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Linguistic Landscape in the face of Kumasi - Kajetia

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Abstract

This ethnographic paper investigated the linguistic landscape of Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti region of Ghana in West Africa. The paper looks into the languages used on the writings on stores on the streets, the mode of writing either with paint or stickers, the size of the writings and the colours used for that. Data collected for this study were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Primarily, the data was from the public writings on stores which is a bottom-up approach. The results proved that the local Asante vernacular were highly represented as compared to the English language. English has a substantial impact on the Kumasi landscape confirming its status as; English is more of an index of globalization than a means of communication. The use of multiple scripts was another dimension of this diversity and this study addressed it. In some cases, there were a combination of different languages represented on the same store. The languages were only the vernacular that's the Twi and the Standard English language.

Keywords: dimension, Kajetia, Kumasi, landscape, language, linguistic, stores



1.0 Introduction

Linguistic landscape has been enjoying growing interest in sociolinguistics. In our current situation, images and visuals have surrounded us and have become part of our lifestyle. They do come in many forms which comprises images only, a combination of images and languages or languages only. All these combination are embedded in semiotic theory in multimodality perspective. They all send a signal or communicate to the general public. According to Blommaert (2013), the term linguistic landscape refers to all visible semiotic signs in public space. He continued to say that, not only does it include printed, written, carved, sprayed or otherwise visible language that occurs in the physical world but also pictures, colors, logos, graphs and other meaningful signs. It's the ensemble of such semiotic signs that constitutes the linguistic landscape of a given locality. Tamakloe, Riverson & Okyere (1975) asserted that, Kumasi has a population of about 345,000 and is the second largest city in Ghana. It is located in the centre of the rich forest area of the country and thus enjoys an important position as a modal town on which most national routes converge (Fig. 1). As a result, Kumasi propagated as an important marketable midpoint where large volumes of agricultural and imported goods are exchanged and much of this activity takes place in the central area. According to Ghanadistricts.com, Kumasi is a city in Ashanti Region, and is among the largest metropolitan areas in Ghana. It is near Lake Bosomtwe, in a rain forest region, and is the commercial, industrial and cultural capital of the historical Ashanti Empire. It is approximately 500 kilometres north of the Equator and 200 kilometres (100 miles) north of the Gulf of Guinea. Kumasi is on the other hand known as "The Garden City" because of its many beautiful species of flowers and plants. It is also called Oseikrom (Osei Tutu's town). The second largest city in Ghana after the capital Accra, Kumasi is known as Ghana's second city. The Central Business District of Kumasi includes areas such as Adum, Bantama and Bompata (popularly called Roman Hill) is concentrated with lots of banks, department stalls, and hotels. Economic activities in Kumasi include financial and commercial sectors, pottery, clothing and textile. There is a huge timber processing community in Kumasi serving the needs of people in Ghana. Bantama High Street and Prempeh II Street in Adum respectively have the reputation of being the hub of business and night life in Kumasi.

