment, religion, beliefs, fears, and the people’s philosophy of life, Obeng (1998) postulated that name also confers identity on the individual and as a member of the society. According to Akinaso (1981), naming a universal concern should be linked to identity issues in all cultures. Amara (2019) opined that the symbolic meaning differs from one context to another. According to Gorter (2013), owing to the spread of English in non-English-speaking nations and the proliferation of foreign brand names, shop names, and slogans in monolingual English-speaking countries, a pure monolingual linguistic landscape is now a rarity due to globalisation.

Nikolaou (2017) examined shop signs in Athens. The study revealed that a significant number of shops often adopt creativity by using languages (i.e. Italian and Romanized Greek) other than Greek. It was also observed that the multilingual nature of business signs is symbolic rather than informative, reflecting their desire to convey a global, smart, and trendy viewpoint. Shang and Guo (2017) discovered that shop names in Singapore’s neighbourhood centers address how the citizens of a heterogeneous and linguistically hybrid social community represent the linguistic landscape in a similar study. All the shop names were verified to be in English.

In Seijo, Tokyo, MacGregor (2003) investigated the language of shop signage. The study discovered that Japanese is the most spoken language used most often. Regardless, foreign languages, particularly English, were widely used in the shop signs. The study found that foreign languages, particularly English, are used to complement Japanese and ‘to a lesser extent express meaning on their own (p.6). McArthur (2000) also looked at bilingual shop naming in Zurich, Switzerland, and Uppsala, Sweden. The study discovered that English is omnipresent no matter the languages it coexists with. The study further concluded that shop-naming reflects the multicultural nature of society because languages like Swedish, French, Italian, Turkish/Arabic, and Chinese were present in the public space in the two research locations.

Anderson, Wiredu, Ansah, Frimpong-Kodie, Orfoson-Offeei, and Boamah-Boateng (2020) looked into the linguistic environment of Accra's core business sector. The study, which combined Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory and Place Semiotic Theory, looked at the signage used by chop shop operators to see which languages are most prevalent and how their use reflects the ethnolinguistic vitality of Accra's indigenous languages. Their findings implied that English is a dominant language for inter-ethnic communication and national integration. This notwithstanding, Akan was prominent in the bilingual signage where both English and Akan were present. The study projects Akan highlighting the important role of Akan in Ghana and making it a very important language in the country.

Tuffour and Asamoah-Poku (2020) explored the linguistic landscape of Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The paper investigated the languages used in the writings on stores on the streets, the mode of writing, either with paint or stickers, the size of the writings, and the colors used. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to analyse the data acquired for this study. The data was primarily derived from public writings on storefronts, using a bottom-up approach. The results proved that Asante Twi was highly represented compared to the English language.

It can be observed that much more importance is attached to the connotation meanings of the names than their denotation of shop names in the linguistic landscape. Furthermore, because foreign languages are linked with high-quality products, most shop names are foreign (Haarmann, 2011). This shows that shop name is an essential component of the linguistic landscape, and it is prudent to study them independently because of their symbolic purpose (Amara, 2019). Furthermore, Scollon and Scollon (2003) proposed that the position of a language on signs contributes to the importance placed on that language. As Shohamy (2006) indicated, 'the presence or absence of a language in public space symbolic conveys symbolic messages (p. 110).' For this reason, it is expedient to examine the shop names in a cosmopolitan area like Kumasi to determine if the linguistic landscape reflects the linguistic composition of the area by paying particular attention to how texts are arranged on taglines within the metropolis.

THE VISUAL SEMIOTIC FRAMEWORK

Visual semiotic refers to 'a theoretical model from which to develop a semiotic analysis of the images and signs that appear all around us in the world' (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 22). According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), the inability of two languages to exist in the same location at the same time generates a system of choice that favors the language that gains visual prominence. In expounding it, Nikolau (2017) stated that Geo-semiotics is a thorough semiotic analytic framework for understanding the meaning of visual signs' material emplacement in the world. Geo-semiotics comprises three semiotic systems, one of which is visual semiotics (the other two are interaction order and place semiotics). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) offered three compositional aspects for grouping text items and images in a given visual frame. Saliency, framing, and informational value are the three factors. The arrangement of distinct items so that some draw more attention than others is referred to as saliency. Examples are color contrasts, focus sharpness, foregrounding, size, capital versus lower case characters, font type, and style in written text. Framing is a technique for connecting or separating objects in a sign using frame lines and borders. Framing is a sign-making technique that requires using frame lines and borders to connect or divide components on a sign, allowing some elements to stand out more. Finally, the placement of the sign's parts along a horizontal and vertical axis divides space into left-right, upper-lower, and center-margin, resulting in a three-dimensional system of information values that

distinguishes between given–new, ideal–real, and given–unreal. “How signs represent the geopolitical world through the choice of languages, their graphic representation, and their arrangement if more than one language is contained on a sign” is defined as “how signs represent the geopolitical world through the choice of languages, their graphic representation, and their arrangement if more than one language is contained on a sign” (Backhaus, 2007, p. 37). This means that the placement of a particular language on a bilingual or multilingual sign indicates its preferred use and importance.

