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Merga Feyera Wekjira – Szilvia Bányi: Navigating Multilingualism: Language Choices and Practices in the Linguistic Landscape of Ambo Town
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Navigating Multilingualism: Language Choices and Practices in the Linguistic Landscape of Ambo Town

The question of language use in multilingual contexts is never neutral. Languages exist in a complex, hierarchical system influenced by political, economic, attitudinal, religious, and other factors. This study explores language choices and practices in the linguistic landscape of Ambo town, Ethiopia, employing the Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS) framework (Gorter, 2021; Gorter & Cenoz, 2020; 2024). Utilizing the "one main street" approach (Rosenbaum et al., 1977), a corpus of 231 signs, consisting of 28 governmental (top-down) and 203 non-governmental (bottom-up) signs, was analyzed to understand the dynamics of language use in public signage. Interviews with five sign makers provided insights into the motivations behind language choices. The findings reveal a bottom-up dominance in the linguistic landscape, with non-governmental signs reflecting local language preferences. Top-down signs are predominantly bilingual, adhering to official policies that prioritize the working language (Afan Oromo) alongside the country's primary working language (Amharic language). The study also highlights the increasing visibility of a global language (English) in commercial signage, driven by globalization, but raises concerns over the underrepresentation of minority languages. Sign makers emphasized the economic and communicative benefits of multilingual signage. Overall, the study underscores a complex interaction between top-down policies and bottom-up practices, suggesting a need for more inclusive language policy implementation to better reflect Ambo Oromia's linguistic diversity.

Keywords: multilingualism, linguistic landscape, bottom-up and top-down, Ambo town

Introduction

The question of language use in multilingual contexts is never neutral. Languages exist in a complex, hierarchical system influenced by political, economic, attitudinal, religious, and other factors. In this regard, we can agree with Spolsky's claim (2004) that monolingualism is not the most straightforward language policy in the twenty-first century as it requires addressing at least two questions: the (linguistic) rights of minorities and the role of English as a global language. Ethiopia presents such a case with its multi-ethnic and multilingual population, with Amharic as the working language of the country and English as a language used in many domains of society.

According to the language policy of the country, “All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal recognition.” (FDRE Constitution, 1995: 3), which causes more confusion than clarity when it comes to the application at different levels (e.g., at the educational level (for an overview see Chali and Parapatics, 2024). The linguistic landscape of the country is such a domain, especially in areas where speakers of multiple languages reside.

The presence or absence of languages in the linguistic landscape can reveal important aspects of language practices and the prestige of the languages in the linguistic arena (Shohamy, 2006; Blommaert and Maly, 2015). This study focuses on the linguistic landscape of Ambo town and aims to reveal the interplay and hierarchy of languages on both top-down and bottom-up signs. More specifically, this paper seeks to answer the following research questions: To what extent the *de jure* language policy of the country is reflected in the sign-making processes and the distribution of the languages on the signs? It is assumed that Afan Oromo, the most widespread language of Ambo town, will be underrepresented on the signs, as was found by previous studies. Following the Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS) model (Gorter, 2021), the study analyzes Ethiopia’s language policy, the sign-making processes in Ambo town, and the languages represented in the signs.

In this article, we briefly discuss this expansion and take a standpoint in terms of definitions, followed by a description of the MIPS model and its applicability to the present study. The second part of the literature review focuses on the language political situation and multilingualism in Ethiopia, specifically in the Oromia region where the target city, Ambo town, is located. Finally, the findings of previous linguistic landscape studies conducted in Ethiopia will be discussed.

Linguistic landscape

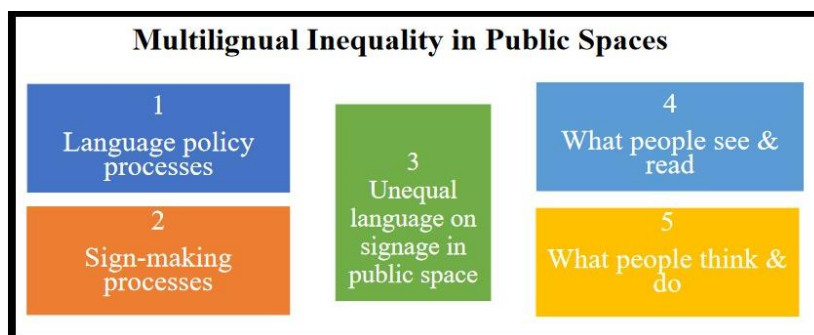
The most popular definition of linguistic landscape (LL) proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997) states that “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.” (p. 25). Since the publication of their article, the field has expanded tremendously, evidenced by the publication of several books (e.g., Shohamy & Gorter, 2008; Shohamy et al., 2010; Gorter, 2006, Backhaus, 2007), thousands of articles and research items (1579 collected by Troyer, 2024¹) and the foundation of the Linguistic Landscape international journal (<https://benjamins.com/catalog/ll>). Initially, the pioneering studies focused on big cities (e.g., Shohamy et al., 2010) and were mainly quantitative, but later, a more