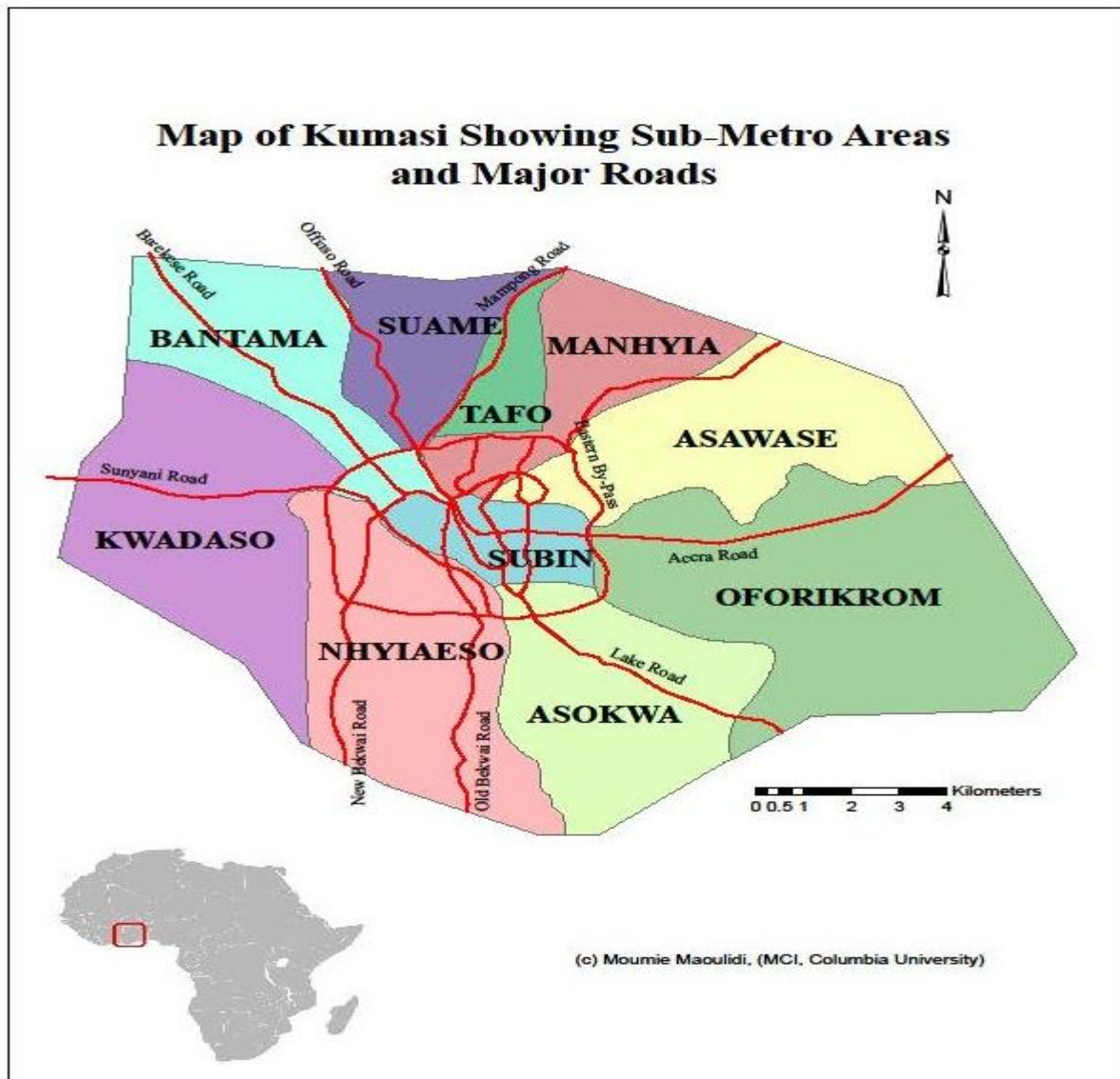


Fig. 1 Kumasi in its national context

All the writings or inscriptions found on the stores were snapped and codes were given to it. After compiling and reviewing the data, the following classification system was developed and categorized based on the collected signs on post boards. They include the following;

- ❖ Which languages can be seen on the stores?
- ❖ How was the language presented on the stores in relation to its size of fonts, either the use of paint or printed stickers?
- ❖ Which colour dominates in the inscriptions?

The study of public signage is termed linguistic landscape (LL). Landry & Bourhis (1997) define the notion as the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings

combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration' (p.25). The current study intends to contribute to this development in Kumasi Kajetia shop signs. It will emphasize colour dominated in the inscriptions as well as the language presented on the shops or stores in the category of the use of paint or printed stickers.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This paper is an aspect of linguistic landscape of sociolinguistics. The theory that influences this study is Visual semiotics theory. This theory deals with the interpretations of signs. Signs can be in indexical, iconic or symbolic relationship with a referent (Sharp 2011, p.2). Signs refer to items with specific meaning. This might be in form of gestures, images or inscriptions. The main requirement is that it must be meaningful in the society. It is therefore a good point to discuss Kumasi Kajetia linguistic landscape on stores or shops inscriptions, in the domain of language used, materials and the colours, It is doubtless that language can be used as a microscopic lens to view and understand the social practices and day-to-day activities of a society. As a microscope, the language travels beyond what is expressed and settles on what is practiced in the real sociocultural world and this is how landscape in linguistic supposed to be captured.