Numerous studies have used this theory to explore the linguistic landscape. For instance Nikolau (2017) used visual semiotic theory to analyse commercial signs in Athens, Greece. The study revealed that in the bilingual signs, Greek occupied the upper position and the rest of the languages (mostly English) were either placed in the margin or lower position. In some cases, English enjoyed the privileged upper position while Greek was positioned in the lower part of the signage. English was also found to enjoy both upper and lower positions on the signage. In a similar study by Lavender (2020), the text on bilingual signs with English first formed 88.8% while the ones with Spanish first composed of 11.2%.

METHODOLOGY

The mixed-method research design was used in this investigation. Combining or integrating qualitative and quantitative research and data is known as mixed-method research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

LOCATION

Kumasi is the second-largest city in Ghana after Accra. It is the administrative, commercial, industrial, and cultural capital of the Ashanti Region. The population has sharply increased due to rural-urban migration coupled with industrial growth and commercial activities. Thus, Kumasi has become the second most populous city in Ghana, with a total population of 1,730,249.

Asokwa, Bantama, Kwadaso, Manhyia, Nhyiaso, Oforikrom, Suame, Subin, and Tafo are the nine sub-metropolitan district councils in the Kumasi Metropolis. Kumasi’s geographic location has aided in its urbanisation. Kumasi is an attractive business center with one of the largest open marketplaces in West Africa since it is the intersection point of the key roadways linking Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso’s capital, to coastal cities like Accra, Cape Coast, and Takoradi. The Trans-Sahelian Highway connects the major cities of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Cote d’Ivoire from Ouagadougou. The Metropolis is home to almost all of Ghana’s ethnic groupings. The Asante, a sub-group of the wider Akan ethnic group, are the most populous ethnic group in the Metropolis (80.7 percent). Mole Dagbon (8.7%) and Ewe (3.6%) came in second and third, respectively. Asante Twi (a dialect of Akan) is the most popular language spoken in Kumasi. Dagbani and Ewe are the two local languages spoken by some 12.1% of the population while the remaining percentage speak other local languages per Ghana Statistical Services Report 2010. It must be noted that Hausa is also a foreign language that is spoken by the majority of people living the Islamic communities within the city.

DATA COLLECTION

Photographs of private shop names were taken from the three sub-metros within the Kumasi Metropolis: Adum, Bantama, and Suame. The photographs were taken within the months of

October and December 2020. In total, 285 photographs of shop names and signage were taken in commercial business centers with the fewest personal occupants. Boutiques, printing businesses, shopping malls, grocery shops, restaurants, cosmetics, recreational outlets, and private offices were among the shops photographed. The pictures were taken in exterior space or streets. Internal signage and labels inside the shops were excluded. In some instances, some shops displayed the signs in the front, sides, and back of their outlets. Only those displayed boldly at the front and easily seen from afar were analysed in these cases. Franchises with international names e.g. Dior, KFC, McDonalds', Levis, etc. were also excluded.

DATA ANALYSIS

The shop names were coded and classified according to the languages in which they were written and the locations of the selected shops. Table 1 presents the distributions of shop signs according to the suburbs within the research area, i.e., Adum 34.1% (98), Bantama 32.6% (93), and Suame 33.3% (95). The arrangements of text on the signs were also analysed qualitatively.

Table 1
Distribution of Shop names across the three Suburbs.

Suburbs	Frequency	Percentage
Adum	98	34.1
Bantama	93	32.6
Suame	95	33.3
Total	285	100

FINDINGS

LANGUAGES DISPLAYED IN THE SHOP NAMES ACROSS THE VARIOUS SUBURBS

Here, the researcher provided a general overview of the data across the various suburbs and the language composition that were quantitatively analysed.

