

Linguistic Landscape in Swat, Pakistan: A Survey of Shop Signs

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Abstract

This paper explores the multilingual character of the linguistic landscape of Swat, a generally monolingual district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The focus of the study is commercial public signs and is based on an empirical research conducted in 2018. A total of 204 digital photos of shop fronts were collected and analysed in terms of language composition employing Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework of visual analysis and comparisons were drawn across different shop types. The findings indicate that the majority of the shops signs are bilingual combining English and Urdu, while English appears to be the preferred choice in monolingual signs. The results also strongly suggest that there is an underlying competition between two languages enjoying co-official status but occupying different symbolic niches.

Keywords: linguistic landscape; multilingualism; identity, visual semiotics

1. Introduction

Depending on how one defines a language, Pakistan has about fifty to seventy of them as local ways of communicating. The country also has a dominant foreign language, English. In the past Hassan (2004) argued that while British or American variants of the language can be called foreign, in its Pakistani form it is a Pakistani language as it has a long history in Pakistan. Notwithstanding this fact, people still call it a foreign language - fixed attitudes are difficult to dislodge. A generalised 'Pakistani' form of communication, with near total acceptance within the country, might evolve in time. However, at the moment it is a fluctuating balance between the official demands of a national language, Urdu, against the conflicting claims of several mother-tongues, with the added problem of English. Urdu and English are the current front runners, but since neither can be said to be the natural first language of most Pakistani people, movements to strengthen regional languages have been mounted at different times in the country's short history.

According to the language policy enshrined in the constitution of 1973, English was to be used until it could be replaced by Urdu, and the early policy makers gave timelines for this. In the forty-six years that have passed since then this has not happened. During General Zia ul Haq's time some attempts were made to Urdu-ise (and Arab-ise) things, but people have resisted them (Rahman, 2005). It is expected however that Urdu will take over some day as the sole or at least most important language in Pakistan. A lot of work is still required: translations, attitudinal changes, writings of a scientific nature, experimentation, etc., before it can become a widely accepted vehicle for advanced education, social interaction, local administration and international diplomacy, commerce and communication.

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English is the 'prestige' language for commercial activities. A car mechanic might know hardly ten words of English, but the signboards he uses for his shop will be written in English. Even when Urdu is used, this is mainly for transliteration purposes – English words (e.g., 'denting', 'painting', 'overhauling') are written in the Urdu script. This leads to what is called the 'social' or 'market' forces or 'social capital' (Bourdieu in Eloire, 2015, p. 4 & 5) of a given language, the way people actually use it in day-to-day activities, rather than the way governments (or language academies) want them to use it.

To the best of our knowledge, no previous studies have been published investigating specifically the presence of English and Urdu in the linguistic landscape (LL) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. However, some useful parallels may be drawn from Nikolaou's (2017) investigation of two basic functions in the context of Athens, Greece. They are 'an informational function and a symbolic function' (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Similar ideas are explored in the context of Pakistan.

2. Linguistic landscape and signboards: an overview

The ability to function linguistically and socially in more than one language is termed multilingualism, and the presence of languages on bill boards, shop signboards and print advertisements constitute a given area's linguistic landscape. Landry and Bourhis (1997) investigate the role of the language of public signboards, their 'visibility and salience of languages' (p. 23) with respect to ethnolinguistic rejuvenation. Spolsky (2009) maintains that the linguistic landscape means using languages in the public space and catching the attention of passers-by in order to understand 'the multiliterate ecology of cities' (p. 32). Signboards are investigated more in terms of 'what languages are used' and what this usage indicates between users (i.e. speakers) and usages (i.e. different languages). This is what has also been pointed out by Cenoz and Gorter (2006) who contend that the linguistic landscape echoes the relationship between users and usages. This relationship indexes relationships between ethnolinguistic communities.

Cenoz and Gorter (2006) derive a bidirectional relationship between the linguistic landscape and the sociolinguistic context. The linguistic landscape depicts connections between the power and status of languages in a certain sociolinguistic context. It plays a role in framing another sociolinguistic context in the surrounding, which helps people to perceive visual information and the language of signs. This affects their perception of the status of different languages as well as their own linguistic behaviour.