2.2 Findings

According to Hult (2014), in some cases, the signs themselves are multilingual signs, reflecting an expected multilingual readership. In other cases, there are monolingual signs in different languages, written in relevant languages found within a multilingual community. Carr (2017) also added on that, the study of linguistic landscape also examines such patterns as which languages are used for which types of institutions (e.g. country club, hospital, ethnic grocery store), which languages are used for more expensive/cheaper items (new cars or used cars), or which languages are used for more expensive/cheaper services (e.g. pool cleaning or washing machine repair). Also, linguistic landscape can be studied across an area, to see which neighbourhood have signs in which languages. Chilwa (2008:274) also made it known that, linguistic landscape is any form of writing or images on the walls or surfaces of public buildings, parks, toilets, buses or trains, usually bearing some political or sexual contents, a lover's pledge, proposition, or obscene words. According to Landry & Bourhis, (1997; 25) the term linguistic landscape comprises public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. It is basically the languages that are visually used in the multilingual societies. For instance, some public signs in Jerusalem are in Hebrew, English, and Arabic (Spolsky and Cooper 1991).

Labov (1984) posited that, with regards to sociolinguists, one important goal is to construct a 'record of overt attitudes towards language, linguistic features and linguistic stereotypes'. This means, learning language attitudes entice sociolinguists. In this manner, (Coulmas, 2013) postulated that, language is an 'indicator of identity group affiliation by means of stereotypes and identity appearance is a matter of relative choice, "relative" because group membership is a social process involving the individual member and the group". The term Linguistic landscape is usually traced back to Landry and Bourhis' conceptualization the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region". This means that, sign aging refers to language being used in the public space only leaving behind inscriptions on vehicle, graffiti, and bikes as well. (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, cited in Gomaa, 2017). This indicates that Landry and Bourhis were the first people to use this term. But Scollon and Scollon (2003) in their study of Geosemiotics argued that, the linguistic landscape includes all of the following: street signs, advertising, shop names, sale signs, road signs (as long as they have text), Posted flyers, government buildings, signs describing monuments, no parking signs, and so on. Any textual item, including graffiti, is a part of the linguistic landscape. Gorter (2006, p.2) holds that linguistic landscape research is concerned with the use of language in its written form in public sphere. Tulp (1978) examined the language of commercial billboards in Brussels. The purpose was to demonstrate how language usage patterns on these signs have been contributing to the city's Frenchification. He assumed that the visibility of a language in a public space is vital for its perceived ethnolinguistic vitality. The focused on three large billboards in and around Brussels. In the same way this study focused on Kumasi Kajetia stores or shops as an ethnolinguistic vitality. Kumasi is next to the capital city of Ghana. Kajetia is the heart of the business of Kumasi.

In functional domain, linguistic landscape has two major functions: informative and symbolic informative function indicates the borders of the territory of linguistic group. It shows that a specific language or languages for communication or to sell products. On the other hand, the symbolic function refers to the comparison to other languages (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Pennycook (1994) argues that because of the intricate involvement of English in the former British African countries including Botswana, in the political, educational, economical, and social lives of the countries, which in turn are also connected to the global political, educational, economical, and social life, it becomes difficult for Botswana to resist the growth and development of English in all spheres of life.)

Pakir (1999) describes the importance of English as a language as follows:

English is a global vehicle that refuels at every stop, creates economic and other opportunities and returns to its home bases, each time upping

financial ante for English users. English has become a global commodity that seems to have no sell-by date attached to it (p,104).

