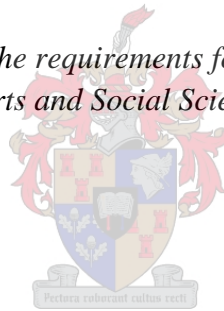


LANGUAGE AND PLACE-MAKING: PUBLIC SIGNAGE IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF WINDHOEK'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

by
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Linguistics in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University*



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Declaration

By submitting this thesis/dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Date: December 2017

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Abstract

Investigating linguistic landscapes (LLs) has primarily been a matter of assessing language use in public signage. In its early days research in the field focused largely on quantitative analysis and typically drew direct relations between the prevalence (or absence) of languages in the public signs of an LL and the ethnolinguistic vitality of such languages. In recent years, scholars in the field have pointed out the flaws of these assumptions and taken a less determinist approach to LL study. In the present study I apply such a broader view with a multidisciplinary theoretical background. I investigate the public signage of Independence Avenue in Windhoek, Namibia, on the one hand evaluating to what extent Namibia's language policy (LP) and the real language practices of Namibians are reflected here, and on the other how commercial and non-commercial entities place and design public signs differently and what this may reveal about their identities. In conjunction with this I examine the public signage of online platforms, which have largely been neglected in LL studies.

I predominantly draw on literature from LL study, and continue to incorporate LP theory and geosemiotics to explain how public signage is used as a form of place-making by making space meaningful. Data collection for the study included two steps: the first involved taking hundreds of photographs of public signs along the physical space of Independence Avenue, and the second comprised looking at the online signage of the different entities discovered in the LL. The study is predominantly qualitative and aims to discover how language use in the LL exposes language ideologies and language practices, and how signs produced by different entities reveal acts of place-making.

The LL reveals a predominance of English both in the physical and online space of Independence Avenue that contrasts with the actual language practices of most Namibians. Furthermore, the findings indicate a division of public signage into zones with markedly different characteristics, with a central zone that appears more exclusive and tourist-oriented, and two peripheral zones that instead resemble sites of necessity. The study is important because it is the first to focus on an LL in Namibia, and in addition reveals possible detrimental ideologies and practices that can be assessed further and possibly resolved.

Opsomming

Die bestudering van linguistiese landskappe (LLs) was nog altyd daarop toegespits om die taalgebruik in publieke tekens te assessee. Vroeë navorsing in dié veld was hoofsaaklik van 'n kwantitatiewe aard gewees, en het gefokus op die direkte verhoudings tussen die aanwesigheid (of afwesigheid) van sekere tale in publieke tekens van 'n LL, en die etnolinguistiese lewenskrag van die betrokke tale. Na kritiese evaluasie van ouer LL studies, het navorsers sekere foutiewe aannames in die navorsingsgebied uitgewys en 'n minder deterministiese benadering tot die bestudering van LLs voorgestel. In die huidige studie pas ek so 'n breër standpunt toe met 'n multidissiplinêre teoretiese agtergrond. Ek bestudeer die publieke tekens van Independence Avenue in Windhoek, Namibia – aan die een kant evalueer ek in watter mate Namibië se taalbeleid, asook die werklike taalpraktyke van Namibiërs, hier weergegee word; aan die ander kant ondersoek ek hoe kommersiële en nie-kommersiële entiteite publieke tekens plaas en ontwerp, en wat dit moontlik oor hul identiteite openbaar. Hiermee saam ondersoek ek ook die publieke tekens van aanlynplatforms, wat grootliks in ander LL-studies verwaarloos is.

In hierdie studie verwys ek hoofsaaklik na literatuur uit LL-navorsing, maar gebruik ek ook taalbeleid-teorie en geosemiotika om te verduidelik hoe publieke tekens gebruik word as 'n vorm van 'plekmaak' deur ruimte betekenisvol te maak. Data-insameling vir die studie het twee stappe ingesluit: eerstens is honderde foto's van publieke tekens langs die fisiese ruimte van Independence Avenue geneem, en tweedens het ek aanlyn tekens van die verskillende entiteite wat in die LL ontdek is, bestudeer. Die studie is oorwegend kwalitatief en poog om vas te stel hoe taalgebruik in die LL taalideologieë en taalpraktyke blootstel, en hoe tekens wat deur verskillende entiteite geproduseer word, handelinge van plekmaak openbaar.