The linguistic landscape, from the perspective of sociology, is underpinned by various 'structuration principles' of power relations, which help to form the linguistic landscape of upper to lower hierarchies of the community (Ben Rafael, 2009). Cenoz and Gorter (2009) argue that LL cannot be isolated from the market and non-market value. Claus (2002) determines market value by finding out the extent of exposure, economic importance of the location and the income earned from the language signs. The non-market value can be determined by estimating the effect of language signs on signboards.

The Manan, David, Dumanig and Channa (2017) study of the linguistic landscape in Quetta, Balochistan in Pakistan shows that although English is just one of the two official languages of the country, perhaps not the officially favoured one, it tends to

dominate the linguistic landscape, whereas the regional and local languages remain almost totally absent. In addition to analysing photographs of signboards, the authors conducted a small-scale survey of opinions of local businessmen. The results indicate that English is instrumental in the creation of attractive advertisements as it is considered a fashionable language. Englishised Urdu and English itself dominate the commercial linguistic landscape as they are deemed to be commercially more attractive than other local or regional languages.

3. Theoretical framework

Below we discuss briefly the methodological framework that forms the basis of the present study. It comprises two sociological approaches (Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) three conditions model and Ben Rafael's (2009) structuration principles) as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) semiotic framework for analysing images. This 'three componential' framework yields enough explanatory power for the purposes of the present study. This was conducted in an urban setting and accounts for the competition of English and Urdu for visual prominence in the area under investigation.

3.1. Three conditions

Spolsky and Cooper (1991, pp. 81-85) present a 'triangle of preference' model which speaks about the problem of choosing language for public display signs. This triangle comprises three conditions (1) a sign-writer's skill condition, (2) a presumed reader condition and (3) a symbolic language condition. The first two angles account for the presence of bilingual signs in the multilingual settings where people speak more than two languages. Sign writers tend not to be adept at this skill, a difficulty that can be countered by commissioning the business of writing to sign-makers (Kasanga, 2010 & 2015). The second angle (i.e. the presumed reader condition) lays emphasis on the emotional impact that the language chosen for the signage and aims to engage readers emotionally (Edelman, 2009). Also, the third angle is relevant to this study since it can elucidate the occurrence of bilingual signs in multilingual settings by linking the choice of usages (i.e. languages) with symbolic elicitations

3.2. Four structuration principles

Ben Rafael's (2009) sociological framework, consists of four structuration principles which are taken from the social theory that addresses constituents (i.e. processes and agents) of LL. They are (1) the presentation of self, (2) good reasons, (3) collective identity and (4) power relations.

In line with Goffman (1963, 1981), in whose work the first principle can be traced, we argue that private business actors need to present themselves often in public LL in order to establish and expand their niche in the market. High-frequency public presentation is also useful to counter market competition. In reference to signage, the linguistic 'how' of self-representation is linked with its substance. This relates to Bourdieu's idea [in van de Werfhorst (2010, p. 157)] of cultural capital associated with the language(s) of the dominant culture. In Pakistan, displaying signboards in English and Urdu rather than in indigenous languages creates an aura of fashionable modernity and sophistication.

According to the good-reasons principle, social action is performed on the basis of rational choices. The term 'good reasons' has been derived from Giddens's (1986, p. 178) definition of rational behaviour, namely, 'aligning motives with the end-result of whatever conduct is involved.' The reasons behind the use of prestige languages in LL relate to their social and market associations.

Ben-Rafael (2009) is of the view that the LL comprises the first two principles: the presentation of self, and good reasons. The LL scene is more significant in urban areas where self-representation and rational choices are made in order to accommodate cultural capital, and the focal point is private business.

While undeniably important, the third and fourth principles, i.e., collective identity and power relations, are deemed to lie outside the remit and limited scope of this study. They are more to do with implications, ramifications, resultants or outcomes rather than of language usage, which is the primary focus of this paper.

3.3. A visual semiotic analysis

Geosemiotics is a generic semiotic framework for analysis, exploring the semiotic systems of the world where people perform actions and place materials in the visual field. Geosemiotics encompasses three systems, 'the interaction order, the visual semiotics and the place semiotics' (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 206). Out of these three, only visual semiotics is of relevance to this study. Scollon and Scollon (2003) define visual semiotics as a theoretical framework which helps one to do 'a semiotic analysis of the images and signs that appear all around us in the world' (p. 22). This notion is linked with Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's work, which is a take-off from systemic functional linguistics. It proposes a theoretical model for the analysis of visual signs which relates to Halliday's notion of ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) categorise four semiotic systems of visual sense: (1) represented participants, (2) modality, (3) composition and (4) interactive participants. Halliday's first metafunction, the ideational, links to the first and fourth semiotic systems: the second semiotic system links to the second metafunction, the interpersonal: and the third semiotic system, composition, parallels the third metafunction, the textual.