Cenoz & Gorter (2006) also observe similar patterns of the use of English in linguistic landscape in some cities in Spain. The question is: is English as a means of communication or an index of globalization? The answer to this question is that English is more of an index of globalization than a means of communication. This is so because only a small fraction of the population speaks English in official contexts and in business sectors. The linguistic landscape is very essential in human settlement since its offer opportunity for better analysis on environmental issues. Ben- Rafael et al (2006) underscore that linguistic landscape analysis allows us to point out patterns representing different ways in which people, groups, associations, institutions and government agencies cope with the game of symbols within a complex reality. (p.27).

3.0 Methodology

Data collection and sampling based on the research objectives, the methods used for data collection were both photography and interviews. The photography focused on the writings on the stores whilst the interviews focused on what informs the writings. The speech community chosen for the study was Kumasi in the Ashanti region of Ghana but the research was limited to the Kejetia area of Kumasi.

4.0 Photography

There are scanty of writings on the stores in the Kejetia market, because of time factor, the researcher decided to limit the study to two hundred stores that had different writings on them. Among the two hundred stores chosen for the study, a total number of two hundred writings were taken. The researcher then took these pictures of these stores mostly in the morning because the place were crowded during that time. The researcher spoke with the store owners and shop keepers and sought their consent or permission before going ahead to enact all the activities needed including picture taking. All pictures were taken with an android phone.

4.1 Data of Inscriptions on Shops or Stores in Kumasi

God is king	Just one day
Ɔbra yɛ ɔko	Jesus is Lord
A to Z fashion	Maa Afia shop
Me dimafoɔ ne Awurade	Asasco Gee
Napisco phones	Yesu yɛ aware
Great Provider	El-shadai
Atinka wine shop	Yesu Mo
Big Brother Africa	Aunte Bee store

Not by might
 Aseda nkoa
 Da bi asɛm nti store
 Yes Lord
 Franco motors
 Setmart computers
 Joyce Asumin licensed store

Nkwagye Nyankopɔn
 Ayɛyie wura
 Sankɔfa
 Allahu Akbar
 Rikpat filters
 Eno Yaa bakery

5.0 Interview

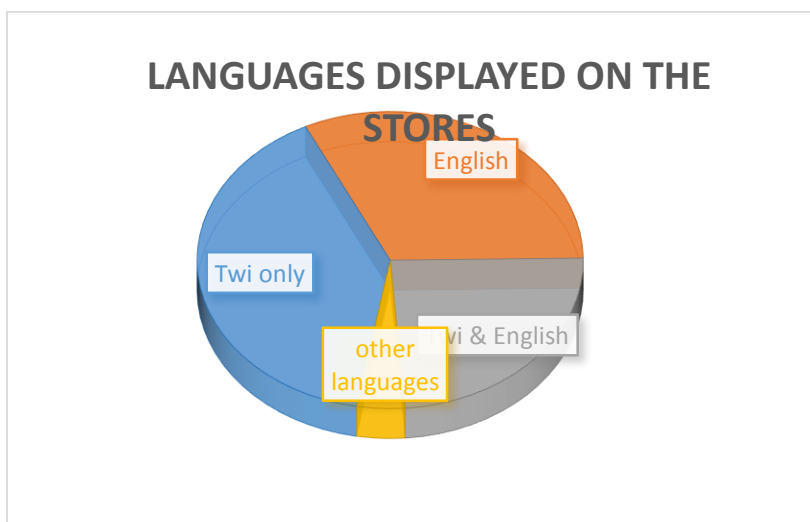
After the photography, one hundred respondents purposively selected and interviewed. These respondents were made up of store owners and store keepers. The purpose of the interview was to find out the reasons that informed the language choice and meaning of the writings on the store. The respondents were told prior to the interview that they would be recorded. Later transcribed the information received for the analysis.

6.0 Data Analysis

This part discusses the classification of the writings based on the language used either monolingual or bilingual.