Die bevindinge wys dat Engels oorheersend gebruik word in Independence Avenue se publieke en aanlyn ruimtes, en dat dit die werklike taalpraktyke van die inwoners weerspreek. Verder dui die bevindinge op 'n verdeling van publieke tekens in sones met uiteenlopende eienskappe: 'n sentrale sone wat meer eksklusiewe en toeriste-georiënteerde voorkom, en twee randsones wat in daarteenstaande areas van noodsaaklikheid. Die studie is waardevol omdat dit is die eerste is om te fokus op 'n LL in Namibië, en daarbenewens openbaar dit moontlike nadelige ideologieë en praktyke wat verder ondersoek en moontlik opgelos kan word.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Topic background

Most of us spend our lives traversing linguistic landscapes without taking note of their intricacies, meanings and effects. A linguistic landscape (henceforth LL) may be understood in basic terms according to Landry and Bourhis' (1997: 23) popularized definition as “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs”, these ranging from “public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, [to] public signs on government buildings” (ibid: 25). LLs, however, are more than mere representations of language, and reflect socio-cultural, political and economic realities and ideologies.

The objective of the present study is to investigate one such dynamic LL, namely Independence Avenue in the central business district (CBD) of Windhoek, Namibia. To what extent the LL reflects the language policy (henceforth LP) and real-life language practices of Namibians, and how signs are placed and designed by sign-producers in specific ways to “make” place, will be examined. Sign-producers are to be understood as those entities in the LL (whether individuals or small and larger businesses/organizations) who are the “owners” of signs, who either make these signs themselves, or commission other outside sources to make them. But sign-producers are no longer limiting themselves to only the physical concrete place, and producers of public signage are increasingly utilizing online platforms to promote themselves. That is why the LL is investigated in two realms, where both physical signage in Independence Avenue and signage in the online space is assessed.

Drawing theoretical and methodological applications from the fields of LL study, language policy (LP) and geosemiotics, I hope to discover how the language, placement and design of public signage in the LL is used to reveal certain ideologies and real-life practices, and affects our impression of the entities within that space. Public signage is ultimately one of many sources used by the individuals and groups within a space to make it socially meaningful. In doing so they participate in “place-making”, turning the more abstract and geometrically based idea of space into an experienced and lived-in place filled with meaning.

1.2 The location of the linguistic landscape

The LL chosen for investigation lies within the heart of Windhoek's CBD. As the capital city of Namibia, geographically situated at the very centre of the country, Windhoek is home to the greatest proportion of the population of Namibia, with 16.2% of the population residing in the Khomas region in which Windhoek is situated (Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) 2011: 7). It is a convergence point for politics, economics and commerce. Its bustling centrality also means that it attracts a significant number of tourists. In 2015 the country reported 1 519 618 foreign tourist arrivals, 38.9% of which visited for "holiday" purposes, with the most significant proportion of visitors from Africa being from Angola, and from outside of Africa from Germany (Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) 2015: III, 7). One might imagine that Windhoek's CBD would be one of several central attractions for tourists given its provision for a variety of goods and services.

The LL has been specifically limited the area of Independence Avenue, a main road that runs through the busiest part of the city. The start site of the LL begins where Nelson Mandela Avenue meets Independence Avenue (see point A in Figure 1), ending approximately 2.5 kilometres at the end of Independence Avenue, where it merges into Jan Jonker Street (see point B in Figure 1). Assessing the LL and collecting data of the signage within its area involved walking along this stretch of the LL and taking photographs of a myriad of signs. What followed was researching the online platforms of the businesses and organizations that display physical signage in the LL. The process of this data collection will be discussed in greater detail in the Methodology chapter.

The choice for this LL lies both in its centrality as well as its dynamic composition of business/organizations. The city is highly ethnically and linguistically diverse, and as a central point of the city Independence Avenue can act as a site of public representation of that diversity. Here we find small local businesses but also high rise buildings, government organizations, hotels and other big conglomerates, and thus this LL also provides a great variety of public signage that offers examples of how commercial and non-commercial businesses/organizations sometimes utilize public signs very differently.