Implicit in these arrangements are a number of classifications or working modalities that define relationships between (1) different aspects of framed signs, and (2) signs taken as a whole and their contexts. Composition is the primary focus of this semiotic analysis, as it is relevant to questions of text and what is seen.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify three areas of interest in composing text items in visual frames, namely, salience, framing and informational value. The first is to do with attention catching techniques, contrast, shapes, arrangements, foregrounding or relative size, or for writing, capitals, italics, underlining, size or style. Framing can provide connections, separations or placing. The informational value can be determined by placing of the components of the sign in a diagram with horizontal and vertical coordinates in three different directions, left-right, upper-lower and centre-margin. Such informational value provided differentiates between given-new, ideal-real, and central-margin.

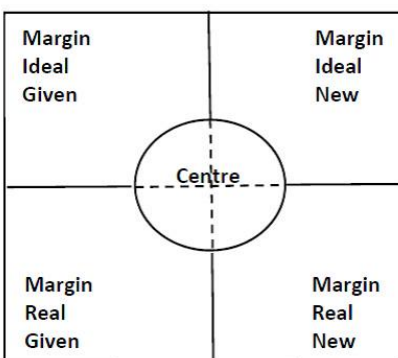


Figure 3.1 Kress and van Leeuwen's information value model (2006, p. 197)

It is possible to extrapolate from the 'given-new' foundation of discourse in linguistics to matters of visual messaging, as in signboards. The attached diagram represents the generalised or idealised message in the top two boxes, and the more practical messages represented in the lower two boxes. The centre offers a corpus of knowledge that radiates through all other areas of the chart. The validity of Huebner's (2009) thesis that 'informational value' should provide a 'point of departure' through one code seems unassailable: the corollary of which is that of all elements available in a given message, this point of departure is the most productive for purposes of analysis.

4. Methodology

4.1 Rationale and research questions

Focussing on the linguistic composition of shop signs in the linguistic landscape of urban area (Mingora) of Swat, this study is the first attempt to draw attention towards the linguistic landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Only Manan, David, Dumanig and Channa (2017) conducted research on the linguistic landscape in the context of Pakistan. Swat, a monolingual district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is home to the Pashto language. However, the official languages used in Swat are English and Urdu, so officially this city is bilingual, and the compositional text of shop signboards is either English or Urdu or both. The aim of the present study is to survey the presence of languages and to investigate the extent to which these languages are present in the LL of Swat. This study will attempt to find answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent is the presence of languages found related to specific kinds of shops?
2. What kind of patterning lies behind specific arrangements of informational structure in bilingual signs?

4.2 The sample

One sample area has been chosen for the aim of this study: the Mingora region of Swat district in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Mingora, the largest commercial city in Swat, has been selected since most of the people living in the region speak Pashto, their mother tongue, while shop signboards are found in Urdu, the national language, English,

the official language, and Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran. Due to the natural beauty of Swat valley, Mingora is a tourist destination where visitors speak different languages. According to the 2017 census, the total population is 331,091, the social hierarchies range from middle class to lower middle class in the aforementioned area. The images of 203 signboards of 14 streets have been captured frontally.

4.3 Methodological concerns

4.3.1. The unit of analysis

It is important to define the linguistic object that we want to see in the LL of the area under discussion. The salient methodological issue that arises in the present study is to identify the linguistic object in the visual field. We cannot ignore the issue of inclusion and exclusion, for instance, if equal weight should be given to the items representing signs on shops. (Backhaus, 2007). The decision of what to include and what to exclude is inherently subjective, and such decisions can also be obstacles to understanding 'meaningful comparison [sic] across LL studies' (Nikolaou, 2017, p. 166).

For the purposes of this study, we have adopted Cenoz and Gorter's (2006) idea of taking the whole as the unit of analysis rather than individual signs, since signs appearing in the visual space show text which belongs to the society: it is not something detached from it.