Table 2
Language composition of text in shop names across the various suburbs

Suburbs	English Monolingual	Akan Monolingual	Bilingual Akan +English	Total
Adum	58 (59%)	3(3%)	37(38%)	100%
Bantama	60(65%)	2(2%)	31(33%)	100%
Suame	67(71%)	3(3%)	25(26%)	100%
Total	185(65%)	8(3%)	93(32%)	100%

A notable finding was that there was a lot more English monolingual and bilingual signage than Akan monolingual signage. Shop names in English monolingual constituted 65% of the signs, while 32% of the signs were bilingual, comprising of both Akan and English texts, with only 3% written in Akan only. Thus, the English monolingual signs of 58%, 60%, and 67%, respectively, formed the data for Adum, Bantama, and Suame, respectively.

It is worthwhile to note that the presence of bilingual signs, as indicated, is very strong. In essence, Akan is vying with English for representation in all three areas investigated, and in most cases, it appears that it has the lead. That is, the percentage distribution in Table 2 showed that a sizeable number of shop names displayed were in Akan and English, with different prominence. These signs constituted 38%, 33%, and 26% in Adum, Bantama, and Suame, respectively, summing up to 32% of the entire data.

Monolingual Akan text in shop names was not common. As shown in Table 2, only 3%, 2%, and 3% were found in Adum, Bantama, and Suame, respectively, making up just 3% of the entire data.

LANGUAGE PLACEMENT AND VISUAL PROMINENCE

This sub-section presents a qualitative analysis of the question about the number of languages present in shop names and their arrangement on the signage.

MONOLINGUAL SHOP NAMES IN ENGLISH

'Foreign effects are significant in business because access to diverse cultures is more evident in daily life, where clients are vulnerable to the influence of foreign images' (Simonson & Schmitt, 1997 p. 105). In this study, shop names written only in English dominate the linguistic landscape of Kumasi Metropolis. They composed 65% of the entire data. The names on the taglines are descriptive. Some of the shop names offer details about the kind of services the business owners provide or render. Passersby can get an idea about the product sold by merely looking at the names. All the words constituting the names are mostly given the same prominence as the figure below.

Figure 1

Monolingual shop name in English with the same prominence



In some English monolingual signs, the brand or product names that give information about the services provided are reduced or written beneath the highlighted portion, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 2

Monolingual shop name in English with varied prominence



BILINGUAL SHOP NAMES FEATURING AKAN AND ENGLISH

Scollon and Scollon (2003) postulated that the arrangement of a particular language on bilingual or multilingual signs and the salient features of signs like font size, font style, and font colors could be associated with a particular language. This category forms 32% of the data used for the analysis. The study has revealed that in bilingual shop names containing both Akan and English, the former is given prominence by printed with larger font size and bolder. The presence of Akan in the bilingual reflects the significant role the Akan language plays in Ghana and further projects it as an important indigenous language in the country. The presence of English on the bilingual shop names basically describes the product or service provided by the business owners (see example in Figure 2). Thus, the English language somewhat gives information about the products sold or services provided at the shop.

Figure 3

A Bilingual Shop name. *ONYAME ADOM 'GOD'S GRACE' PHONES ACCESSORIES & REPAIRS*



In some instances, as highlighted by Figure 5, the tagline displays Akan and English in an equally prominent position on the bilingual sign.

Figure 4

Bilingual sign with the same prominence. *ABIBIDURO DEPOT* translated as 'HERBAL MEDICINE DEPOT'



MONOLINGUAL SHOP NAMES IN AKAN

A major characteristic of the Akan monolingual shop names is their sense of religious appeal. For instance, *ONYAME TUMI SO* 'OMNIPOTENT GOD' name does not detail the products or services. The shop owner is only portrayed as a devoted religious individual who believes in God's supreme power. In this example, too *EYE AWURADE ADOM* translated as 'IT IS THE LORD'S GRACE,' the shop owner is presented as a religious person whose wellbeing is by the LORD'S grace. Furthermore, no information on the product is given in the shop names. This means that they are mainly symbolic rather than informative because such names do not provide any clue on the product or describe services they render except

contacts in some cases. It is discovered that monolingual Akan shop names in Kumasi are rare because they form a lower percentage of the data (3% of the total data).