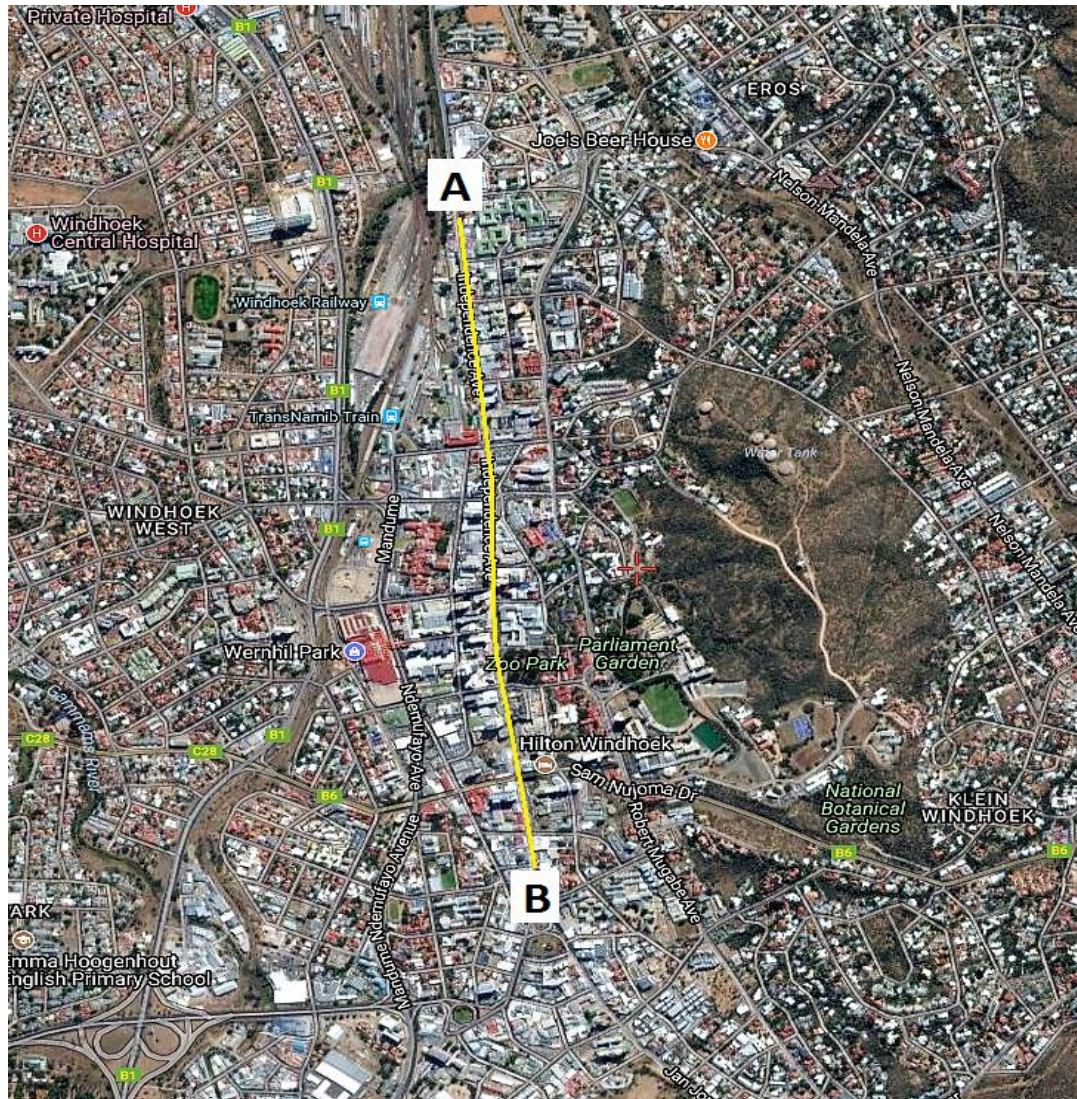


Figure 1: Satellite image of Independence Avenue

1.3 Research questions

The main objective of the research, broadly speaking, is to investigate and analyse the use of language in the LL by looking at the signage within its parameters, while at the same time also assessing how signs are placed and designed by the different commercial (i.e. those who sell products and services) and non-commercial (i.e. those with no financial profit objectives) entities within the LL. As a starting point the research falls under the general field of LL studies. In order to narrow down the scope of this investigation, the areas of analysis have been further divided to LP study (in this case how the LP is reflected in the LL) and geosemiotics. Against the backdrop of geosemiotics it is possible to assess the placement of signage and its function in the LL. LP study on the other hand takes on a different dimension, but I believe cannot be ignored given the unique language situation of the country in which the LL is situated. A country with a long history of former colonization, Namibia presents a rare case in the African content where the country's choice of official language (English) was not one of its former colonizers. This decision and the LP's real-life practices manifest themselves through the signage in the LL. These practices in turn reflect certain individual and collective ideologies. In order to assess the signage in the LL within an LP and geosemiotic context, and to discern the underlying choices and ideologies present in the LL, three main research questions have been determined:

- 1) To what extent does the LL of Independence Avenue in Windhoek's CBD reflect the Namibian language policy and the actual linguistic practices of Namibians?
- 2) How do the different types of commercial and non-commercial entities in the LL place and design their public signage and what does this reveal about their identities?
- 3) How does language use and the design of public signage compare between the physical space of the LL and the online domain?

1.4 Research rationale

During my third year of studying General Linguistics at the undergraduate level we were given an assignment that involved choosing a public domain in a region and determining how the region's LP influenced and was reflected in the signage of that domain. The task was assigned shortly before a university break in which I had planned to go home to Namibia. I had decided that investigating an LL here would be an interesting opportunity. I had chosen Independence Avenue because it was a site with a great number of public signs, and once I began the work I found myself struggling to keep to the maximum word count stipulated for the assignment and felt that a lot was left unsaid. I also believed that studying language in the public space could reveal important features of the influence of LP on ideologies and language practices and could provide a knowledge base for future career prospects in language planning and LP. When I began considering research topics for my Master's thesis the LL of Independence Avenue immediately came to mind and I decided that it was an opportunity for me to carry out an expanded study and increase my experience in the field. Having grown up in the country, I reasoned that I would also have a more personal understanding of the LL and its context, adding deeper insight to the analysis of the present study.