¹ According to 04.10.2024

qualitative approach was taken, which focused more on how the languages were represented in the LL. The study of linguistic landscapes worldwide has changed due to globalization and technological advancements, which further broadened the scope of LL to other modalities (e.g., touch screens and video walls). In line with this observation, Bányi et al. (2019) argue that “LL has to be redefined by everyone who decides to investigate the signage of a given space as the items may differ from what Landry and Bourhis (1997) included in their list” (p. 2). In this study, we espouse the definition of linguistic landscape as “the use of language in its written form in the public sphere” (Gorter, 2006: 2), excluding any other, more recent modalities that may include the analysis of sounds, non-linguistic signs, smells and scents (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Motivated by the work of Shohamy and Ben Rafael (2015), we ascribe to the standpoint that the main aim of studying the linguistic landscape is to reveal both the presence and absence of languages in the public space that highlight the ideologies, reactions, decisions, and motives reflected in the different signages. This requires the investigation of multiple agents (e.g., sign-makers) and elements in a given context.

One of the recent theoretical models, the Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS) model (Gorter, 2021; Gorter & Cenoz, 2020; 2024), proposes five interlocking and cyclical components, Illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Multilingual Inequality in Public Spaces (MIPS) (based on Gorter, 2021; Gorter & Cenoz, 2020; 2024)



The first component in this model concerns language policy processes referring to legislations that regulate the appearance of languages in the linguistic landscape. The second component, a crucial but under-researched element, pertains to the construal of the linguistic landscape that includes sign-makers’ considerations about what should be included in the sign. The third and paramount component, tightly affected by the first two components, is the linguistic landscape itself, in which languages are displayed unequally (Gorter and Cenoz, 2024), especially when there are divergences between the official (or top-down) and the commercial (or bottom-

up) signs. The last two components focus on how people see, read, and react to the elements of the linguistic landscape, which can lead to the development of future policies. The cyclical feature of the model means that changes in one component can lead to changes in another: for example, a new language policy can modify the linguistic landscape, or changes in language practices can influence policymaking.

Most LL studies focus on the linguistic landscape (third element) and the language policy processes (first element); however, fewer studies have addressed the remaining three elements: the making of the signage, how people relate to them, and what people think about them. This study focuses on the first three components: language policy, signage creation, and linguistic landscape.

Language policy in Ethiopia

In today's world, multilingualism has become the ‘norm’ (Stavans & Jessner, 2022), with regions globally embracing the use of multiple languages. This trend is also evident in Ethiopia, where both individuals and communities commonly speak more than one language (Chali and Parapatics, 2022). Several factors contribute to Ethiopia's rich linguistic diversity. First, Ethiopia is home to more than 80 different ethnic groups (Lanza and Woldemariam, 2014) and 87 languages. According to Ethnologue (2021), the following languages are the most prominent first languages in the country: Oromo (36 million speakers), Amharic (31.8 million speakers), Somali (6.7 million speakers), Tigrinya (6.4 million speakers), Sidama (4.3 million speakers), Wolaytta (2.4 million speakers), Sebat Bet Gurage (2.2 million speakers) and Afar (1.8 million speakers).

Multilingualism in Ethiopia is a result of an interplay between different factors. As people move across the country for various reasons, they interact and exchange languages and cultures, which leads to multilingualism. Second, Ethiopia's religious diversity also promotes multilingualism. The country hosts several religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Waaqeffataa, each using different languages in their practices. Third, historical attempts at colonization have influenced the linguistic landscape. Italy's unsuccessful attempts to colonize Ethiopia included a five-year occupation during which they introduced policies supporting the use of multiple languages. Lastly, foreign languages such as English, Arabic, French, and Chinese languages have been introduced for academic, diplomatic, and other purposes, further adding to the multilingual environment. However, in the history of Ethiopian languages, legal multilingualism is recognized at a school level only in the current constitution of the country, which was first introduced in 1991.