4.3.2 The categorization of text of shop signage

Edelman (2009) divided the textual arrangement of the shop sign into two: primary text or sign and secondary text or sign.' The former comprises the name of the shop and often its type. The latter constitutes product details, special offers and address. Following Nikolaou (2017), we analyse the primary sign as consisting of the following components: (1) a proper name; (2) a brand/corporate name and (3) other text'. Other text is composed of common nouns and noun phrases.

Edelman (2009) classifies proper nouns both in relation to a given language and as a visible subset of the overall heading of nouns. Initially uncertain as to the advisability of including them in her study, she found when she did so that there was a high incidence for English and other languages. As a result, we can get a more real image of the multilingual character of a specific region by giving proper nouns to a specific language. On the basis of her coding scheme Edelman proposes proper nouns as a distinct class that relates to a specific language too for the analysis that suggests a standard criterion for a proper procedure. In everyday English writing, proper names begin with a capital letter, which might or might not show up in a sign written entirely in capitals. In everyday Urdu writing no such marker is used.

5. Analysis and Results

5.1 Sample demographics

The analysis identified a total of 40 different business types, 9 of which account for nearly three-quarters of the sample (Table 1). Additionally, 87% of the shops are independent businesses and 13% belong to retail chains and international corporations.

Of the total of 203 shop signs examined, 79% were bilingual, displaying English and Urdu in the remaining 22% of monolingual signs, Urdu and English were almost evenly distributed with English having a slight edge (11% as against 9%). In terms of script composition, overwhelmingly (90%) the signs displayed combinations of the Urdu and Roman alphabets. Exclusive use of single-script signs accounts for as low as 10% of the total sample distributed relatively evenly between Roman (5.9%) and Urdu (5%).

Table 5.1 The most frequent business types

Business Type	N	%
electric/electronic appliances	28	13.8
multi retail shop	16	21.7
convenience store	16	7.9
auto supply shop	14	6.9
Pharmacy	13	6.4
Clothes shop	8	3.9
Surgery	7	3.4
Automotive repair shop	7	3.4
Tyre shop	6	3.0
Total	115	70.4

5.2 The constitutive elements of the shop sign

The next step in our analysis was to determine the actual presence of different languages in the linguistic composition of the primary sign. First, we calculated the percentage distribution of languages in the shop name. As mentioned earlier, a shop name may consist of a proper/brand name, other text or any combination thereof. The status of proper names as belonging to the lexicon of a language has been debated in the literature (Bade, 2006; Canani, 1994; Crystal, 2003; Korzilius, Meurs, & Hermans, 2006; Lüdi, 2007) with persuasive arguments put forward both for and against a link between a proper name and a language of origin. As a way out of this linguistic conundrum, we followed Edelman's (2009) methodology in first calculating the percentage distribution of languages in the shop name leaving out proper names from the analysis and then a second analysis was carried out with proper names included.

The results are displayed in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. Both analyses show that the combination of English and Urdu is by far the most common pattern. In the cases where only one language is displayed, English prevails (28.1% as against 3.1%) when proper text is excluded from the analysis, whereas the situation is reversed in favour of Urdu (10.1% as against 7.5%) when proper names are included in the analysis. It is clear that the majority of the signs displaying primary text are bilingual and the languages of choice are exclusively English and Urdu.

Table 5.1 Primary sign composition

	N	%
proper name	4	2.0
other text	32	15.8
proper name and other text	159	78.3
brand name and other text	1	0.5
corporate name	7	3.4

Total	203	100
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The analysis of the linguistic composition of the primary sign was completed by examining the languages chosen to signify the shop type.

Table 5.2 Language composition of primary text excluding proper names

Language	N	%
Urdu	1	3.1
English	9	28.1
English and Urdu	22	68.8
Total	32	100

Table 5.3 shows a similar pattern of language frequency. English combined with Urdu is overwhelmingly the most frequent choice, whereas in monolingual signs English has a slight lead over Urdu.