Another motivating factor for the choice of such a topic specifically in Namibia is that there are no (published) studies of public signage in an LL in the country. Having studied LP before, I knew that there already exist several LL studies in South Africa, but there is a clear gap in the literature in the context of Namibia. Once I had chosen my study location and began reading the relevant literature I also became aware that an increasing number of LL studies in recent years had begun to assess public signage in terms of geosemiotics. I felt that this new approach would yield intriguing new information about the LL, but I also did not want to focus exclusively on this study area and ignore LP considerations. Thus I decided that investigating the LL in the context of both these disciplines would provide more dynamic outcomes.

Finally, I noticed that LL studies either exclusively studied public signage in the physical space or exclusively studied online LLs (though these studies were few). I came to the conclusion that comparing how sign-producers use signs in the physical space and

additionally in the online realm would add an interesting dimension to my study that would make it more distinctive in the plethora of LL literature.

1.5 Chapter outline

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 provides a linguistic profile of Namibia and a background to its political history in order to better understand the environment of the LL. Here the ethnic and linguistic composition of Namibia's population is discussed, as well as how the country's history of colonization has influenced its LP. This is important for understanding why public signage in the LL reflects certain language use and ideologies. Included in this chapter is a discussion of Namibia's present LP, how it was developed and the critique thereof. In Chapter 3 the theoretical concepts of LL study are introduced before continuing onto Chapter 4, in which the theory of LP and geosemiotics relevant to the interdisciplinary approach of this study are discussed. In Chapter 5 the literature of LL study is reviewed, looking specifically at some of the early work done in the field, how it has evolved and what current theoretical and methodological progress is being made. In Chapter 6 the methodology for the investigation is discussed, explaining how data was collected, categorized and analysed, with a discussion of some of the obstacles encountered during data collection. In Chapter 7 I then provide the results of the data collection and analyse and discuss the data collected. Finally, in Chapter 8 conclusions regarding the findings are made and some future possibilities for research are considered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The field of LL study is a comparatively young one and so interdisciplinary in nature that it has historically had difficulty in establishing itself as a discipline in its own right. The LL has been studied in conjunction with various fields of study and against a backdrop of vastly differing theoretical approaches, from investigations into the relationship between LL and LP, multilingualism and ethnolinguistic vitality, to those concerned more specifically with geosemiotic, socio-cultural, political and economic factors.