In a country like Ethiopia, where language diversity is highly complex, it is essential to have a formal structure and legal protections governed by a clear

language policy. Ethiopian language policies have historically been imposed from the top down without adequately considering the country's linguistic diversity (see McNab, 1990; Alemu & Tekleselassie, 2006). Since the paper focuses on modern Ethiopia, the discussion only touches upon the different historical periods and will not go into a detailed description of the language situations. Modern Ethiopia was established at the end of 1880th when the unification of the northern and southern parts of the country was completed (Baharu, 2005). During the unification, the Amharic language was used to cement a centralized and unified country that speaks one language; however, official regulations have not been documented during this time (Getachew and Derib, 2006). This period was followed by the strict policy of 'Amharization' (Lanza and Woldemariam, 2014) when the Amharic language also expanded all over the country, which was meant to ensure national unity (one language = one nation). A short period of multilingualism introduced by the Italians was followed by the restoration of the imperial power, during which the Amharic language was restored as the working language of the country, and it was legally incorporated in the 1955 written constitution (the first written constitution) of the country (Getachew and Derib, 2006). Following the downfall of the imperial power, the Derg regime introduced 15 regional languages as part of the national literacy campaign, though the dominance of the Amharic language continued (Getachew and Derib, 2006; Lanza and Woldemariam, 2014).

The current constitution of the country first came into function during the transition period between DERG and EPRDF (1991) (Getachew and Derib, 2006). In addition to policies of different sectors of the country, the constitution has also contained a language policy, yet is not clear and detailed language policy (Lanza and Woldemariam, 2014). The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRGE) of 1994, particularly Article 5, sets a framework for linguistic diversity in the country by stating that the state equally recognizes all Ethiopian languages. Likewise, it establishes Amharic as the working language of the federal government while allowing each regional state the autonomy to determine its own working languages. Despite this legal recognition of linguistic diversity, the practical implementation of multilingualism in Ethiopia, as observed in various studies and critiques, appears to be limited.

Higgins (2009) points out that Ethiopia, though not colonized, has adopted English as a second language of official importance, especially in education and international affairs. This reflects the significant role English plays in the country's linguistic landscape, alongside Amharic and regional languages. Yet, the practical language policy in education and government functions indicates a disparity between the constitutional promise of equal recognition for all languages and the dominance of particular languages in regional states. As noted by Samuel and Wolde (2015),

many Ethiopians primarily use their mother tongue in regional settings, Amharic at the federal level, and English for academic and international purposes. The broader critique of Ethiopia's constitutional approach to multilingualism suggests that while the constitution acknowledges the country's linguistic diversity, it has not effectively promoted true multilingualism across all regions. The dominance of regional languages in education and governance in some areas can marginalize smaller linguistic communities, leading to a lack of representation for minority languages. This centralization of regional dominant languages mirrors historical practices in Ethiopia, where certain languages (like the Amharic language) were historically privileged over others, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies. In essence, Ethiopia's constitution may not have entirely escaped the influence of previous regimes, which favored a limited number of dominant languages. While regional autonomy over language use is allowed, in practice, only a few languages enjoy prominence in governance and education, limiting the inclusivity of the country's multilingual policies. The implementation of language policy in Ethiopia continues to present challenges, particularly in regions where linguistic diversity is not fully reflected in official language choices. In the newly introduced governmental system, the formulation of regional states was based on the number of people in the nations. Likewise, nations that have relatively many people got their own regional states, and others were collectively given common regional states. These allowed many of the ethnic groups of the country to take part in the country's ruling system. Many languages were also given some promotion to be languages of academia, media, research, and regional official languages. Based on the possibility guaranteed by the Constitution, out of more than 80 languages of the country, six local languages (Afan Oromo, Somali, Tigrigna, Afar, and Harari languages) (Turton, 2006) were promoted to regional working languages in Ethiopia.

Currently, there is no clearly documented regulation with regard to public road signage in Ethiopia. However, the current Ethiopian constitution states that regions must use their mother tongue or the regionally dominant language(s) as a working language.