Table 1. Summary of languages seen on the stores

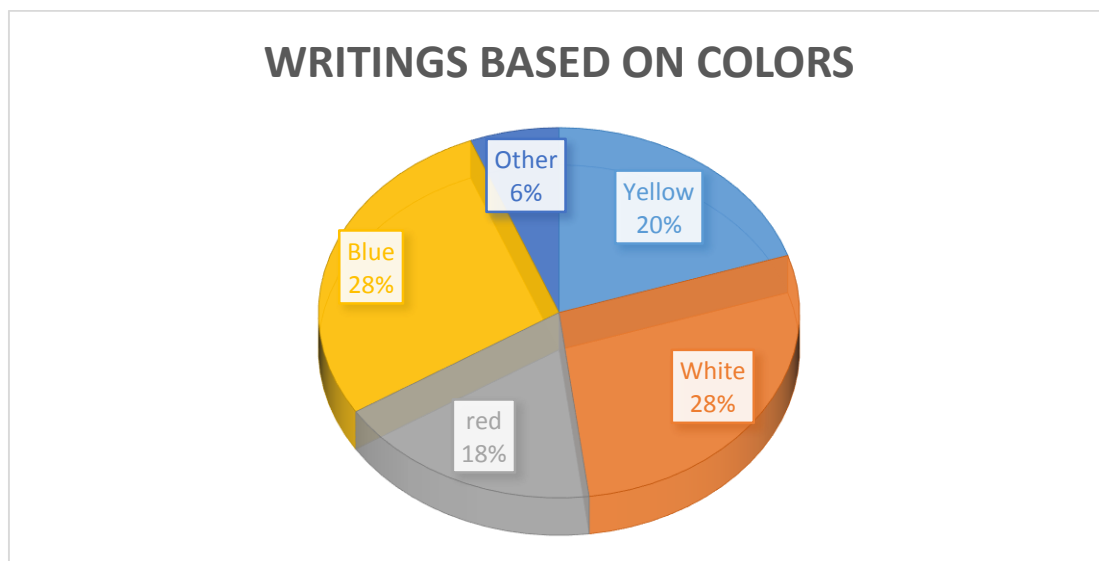
Language usage	Number	Percentage
English only	64	32%
Twi only	80	40%
English and Twi	48	24%
Other languages	8	4%
Total	200	100%



The table and the chart above illustrate the language usage on the stores of Kumasi Kejetia. It can be seen from the table that, English, Twi and some other languages were represented. Quite number of the writings were in the Twi, which is 80 representing 40%. English only followed with 64 representing 32%. Then, followed by the combination of English and Twi 48 representing 24%. Then to the other languages which 4%. It could be explained that, because Kumasi is a Twi speaking community, the inhabitants will use Twi to write on their stores. From the above statistics, we could see that there is a combination of languages.

Table 2. Summary of the writings based on color

Colors	Number	Percentage
Yellow	40	20%
White	56	28%
Red	36	18%
Blue	56	28%
Other	12	6%
Total	200	100%



The above table and figures depict that, white and blue are the dominant color used during the writings each was 56 representing 28%. They normally opt for these colours because “The colour white and the blue are so appealing to the eye, resistance to fading and can be read no matter your distance”. One shop keeper also added to it that, “These colours beautify the post, and is cheaper as well”. Follow by the yellow colours which realized as 40 representing 20%. Red and other colours followed slightly with 18% and 6%. The later colours few opted for them.