LL study has had a relatively slow start, with one of the first publications on LL considered to be Rosenbaum et al. (1977). Intermittent studies appeared, but a significant rise in interest in the field seems to have developed after Landry and Bourhis' (1997) publication in which a more concrete definition of LL was introduced. In the past two decades LL study has seen an abundance of theoretical contributions and empirical investigations being published in books and numerous journals from the likes of the *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Space and Culture* and *Visual Communication*, to the recently introduced and pivotal *Linguistic Landscape*. In the present chapter some of the most insightful and commonly used works and articles in the field will be reviewed and discussed.

2.2 The foundation of linguistic landscape study

The present section sees the discussion of two influential works in the field of LL that were published before it saw a significant rise in scholarly attention, namely Spolsky and Cooper's contribution *The Languages of Jerusalem* (1991) and Landry and Bourhis' empirical study on ethnolinguistic vitality in various provinces of Canada (1997). Landry and Bourhis' work will be assessed first despite it being a more recent study, given that their publication was a pioneering contribution in providing a first concrete definition of LL. It is hard to find any work on LL that does not cite Landry and Bourhis' study. While older studies on public

signage in the LL certainly exist, such as that of Rosenbaum et al.'s (1977) study of the use and prevalence of English in the LL of Keren Kayemet Street in Jerusalem, Landry and Bourhis' contribution to LL study was a first attempt at a theoretical foundation for the field.

Their definition of LL (introduced in Chapter 1) is perhaps so commonly used and referred to because of its simplicity and one-dimensional contextualization. Described as “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs” (1997: 23), the first concern with their delineation, however, is the limitation to signage that contains written language. Itagi and Singh (in Backhaus 2007: 10) argue that LL investigations should not show such a “bias toward written language”. In the ever diversifying research of LL, particularly in combination with a semiotic approach, this definition is too limiting. In the following chapter some broader and more abstract definitions of the LL are presented, all being of great value to the field and each serving their purposes in different theoretical and methodological approaches. The focus of the present investigation of the LL is nonetheless on written public signage in an attempt to limit the scope of study. For the analysis of the research written signs are especially important because they are visible markers of language use. Landry and Bourhis (1997) have also provided, while somewhat contested, a useful distinction on the functions of public signage in the LL, namely that of the informational and symbolic function, which are discussed in Section 4.3.1 of Chapter 4.

Spolsky and Cooper (1991) had set their sights on Jerusalem, assessing the choice of language of passers-by and shopkeepers in the Old City and dedicating an entire chapter to the investigation of street signs and what they may reveal about the language use and vitality of a given territory. While they do not posit a definition for the field as Landry and Bourhis do, they do offer an important taxonomy of signs, distinguishing between eight major signs with further possible distinctive categorizations, thus offering a more in-depth analysis of sign types. The eight major categories that they include are: street signs, advertising signs, warning signs/prohibitions, building names, informative signs, commemorative plaques, signs labelling objects, and graffiti (Spolsky and Cooper 1991: 76-81). These categories are however not necessarily mutually exclusive, and thus a commemorative plaque may also be informative. They add another method of classification, distinguishing signs according to their material and physical form, such as a sign typed or written on paper, or an engraved bronze or metal sign (ibid: 81). This is an early attempt at drawing attention to the materiality of signs, which has been increasingly seen in more recent research on LL (to be discussed

henceforth in Section 2.4). The authors also consider a categorization according to the language or number of languages present on a sign, with a further distinction including the presumed language of the owner and readers of the sign (ibid: 81). Unlike Landry and Bourhis, Spolsky and Cooper acknowledge that many other taxonomies are possible (ibid: 81), and provide a greater range of sign classifications.

Spolsky and Cooper also identify three important conditions for signs, to be discussed in detail in Section 4.3.1 of Chapter 4. These conditions, whilst seemingly obvious, are clear markers for what we need to look out for and take into consideration when analysing public signage in an LL. While only one of their chapters is dedicated to public signage specifically, the entire book is an important contribution to the field of LL, as Spolsky and Cooper acknowledge that the “study of signs and public language can contribute to an understanding of the various historical, sociological, political, and economic forces that meet in a community” (ibid: 148). Indeed they limit themselves not to an ethnolinguistic vitality investigation as Landry and Bourhis do, but look at the LL of the Old City of Jerusalem against a thorough historical background, with consideration of LP and language planning as observed within it, as well as language learning and an investigation of Arab-Jewish relations by looking at socio-linguistic patterns.