LL in Ethiopia

The study of the linguistic landscape in Ethiopia is not uncharted waters. Lanza and Woldemariam (2009) investigated the presence of different languages in downtown Mekelle in the Tigray region. They found that, as a result of linguistic emancipation, which was introduced to decrease the hegemony of Amharic, the Tigrinya language is highly prevalent on both bilingual and monolingual signs. As the constitution encourages the use of local languages in media and administration, Mendisu et al. (2016) focused on more minor languages with several hundreds of thousands of

speakers. Gedeo language is spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of Dilla, while Koorete is spoken in Amarro-Keele; both settlements can be found in the most multilingual region of the country, the southwestern part of Ethiopia. Based on a corpus of 190 pictures, the authors found that Amharic and English dominate the LL, while the Gedeo language was present only in 7.3% (9 signs) of the signs in Dilla, and Koorete was entirely absent in the LL of Amarro-Keele. While both languages are now used in education and the media, the absence of these local languages in the LL has been associated with the choice of Latin script for their written forms, which is a highly sensitive issue in Ethiopia.

Blackwood et al. (2021) studied the role English plays in two distinct cities, Oslo in Norway and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, and they found that “English saturates the public space” (p. 131) in both places, a sign of modernization and globalization. They also conclude that the fact that English is the preferred language on many bottom-up signs in Ethiopia shows a general social and cultural change going on in many African countries, and it squeezes well-established African languages out from the LL.

Fekede and Tesfaye (2020) studied multilingual practices and multiple contestations in the linguistic landscape of Jimma, Adama, and Sebeta towns in Oromia in which the study employed “a theoretical concept of geosemiotics from social semiotics as an analytical tool” (p. 105). The study identified varieties of multilingual practices, contestations, identity constructions, and other related social concerns. It portrayed the exclusion (i.e., marginalized visibility or less visibility) of Afan Oromo in unspecified domains. It also proved the absence of language policy in the country and its impacts on LL.

Chali and Parapatics (2022) studied the LL of commercial shop signs in Nekemte town, Oromia, Ethiopia. The study depicted that most of the commercial signs of the town are monolingual (Amharic or Afan Oromo) and bilingual (Afan Oromo and Amharic language), whereas some are multilingual. Direct translation of the signs from the Amharic language to Afan Oromo and fragmentation of the signs were also apparent in the study, including several careless translations from Amharic to Afan Oromo. The study also identified that there is no bottom-up policy for the signs.

While there have been some recent studies on the linguistic landscape in the Oromia region, the linguistic landscape of Ambo town has not been researched. Ambo town is one of the rapidly developing towns of Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia. It is located only 114 km away from the country’s capital city, Addis Ababa (Finfinne), and it is the town of Western Shoa Zone. Oromia Region is home to more than 35 million people, and factors such as weather conditions and job opportunities attract people from every part of the country to live in the region. Hence, most of the languages of the country could be spoken in the region, though the degree varies.

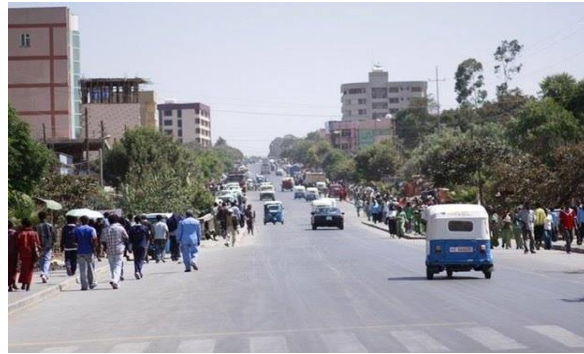
Accordingly, the 2007 census data shows that Afan Oromo speakers account for 88% of the population, Amharic 7%, and others 5%. Although the Afan Oromo and Amharic languages are dominant languages of the region, every individual has the right to use their language following the equal constitutional right given for languages of the country. In the current Oromia Regional State, the language used in official settings is Afan Oromo; the languages used in the educational setting are Afan Oromo, Amharic, and English languages, and anyone has the right to use any language in informal settings.

The Oromo people established Ambo as a modern town more than 90 years ago. These days, the town is a home for many people from different parts of the country. The 1994 national census reported that Afan Oromo was spoken as a first language by 90.92%, and 8.37% spoke Amharic language; the remaining 0.81% spoke all other primary languages reported. This shows that the speakers of Afan Oromo (Oromo people) are highly dominant in the town, so Afan Oromo is used as a mother tongue and official language, Amharic as a second language, and English as a foreign language at schools. Additionally, the Ge'ez language in the Orthodox Churches and Arabic in Muslim Mosques are also used, respectively. Furthermore, other minority languages (e.g., Tigrigna, Guragigna) are also being used at home and at the family level by those who came to live in the town. These helped the people of the town to at least be bilingual and, possibly, multilingual.