Table 5.3 Language composition of primary text including proper names

Language	N	%
Urdu	16	10.1
English	12	7.5
English and Urdu	131	82.4
Total	159	100

5.3 Language composition of the secondary text

In contrast to the pattern of linguistic composition of the primary text, the picture is markedly reversed in favour of Urdu with respect to secondary text. As Table 5 shows,

Table 5.4. Language composition of primary text: shop type

Language	N	%
Urdu	20	9.9
English	23	11.3
English and Urdu	160	78.8
Total	203	100

Over three fifths of all secondary text signs show a preference for Urdu, while English is the preferred choice in 1 out of 8 signs. The first two choices account for close to 80% of the displayed languages, while the remaining 20% displays combinations of the two languages with English being the first language appearing in the sign. The reason for the predominance of Urdu in the secondary text must be pragmatic as the information presented here is of essentially practical nature.

5.4 Language distribution across shop types

The second research question concerns the extent to which there is a pattern of association between language choice and shop type. As the original number of the identified shop types was too large (n =114) to make any meaningful comparisons, the original categories were reduced to 8 large categories as shown in Table 6. Only shop signs that contained ‘other text’ were considered. In other words, proper names (brand, shopkeeper’s name) were left out because they are given and as such are not the result

of linguistic creativity. The results show that across the 8 categories the dominant pattern is a combination of English and Urdu. With respect to monolingual signs, English has a slight edge over Urdu although the difference is too small to warrant any significant observations.

Table 5.5 Language distribution across categories

		Grouped business type							Total
		Retailer	entertainment & leisure	food & drink	health services	financial services	other professional services	other businesses	
shop name language	Urdu	7	0	2	2	0	1	5	17
	English	11	0	1	1	0	3	5	21
	English & Urdu	68	1	14	17	3	6	45	154
Total		86	1	17	20	3	10	55	192

5.5 Visual analysis

At first glance we can see that both English and Urdu are vying with each other for visual prominence. As discussed earlier, visual prominence can be achieved by placing a text in larger font size, or in the centre, left or top position of the sign. The 9 examples we have selected for analysis display this visual ‘tension’ between English and Urdu.

Figure 5.1 presents a rather complex configuration of text, colour and graphics. The signboard itself is colour divided unevenly into two parts. The larger upper part, occupying most of the space is painted in off white; the lower part, considerably narrower, is navy blue. The colour partition acts as a framing device ascribing the status of ‘ideal’ ‘visualiz[ing]’, and thus ‘the ‘promise of the product’ (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 186) to the elements placed in the upper part. The items placed in the lower part present more factual, practical and ‘down-to-earth’ information (p. 187) Occupying the top left-hand corner and extending all the way to the middle of the sign board we see a collage of pictures of different vehicles indexing the type of business. Immediately below, features the name of the shop owner in Romanised script and across to the right top corner of the board an oversized text in Urdu giving the name of the company, repeated below in English, ‘Emarat’, in slightly smaller size font, followed by an even smaller-sized two part slogan in English: ‘Making Famous Oil: Making Life Better’. As the left and right sides are associated with Given and New respectively, the picture on the left represents the familiar, taken-for-granted element, and the bilingual verbal text, on the right, contains the new element, the name of the shop. Interestingly, the language that appears in the lower part of the signboard - the Real - is almost entirely in English. The small text in Urdu on the left reads ‘Established 40 years ago. Specialised in all kinds of motor cars.’ The informational salience of English is thus clearly evident.



Figure 5.1 Emarat auto repair shop

The signboard in Figure 5.2 is symmetrically divided into two halves by the company’s logo. The text in Urdu on the right-hand side mirrors the English text on the left hand side. As both texts are equidistant from the upper and lower margin, they both claim informational centrality. In terms of Reh’s (2004) typology, the arrangement of the two texts on the signboard suggests duplicating multilingual writing where each text carries

the same message in both English and Urdu. Reh, argues that that this practice is indicative of societal multilingualism acknowledging the existence of more than one language in the target community and serves practical and affective purposes. It assumes that most members of the community understand both languages but at the same time it acknowledges the special role one of the two has as a language of ethnic identification.



Figure 5.2 AL Habib Bank

The same pattern can almost be observed in Figure 5.3; the information that appears in English on the left-hand side is repeated in Urdu on the right-hand side. This time however the arrangement of the two codes (English occupying the upper part and Urdu the lower part of the sign) point to a clear demarcation between Ideal and Real positions although the two codes are of the same size. Perhaps this clear-cut division is motivated by the need for informational enhancement, without undermining the visual salience of the Urdu text. Perhaps, the English text appeals to a more educated, cosmopolitan clientele while the Urdu text serves merely affective purposes. The entire lower part of the signboard is taken over by Urdu – on the left the much smaller text displays telephone contact details and on the right the repetition of the content of the English text – which perhaps reflects pragmatic considerations in a lower-middle or working class area.