2.3 Early approaches in linguistic landscape study

In the short time span that has passed between the two works discussed in the previous section and the present day, a plethora of theoretical and methodological contributions have been made to the study of LL. It is apt to begin by introducing the first significant anthology in the field, a collection of empirical studies compiled by Durk Gorter (2006). The book is not only important because it is the first in the field to present a collection of studies in the area, but also because Gorter offers us for the first time an overview of LL and some of the methodological challenges of data collection in LL study (Gorter 2006: 1-3). The collection includes four separate contributions, the first a study by Ben-Rafael et al. entitled *Linguistic Landscape as Construction of the Public Space: The Case of Israel*. The authors investigate the degree of visibility on private and public signs of the three major languages of Israel, namely Israel-Hebrew, Arabic and English. The second study is Thom Huebner’s exploration

of the LL of Bangkok in which the author assesses 15 Bangkok neighbourhoods and discovers the language contact, language mixing and language dominance present within the areas. The third contribution is that of Peter Backhaus' study of the LL of Tokyo, later included and expanded in his monograph *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo* (2007). Finally, Cenoz and Gorter look at two streets in two multilingual cities, one in Friesland (Netherlands) and the other in Basque Country (Spain), and explore how minority languages and English are represented here.

While this collection of works provides a first look at empirical studies on LL and insightful conclusions about what language use in the LL may imply about certain sociolinguistic conditions, the work seems distinctly one-dimensional. The authors focus their analysis exclusively on top-down versus bottom-up signage and a quantitative assessment. While a quantitative approach can certainly demonstrate interesting trends, the scholars in this anthology concentrate on the LL in a static, synchronic manner that has been strongly criticized by Blommaert (2013; 2016). Their interpretation of language presence is also flawed, considering the presence of languages in public signage as an indication of language vitality and power. While this might sometimes be the reality, various scholars have pointed out that the degree of visibility of languages in an LL does not necessarily reflect their vitality (Rodríguez 2013: 112; Barni & Bagna 2015: 10; Blackwood 2015: 39; Blommaert 2016). Although the work in this collection seems somewhat static, at the very least it is cohesive, and Gorter ends by considering the various avenues of research in the field and acknowledges its multidisciplinary nature (2006: 86). The author points out that with technological advancements ease of research, accessibility, speed and quality of photographs will improve and broaden the scope of study of LLs (2006: 83-84).

Following this publication, Gorter produces an overview of the field of LL in collaboration with Jasone Cenoz (2007). The short paper is useful for newcomers to the field as a basic description of the study of LL and its history, discussing major contributions in the area, as well as its interdisciplinary nature and future potential. What I do not fully accept is their brief section on the "Problems and Difficulties" of LL research. This heading in itself holds negative connotations, and while there is indeed "a lot of work to be done at the theoretical level" (Gorter & Cenoz 2007: 8), I see what they term as problems and difficulties rather as opportunities. Particularly their inclusion of "the dynamic nature of the linguistic landscape" as a problematic feature of the field that makes its "study more difficult" seems based in the

wrong approach to LL research. Their view of mobile and ever-changing signs as an obstacle in the study of LL is based in old-school, synchronic approaches that have recently been criticized (Moriarty 2014; Blommaert 2013, 2016). The fluid nature of public signage has increasingly been incorporated into the core of some research questions into the LL, where places and signs have been realized as mobile and constantly changing (Stroud & Mpendukana 2009; Krase 2011; Blommaert 2013; Stroud & Jegels 2013; Jaworski 2014; Peck & Banda 2014; Pietikäinen 2014). The mobility and dynamic nature of LL should thus not be seen as an impediment, but rather as an opportunity for more fruitful theoretical and methodological engagement.