Table 3. Summary of the writings based on material used

Material type	Number	Percentage
Sticker	188	94%
Paint	12	6%
Total	200	100%

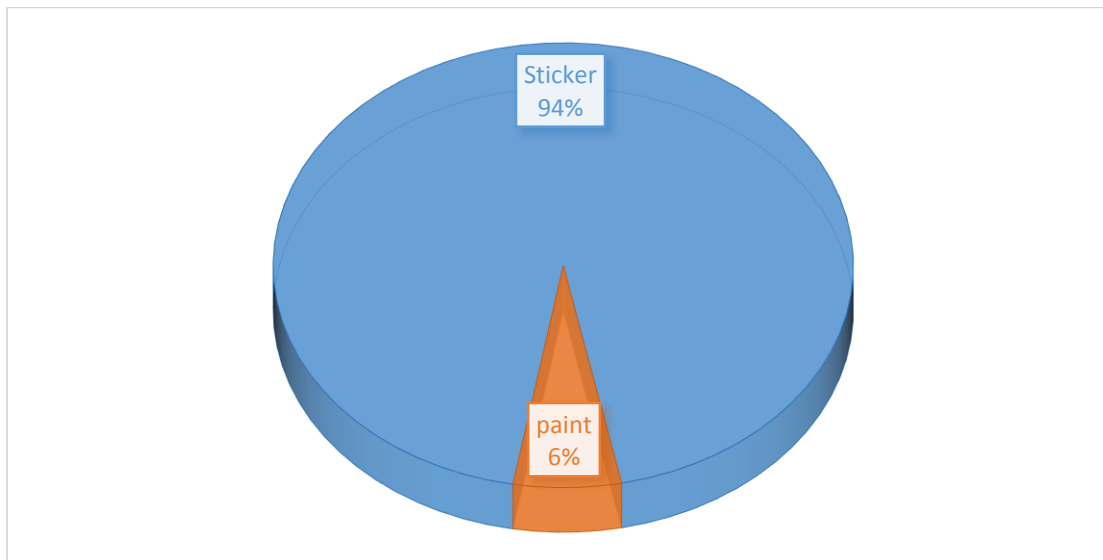


Figure 9. A representation of the writings with stickers as against paint

Table 3 and figure 9 confirm that, the writings on the stores which were written with paints are fading out. After the data collection, only 12 representing 6% of the writings were seen in that form. This implies that, gradually, that mode of writing will be no more. It is therefore pointless to guarantee writing on shops in Kumasi Kajetia. This goes in line with what Mr. Agyenim Boateng said. He said that:

- a) They are outdated
- b) They are costly.
- c) It consumes or delay time when using such material as mode of writing.
- d) They deteriorate the paints of the store when you want to change it.

Storekeeper 1; *“It is easier to change the writings on the post any time you wish without any difficulties. If is a paint, you will have to paint the whole plate but you will just remove the stickers if you to want change it.”*

Shop owner 1; *“It is quite simple to correct mistake made on the sticker than the paint writing. The correction can lead to further deterioration of the writings.”*

Shop owner 2; who was in support of the paint writing said; *“the painting is quite expensive but it last longer than the sticker material. The contention that is time consuming*

was well explained by He added, “I can just give the details to the writer and within a twinkle of an eye, he/she is done with it. A sign writer will use a whole week to do so and with errors too. The drawing on the post will be totally different from the original picture (**he was speaking from experience**)”.

Storekeeper 2; *The paint writings is only attractive in the first two weeks, afterward it loses its beauty but stickers are materials that ever remain in their natural state throughout their life span.*

Storekeeper 3; *I have stopped using paint because it attracts dust so easily. Another difficulty in using paint has to do with maintenance.*

Storekeeper 4; *The stickers attract customers for me because of its beauty. Someone even said paint is no more in use this means they are outmoded.*

In fact all my respondents spoke in favour of stickers which was clear indication of painting of shops in Kumasi Kejetia losing their importance. According to the hypothesis shown in table 1, it made it known that, the Twi language is the most mainly used language, followed by English, then the rest follow. With respect to the second table it indicated that, the painting inscription is fading out and is being replaced with the modern sticker which is easy to remove, cheap, affordable and less time consuming. Lastly table 3 showed that, they prefer the white and the blue colours to other colours. The landscape of Kumasi Kejetia drew our attention to the fact that Ghana is a business country. In conclusion, the above responses designate that, several things are put in place before they write on a store.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper has tried to discuss the writings on the stores in Kumasi, Kejetia to be precise. The quantitative analysis of (200) posts were recorded, the paper showed that with regard to the language used, Twi dominated but English language can be a threat to Twi though geographical location of the paper is purely Twi speaking area. The paper also discovered a strong fear of the fading nature of the paint writings and supported sticker writings. Several reasons were given by the shopkeepers and store owners concerning it. Based on the information gathered on the grounds, it can be concluded that, the writings with paints will totally die off in near future.

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