In light of the knowledge drawn from previous studies, this study aims to answer the following question: To what extent is the *de jure* language policy of the country reflected in the sign-making processes and the distribution of the languages on the signs? It is assumed that Afan Oromo, the most widespread language of Ambo town, will be underrepresented on the signs, as was found by previous studies (Fekede and Tesfaye, 2020).

The study

The town has one main road, which is the primary research site of this study (see Picture 1). It is 5 km long, and it is a road where most of the government offices are located, including different kinds of shops and businesses. Hence, it allowed the researchers to collect data on both top-down and bottom-up signs. Sign makers were also interviewed about their attitudes and considerations during the sign-making process.



Picture 1. Part of Ambo town's main road

In the present study, the “one main street” approach is used (Rosenbaum et al., 1977 in Jerusalem; Cenoz and Gorter, 2006 in Donostia - San Sebastián and in Leeuwarden-Ljouwert in Friesland; Mendisu et al., 2016 in Ethiopia- Dilla and Amarro-Keele). A total of 311 signs constitute the sample for analysis in this study. The corpus consists of 28 governmental or top-down and 203 non-governmental or bottom-up signs. These results indicate that the public road sign of Ambo town is dominated and shaped by the bottom-up approach.

This study is primarily a qualitative study whereby each picture is defined as a sign that is spatially framed (Backhaus, 2007). Following the MIPS model as the framework of the study, the quantitative approach was completed by semi-structured interviews with five sign makers to understand the driving forces behind the inclusion of specific languages on their signs. The interviewees are bi- or multilinguals speaking Afan Oromo as a mother tongue, Amharic as a second language, and English as a foreign language. Most of them completed university, and only one graduated from college, but none of them are qualified for the job they are doing. All of them were trained in different fields; however, they are making signs using the skills and knowledge they gained through experience, and they have never had an opportunity of formal training from a formal institution about sign manufacturing. They consider themselves competent in writing in Afan Oromo and English, and they learned the writing systems at school. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Results

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the linguistic landscape in Ambo town as manifested on the main road of the town. We aimed to explore how the language policy of the country is reflected in the sign-making processes and the distribution of the languages on the signs in this central part of the town.

Language policy: a top-down or bottom-up reflection in the linguistic landscape

A corpus of 231 signs was analysed in terms of whether the signs are governmental (top-down) or non-governmental (bottom-up) signs. Table 1 displays the distribution and type of signs.

Types of sign	Top-down	Bottom-up
Monolingual Afan Oromo	---	4
Monolingual Amharic	---	2
Monolingual English	---	12
Bilingual (Afan Oromo and Amharic)	19	122
Bilingual (Afan Oromo and English)		5
Bilingual (Amharic and English)	3	---
Multilingual (Afan Oromo, Amharic, and English)	6	34
Multilingual (Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Ge'ez)	---	4
Multilingual (Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Arabic)	---	3
Brand names	---	17
Total	28	203

Table 1. The number of public signs based on the languages displayed on them

From Table 1, we observe that the LL of the main street is dominated and shaped by bottom-up signs. In the case of top-down signs, no monolingual signs are displayed in the LL; most of the signs are bilingual, whereas Afan Oromo precedes Amharic (see Picture 2), indicating the dominance of the official working language of the region. This is further confirmed by the six multilingual signs where Amharic and English follow Afan Oromo. Only three signs exclude Afan Oromo and display Amharic and English.



Picture 2. Bilingual Afan Oromo – Amharic top-down sign

Bottom-up signs include 18 monolingual signs, out of which 12 are English (Picture 3), 4 are Afan Oromo, and 2 Amharic.



Picture 3. Monolingual English bottom-up sign

A high proportion of bottom-up signs are also Afan Oromo – Amharic bilingual signs (122) (see Picture 4), followed by trilingual Afan Oromo – Amharic – English signs (see Picture 5). In some cases, Ge’ez or Arabic are also added besides Afan Oromo and Amharic.



Picture 4. Bottom-up sign (glass/mirror shop) in two languages (Afan Oromo and Amharic)



Picture 5. Bottom-up sign in three languages (Afan Oromo, Amharic and English)

In very rare cases, there are also banners inscribed in Ge’ez and Arabic languages, which are found around the Orthodox Church and Muslim Mosque and Muslim restaurants, respectively.

Brand names are a special category within bottom-up signs as they often display brands in the original language. Ambo town is not an exception; however, additional information is usually given about the shop in Afan Oromo and/or Amharic. Picture 6 shows the advertisement of a Chinese smartphone manufacturer, the brand name

being the most prominent part of the ad; however, additional information is given in Afan Oromo.