This brings me to Backhaus' (2007) monograph *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*. In a foreword by Spolsky, he identifies Backhaus' book as the "first serious attempt to define the field and to investigate its problematic methodologies" (Backhaus 2007: xi). I agree here with Spolsky, as Backhaus' work is indeed comprehensive and more insightful both methodologically and theoretically compared to Gorter's (2006) collection. Backhaus provides us with a brief and clear account of what signs are, the potential in LL research, and introduces older and, at the time, current studies on LL. Moreover, the author addresses some of the methodological challenges in the field, identifying three main considerations in the exploration of public signage, asking who is in charge of linguistic landscaping, who this is intended for, and *quo vadis* (or what do signs reveal about the diachronic development of a city's linguistic condition?) (Backhaus 2007: 57-60). He additionally points out three main problems that LL researchers face in data collection: 1) establishing a suitable survey area, 2) identifying and choosing survey items, and 3) distinguishing the linguistic properties of these items (ibid: 61).

While Backhaus' work is certainly a valuable contribution, and at the time was the first to concretely identify theoretical and methodological challenges and opportunities in the field, his case study on the LL of Tokyo is distinctly fixed and quantitative, and reminiscent of work done in Gorter (2006). A quantitative approach can certainly be useful and reveals linguistic patterns in an LL, but as Blommaert (2013: 40-41) points out, Backhaus focuses so intently on numbers and describing these that he misses any significant ethnographic assessment. The author makes no noteworthy attempt of assessing what the figures reveal about socio-cultural conditions, and demonstrates another example of counting the visibility of languages and interpreting this as vitality.

The development of LL study following the works of the likes of Gorter (2006) and Backhaus (2007) has seen a broadening of theoretical and methodological approaches and enlightening shifts in the interpretations of LL. Contributions in the field have taken on more critical perspectives of the relationship between language and signage, and of the most important collections, and still relevant nearly a decade later, is that of Shohamy and Gorter's (2009) *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery*. They emphasize what had previously been left somewhat neglected in the study of LL, namely the role of people – the sign producers, readers and interpreters. In their introductory chapter they point out that online and virtual spaces, not just physical ones, deserve to be investigated and open up new questions and theoretical considerations in the study of LL. The authors also consider what LL really is, asking if it should only be limited to written language, and question the importance of images, sounds, buildings, clothes and people in researching an LL.

Their collection is divided into five parts, the first including chapters from scholars with varying theoretical perspectives. The second part concerns itself with methodological issues, with an interesting chapter by Malinowski regarding the authorship of signs, asking who puts up the signs and why. Part three of the collection dedicates itself to studies on LPs and how these affect and are reflected in the LL, and part four moves on to concentrate on identity and language awareness on individual, collective and national levels. Finally, part five offers some prospective insights into possibilities for further research in the field. Here new suggestions are made as to what we can study in the LL, Hanauer for instance looks at the LL of a microbiology laboratory, and Pennycook focuses on the semiotics of graffiti.

Finally, Spolsky makes an especially significant contribution, questioning whether LL really requires a theory or is simply a collection of random methodologies that study public signage. He ventures to say that perhaps LL investigations should either fall exclusively under the study of signs (semiotics) or literacy, which in either case would involve an increase in the number and type of signs to be studied. It is indeed sometimes difficult to distinguish where the theoretical boundaries of LL lie because of its multidisciplinary nature, but it is precisely this that makes it such a fruitful area of study. It means that the study of language in relation to place can move beyond factors such as ethnolinguistic vitality and even written signage and can offer a more open and multifaceted sociolinguistic approach.

2.4 New investigations into linguistic landscapes

Soon after Shohamy and Gorter's (2009) contribution, Stroud and Mpendukana, two other notable scholars in the field of both LL and geosemiotics, produced two articles investigating the LL of Khayelitsha. The work is of significance because it is one of the few first examples of investigations into the LL of townships rather than cities and one with a more ethnographic, qualitative approach. In the first publication (2009) they concentrate on landscape as "semiotic moments in the social circulation of discourses" and look at how language and meanings are represented differently across semiotic artefacts (such as written signs) and technologies (Stroud & Mpendukana 2009: 363). The authors concentrate specifically on commercial signage, and continue to do so in their later publication. They investigate how consumer identities are expressed in the LL and how this plays a role in the "continued marginalization of the poor", paying special attention to how signage is produced thematically as either local or global, traditional or modern (Stroud & Mpendukana 2010: 473). The authors take a departure from the traditional approaches to LL study that had typically focused on multilingualism in the LL and discovering ethnolinguistic vitality. In later work Mpendukana also contributes a chapter to Bock and Mheta's (2014) collection, *Language, Society and Communication: An Introduction*. The author's contribution has been used in the discussion of LL theory in the following chapter in Section 3.2 because of its clarity, where Mpendukana introduces the different scales of signage in an LL, the typologies of signage, and revisits the geosemiotic notions of sites of necessity and luxury that he and Stroud (2009) discuss in earlier work. I make use of his straightforward introduction on the type of signage we find in an LL in the methodological approach to my investigation, as I will divulge in greater detail in the Methodology chapter.