Figure 5.3 New Khyber drugstore

An interesting example of a bilingual signboard is shown in Figure 5.4. On the face of it, a pattern nearly identical to Figure 5 can be seen. A picture of two car tyres in the middle divides the visual space into an English text on the left giving the name of the proprietor and the business type and on the right, equally sized the text in Urdu repeats the information in Urdu, and includes proprietorship ('and brothers') and address details

(Airport Road Mingora Swat). Part of practical information is repeated in the lower margin alongside a contact phone number. Interestingly though the upper margin displays short invocations to the Deity in Arabic (top left-hand corner: ‘the self-existing One. My God bless us more’; top centre: ‘May God save us from the evil eye’; top right-hand corner: ‘the eternally living. May God bless us more’). This linguistic arrangement corresponds to Reh’s (2004) overlapping multilingualism where identical information is partly given in more than one language but additional information is given in one language only. The religious text on the signboard in Figure 6 conveyed only in Arabic is irrelevant to the commercial activity of the shop and acts as an important marker of Muslim identity.



Figure 5.4 Amir Zeb tyre shop

In Figure 5.5, the shop name displayed in English ‘CAFÉ AKBARI’, in large capital letters, is positioned in the middle of the signboard. Underneath, in lower case and significantly smaller size, the secondary sign (‘the taste you never forget’) is also in English. Although it occupies real position, it constitutes a visual unit with the text above it and their spatial centrality guarantees its prominence as the “nucleus of information (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 196) showing the potential customer the promise of the service. The text in Urdu flanking the English text is a translation of the name of the café in Urdu (left) and provides additional information about the location (right: ‘Haji Baba Chowk Mingora Swat’). Additional text in Urdu is displayed on the top left (‘Our identity is of a high standard’) and right-hand side (‘politeness is our goal’) of the signboard, inside two-coloured boxes making an emotive appeal about the quality of the service exclusively in Urdu. This is another example of overlapping multilingualism. Each language conveys information not translated into the other. On closer look both languages convey emotive text but whereas the English text is addressee oriented (‘what you will get from us’), the Urdu text is speaker oriented (‘what we can do for you’). This contrastive appeal may reflect underlying socio-cultural orientations.



Figure 5.5 Café Akbari

Figure 5.6 is essentially a bilingual sign that contains two scripts: a Romanised Urdu text that includes the internationalised word ‘hotel’ at the middle top of the signboard and Arabic. Positioned in the centre, a large size Arabic text in bright red reads “May God Bless us more Bismillah Ghazi Hotel” vying for prominence with the Romanised text but it is clear that they perform different pragmatic functions. The rest of the text in Arabic consists of practical information about the menu and contact details, interlaced with invocations to God. Worth noting is the flanking of the signboard with pictures of food which reinforces the linguistic message.



Figure 5.6 Bismillah Ghazi Hotel restaurant

Figure 5.7 shows a housewares retailer. The English text at the left to the middle top of the signboard “WHOLE SALE CROCKREY HOUSE displays the shop type misspelled (‘crockery’ was the intended word) while a translation in Urdu in the middle to the right-hand side repeats the message. The size and the bolding of the lettering mirrors that of the English text, indicating informational and symbolic equity. More practical information about merchandise and location appears only in Urdu in significantly smaller font size underneath the English text and along the middle to the right bottom edge.



Figure 5.7 Qamar crockery shop

This brief visual analysis has shown a patterned juxtaposition of English and Urdu where English enjoys the privileged upper left or middle position, but frequently Urdu, or in some instances Arabic, mirrors the placement of the English text giving the impression of a constant dialogue between pragmatism and identity

6. Discussion

The analysis of the data shows that the most common pattern in the linguistic composition of the shop signs in our sample is a combination of English and Urdu. It appears that this pattern remains consistent across different shop types. It must be remembered that English in Pakistan enjoys a co-official status alongside the indigenous Urdu; however, the visual prominence of English cannot go unnoticed. Nearly all bilingual shop signs display the following pattern: English is either placed at the top followed immediately by Urdu, or on the left-hand side of the sign board while Urdu occupies the right-hand side. Following, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), this symmetrical distribution of the two languages clearly privileges English according it a higher degree of ‘visibility’, thus indexing the special status it enjoys in this geopolitical location (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