Picture 6. Brand name (the brand name is accompanied by information in Afan Oromo)

Considerations in the sign-making process

While interviewed, the sign makers showed a positive attitude towards the use of multiple languages in the sign-making process. They justified this attitude by stating that: a) using many languages helps them increase the number of customers from different communities; b) it helps them to deliver messages and information to different groups of different language speakers; c) it empowers them personally to feel they are members of a more diverse community; d) it is lucrative because the larger the size of the banner the higher the price. However, three of them prefer to use one language only.

All sign makers stated that they were very aware and cautious in making not only a high-quality sign product but also that the content and the meanings embedded in the information were not distorted.

To ensure such accuracy, many of the sign makers edit the writing of their customers, especially when the customers allow for that. However, this is not always the case. According to the respondents, some customers do not want their advertisement to be written in Afan Oromo or Amharic due to the complex political situation in the country; therefore, they ask the sign makers to use English only (see Picture 7).



Picture 7. Monolingual English advertising banner

Discussion and Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the linguistic landscape of Ambo town and the extent to which Ethiopia's *de jure* language policy is reflected in the sign-making processes and the distribution of languages in public signage. The findings indicate a complex interplay between top-down and bottom-up language practices that highlight both adherence to and divergence from the constitutional framework for language use in Ethiopia. The Multilingual Interaction in Public Spaces (MIPS) framework offers valuable insights into understanding the dynamics of language use in the linguistic landscape of Ambo town. In this framework, we interpreted the presence or absence of languages in the light of language policy and sign-making processes.

The analysis revealed that the linguistic landscape is predominantly shaped by bottom-up signs, which often reflect the actual language preferences of the majority of its speakers within the local population. With 203 bottom-up signs compared to only 28 top-down signs, it is clear that non-governmental signage plays a significant role in the public linguistic landscape of Ambo. This dominance of bottom-up signs suggests that local businesses and residents are actively engaging in language use that resonates with their identity and community preferences, as well as adapting to the multilingual nature of the region. By contrast, the top-down signs predominantly feature bilingual inscriptions of Afan Oromo and Amharic, reinforcing the official language policy that prioritizes Afan Oromo as the working language of the Oromia region.

Besides the predominance of the non-governmental/business-driven bottom-up signs, the signs illustrate a similar and more complex linguistic reality. The significant presence of English, both as a monolingual and bilingual option, aligns with global trends where English increasingly saturates public spaces, as noted by Blackwood et al. (2021). This proliferation of English in commercial signage reflects broader societal changes driven by globalization and modernization, but it also raises concerns about the potential erosion of local languages and identities. Notably, the presence of Afan Oromo and Amharic together in most signs underscores a local negotiation of identity that respects the dominant languages while accommodating the influences of globalization. This alignment with policy is crucial but rare. Previous studies found the underrepresentation of (minority) languages in linguistic landscapes across Ethiopia, indicating that while constitutional provisions exist, the implementation of inclusive language policies remains inconsistent. In the present study, however, contrary to our assumptions, the salience of Afan Oromo was found. The limited visibility of more minor languages (e.g., Ge'ez and Arabic) in both top-down and bottom-up signage highlights a continuing challenge for the representation of linguistic diversity, especially for minority varieties in Ambo town.

The sign makers demonstrated a positive attitude towards multilingualism in sign-making, recognizing its potential to attract diverse customer bases and facilitate communication across different linguistic communities. They emphasized that multilingual signs enhance business opportunities; this reflects a pragmatic understanding of language as a tool for economic empowerment and community engagement.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the de jure language policy of Ethiopia, while progressive in recognizing the country's linguistic diversity, is not fully reflected in the linguistic landscape of Ambo town. The dominance of Afan Oromo and Amharic in top-down signs adheres to the official policy, yet the underrepresentation of minority languages reveals gaps in the policy's practical application. The interplay between bottom-up signs and the prominence of English signals a dynamic and evolving linguistic landscape influenced by both local identity and global trends.

These findings emphasize the need for a more nuanced approach to language policy implementation that actively promotes not only the recognized dominant languages but also the inclusion of minority languages in public signage. Future research could benefit from a broader examination of the impacts of these linguistic practices on community identity, social cohesion, and the preservation of linguistic diversity in Ethiopia. By addressing these areas, policymakers can better align the country's language policy with its rich cultural tapestry, fostering an environment where all languages can thrive in the public sphere.

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