Figure 5

Monolingual Shop Name in Akan



DISCUSSION

The results indicate that English monolingual and bilingual (Akan and English) shop names are strongly represented in the linguistic landscape. The dominance of English in the shop names is an important observation that cannot be ignored. The findings support the numerous studies that have documented about English's omnipresence in advertising worldwide. Thonus (1991) observed a trend towards Anglicisation of business names with non-English speaking local clients. Even though English is not widely spoken in the society, it is widely used in advertising because of its worldwide associations with grandeur and modernity (Kasanga, 2010; Kelly-Holmes, 2005). English, as pointed out by Kasanga (2010), indicates its pervasive influence "as a global language or perhaps the language of globalization" (p. 181). The study has revealed that although it is uncommon to hear people speaking English in these commercial areas, commercial signage in the study region typically includes English words in the shop names, such as POPE PHONES SERVICE CENTRE, F AND S COLLECTIONS, K. BUCKMAN ENTERPRISE, SEVEN PAGES, DJ ESSENTIALS, MORE HOPE BOUTIQUE, YES LORD ENTERPRISE, and UNICORN CHEMIST LIMITED. While Kumasi's entry into globalisation is marked by the widespread use of English words in commercial signs, the researcher believes that English display words now serve the symbolic functions of associating the enterprise and its products with modernity (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2009) and enticing both local and foreign customers. Because there is no established terminology in the local languages, satellites, televisions, washing machines, air conditioners, electrical appliances, hardware, photography, and repair services are all written in English.

The language policy in Ghana is another aspect that contributes to the increased presence of English among shop names. As indicated, English is the official language in Ghana, and one cannot progress from senior high school to the tertiary level without a credit pass in the English language (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). As a result, most people have developed a substantial appetite for the English language even if what they read or write is inaccurate. Much importance is attached to the English language because it is seen as

modern and prestigious to be associated with. Moreover, a strong command of the English language can lead to the most lucrative work opportunities in Ghana (Morris, 1998). For this reason, the English language has become a symbol status.

It also came to bear that in shop names where the 'texts' were written bilingually with Akan and English; Akan was given prominence. The Akan words in the shop names were boldly written with larger font sizes, mostly written on top or written bright colors to make them unique compared to the English words. This can be better understood if placed in the visual semiotic framework, which argues that the placement of a language on a bilingual or multilingual sign defines its preferred use and may indicate its importance (Scollon & Scollon 2003; Anderson et. al., 2020).

It was also noticed that shop names written in Akan only is rare in the linguistic landscape of Kumasi despite being the only local language identified. This revelation contradicts Tuffour and Asamoah-Poku's (2020) claim that Asante Twi, a dialect of Akan is the dominant language in shop signage in Kumasi. This may partly be attributed to the absence of brand or product names, and the unwillingness of the government to promote indigenous languages. This revelation is crucial because if the most predominant language in the country is not visible where the language is revered and held in high esteem, the researcher wonders what will be the fate of the less endowed local languages. This calls for concern because the research location is made up of people from different linguistic backgrounds.

To sum up, in comparison to Akan monolingual signage, there was a lot more English monolingual and bilingual signage. However, Akan, in most cases, is given prominence when it co-occurs with English on the same sign.

CONCLUSION

The presence of some languages and the absence of others send a clear message about portraying their status, value, and relevance in society (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2009). According to Dixson (2015), language is tied to identity, and languages present in the linguistic landscape to promote or demote these languages and the ethnic groupings affiliated with the languages. Whereas Akan is present in the linguistic landscape alongside English, the other indigenous languages are conspicuously invisible. As Shohamy and Waksman (2009) pointed out, texts shown in a linguistic landscape are not neutral but rather the visual interface of a contested arena. The use of Akan alongside English in commercial signs shows the Akan-speaking commercial players make significant contributions to Kumasi's economic life and ethnocultural diversity. The prominence of Akan in the bilingual names further highlights Akan as an important language as postulated the visual semiotic framework by Scollon and Scollon (2003). The study found the usage of English-only "texts" in the shop names as a signal of globalisation, modernity, and fashion to attract both local and foreign clients. Therefore, the use of the Akan language without the English language in signage signifies old-fashioned, or traditional. This may be partly attributed to the negative attitude accorded the teaching and learning of the Ghanaian languages in school (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014) and the low literacy rate in the Ghanaian languages (Anderson et. al., 2020). Furthermore, Akan is not as monolingually extensive as English in the linguistic landscape because the majority of the terminologies related to these products are foreign to the Akan language and no terminologies are easily available when they are encountered in Akan.

The study finds the usage of English only 'texts' in the shop names as a signal of globalization, modernity, and fashionable to attract both local and foreign clients. Finally, strong evidence from the data suggests that there is a need to promote the study of the 11

approved local languages to ensure their visibility, which will go a long way to secure a place in the linguistic landscape. This will promote inclusion and national unity to help promote the government's Bilingual Education agenda.

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