The production and emplacement of publicly displayed signs is the result of motivated choice involving the direct or indirect participation of sign owners and potential

customers (Bianco, 2018). Following Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) framework of analysis we suggest that all three conditions are at play. Undoubtedly, the primary motivation is symbolic. English is emblematic of modernity, fashion, and technological advances (Gorter, 2013; Martin, 2011; Piller, 2001; Ross, 1997). Additionally, as Manan et al. (2017) remark, English is peculiarly over-represented in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan given that it is rarely used for social interaction. However, unlike contexts such as Tokyo and Athens where English is primarily used as a 'display language' (Eastman & Stein, 1993), while practical information is conveyed mainly in the national languages and, at least in the case of the Athens study, Greek mainly appears in the secondary text or it is reserved exclusively for commercial domains such as basic necessities, hardware retailers as well as health services (Nikolaou, 2017), in the present study phrases such as 'computerised eye testing', 'new Fazal medical store', 'the largest selling foam in Pakistan' and 'we deals [sic] all kinds of hardware and tools' appearing on shop signboards clearly index a high informational value for English given the sociolinguistic parameters of the research context.

The position of English and Urdu in the linguistic landscape of Swat reflects their official status enshrined in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan as the languages of public administration (Kohistani & Schmidt, 2005). As was mentioned earlier, in spite of the provisional stipulation of its eventual replacement by Urdu, 45 years later English is deeply entrenched in Pakistani society and enjoys the de facto patronage of the ruling classes in the name of modernization and efficiency (Rahman, 2005).

The structuration of the linguistic landscape in Swat can be explained in terms of Ben Rafael's (2009) *power relations* and *collective identity* structuration principles. Power relations refer to the competition of different languages for visibility in the public space. The first accounts for the prominent visibility of English. This is attested by the small-scale visual analysis on selected signs showing that English in most cases is informationally salient in that it either occupies the (upper) left section of the sign visualising 'the promise of the product' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 186), central position, claiming informational centrality, or lower position which is reserved for more practical information. The collective identity, on the other hand, is especially relevant in multicultural and multilingual environments reflecting actors' regional, ethnic, religious affiliations (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, & Barni, 2010). The use of Urdu serves primarily an identity function as the main national language of Pakistan, exercising cultural hegemony as a symbol of the ruling Panjabi elite in spite of the fact that it is the mother tongue of only 7.5% of the population (Rahman, 2005). Urdu appears frequently on the left side of the signboard or below English either to reinforce a message by conveying extra information (overlapping multilingualism) that has an emotive appeal or it simply carries the same message as the English text (duplicating multilingualism). The latter pattern is more indicative of the underlying competition between English and Urdu. Interestingly, a few signs contain visually prominent religious messages in Arabic completely unrelated to the provided product or service. This is an interesting, if not incongruent, case of recontextualisation (Connolly, 2014) whereby religious texts appear in a discursive context of commercial activity, essentially participating in a process of linguistic commodification.

7. Conclusion

In this paper we have applied existing theoretical tools to the investigation of the linguistic landscape of Swat, Pakistan in an attempt to gain an insight into the state of written multilingualism in that geographical location. As the data reveal, the commercial district where the study was carried out is characterised by a high degree of visibility of both English and Urdu at the expense of local and more widely spoken regional languages. Similar findings were obtained in the recent study by Manan et al. (2017). Whereas, English has been traditionally identified with the affluent, cosmopolitan outward looking elites and enjoys a *de jure* official status, Urdu, as a co-official language, is viewed as a symbol of national identity, despite the low number of speakers who claim it as a mother tongue. The distribution of the two languages in the commercial signage of Swat is characterised by a considerable degree of visual symmetry, communicative and symbolic complementarity resulting in what might be termed balanced written bilingualism.

Limited resources, and geographical considerations weighed heavily on our decision not extent this project into a full-blown ethnographic study which would more directly tap into the motives of the relevant actors underpinning their linguistic choices and afford us a better picture of the role of private agents as covert language planners.

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