The geosemiotic approach implemented by Stroud and Mpendukana has since been increasingly used in studies of LL. The foundation of geosemiotic theory was first concretely established by Scollon and Scollon (2003) and further applied in a collection compiled by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010). These sources have been predominantly used for the theoretical background of geosemiotics in Section 4.3 of Chapter 4, as they are the first major contributions to the study of LL against a semiotic context, and the theories presented in each complement each other. Numerous articles, alongside those of Stroud and Mpendukana, have since been produced that approach LL with geosemiotic theory as a backdrop. These include

investigations by scholars such as Jackie Lou (2007), who takes on a geosemiotic analysis in discovering the revitalization of Washington DC's Chinatown, Denis and Pontille (2010), who determine what the placement of signs in the subways of Paris reveals about the ecology and ethnography of these places, or Jerome Krase (2011), who uses spatial semiotic analysis to determine how "vernacular" urban landscapes are changing as a result of globalization.

The possibilities for investigation in this area are limitless and dynamic. Studies such as Ico Maly's (2016) analysis of public signage to discern social changes in Ostend, Belgium, Lilian Knorr's (2016) exploration of how visual culture (including signage) creates informal borders that separate distinct racial group territories in the city of Baltimore, and Victoria Kerry's (2016) discovery of gender power relations and the "construction of hegemonic masculinity" in the semiotic landscape of a CrossFit gym, demonstrate that LL study combined with geosemiotic analysis can produce intriguing themes about people and society. These studies look at the LL not to discover ideologies about languages or the language vitality as older studies do, but rather use language in the public space on signs to explore entirely different sociological topics.

In a monograph by Michelle Metro-Roland (2011), the semiotic orientation of LL is related to tourists and the city. Metro-Roland's work may firstly fall under tourism studies, but the author's explanation of semiotic theory and core focus on assessing the effect and impression of the urban landscape on tourists through public signage makes it a valuable contribution to LL study as well. The author investigates three landscapes in Budapest, using an interesting methodology of analysing photographs of the city, including that of signage in the three places, which not she herself, but participant tourists have taken. She emphasizes that LL is a key element in the experience of cultural tourism and "crucial for the smooth functioning of any literate society" (ibid: 75). Through her work we are presented with a new approach to investigating the LL, where it may be considered a possible meeting of "cityscape" and "touristscape" and where public signage can affect not only the local, but the foreign.

A further individual contribution is that of Blommaert's (2013) work entitled *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscape: Chronicles of Complexity*. Much like Backhaus (2007) the author discusses the development of LL study and its potential, but discusses signs also in a historical and semiotic and spatial scope. He highlights the shift of LL study to a more diachronic approach, criticizing older approaches that view the LL and signage as fixed

in a specific time and place. The author's work echoes that of recent developments in the field that consider LL as mobile and highly dynamic, arguing that LL study should not reflect static conditions, but social, cultural and political changes and patterns (Blommaert 2013: 3). This resonates with Cooper's (1989) notions of social change (discussed in detail in Section 4.2.3 of Chapter 4), namely that society is never in equilibrium and that one source of social change, the physical environment (such as an LL), can induce and be reflective of such change.

Blommaert posits that public signs "both reflect and regulate the structure of the space in which they operate" (2013: 39), and finds that in his study on the neighbourhood of Berchem in Antwerp, Belgium, signs provide a far better "diagnostic of change and transformations" compared to field notes and interviews (*ibid*: 16). The author additionally introduces new categories of signs, the three main types being a) permanent signs (such as road and shop signs, landmarks, b) event-related signs (such as posters, flyers, for-sale signs), and c) "noise" (inscriptions that are not present in the LL out of deliberate linguistic landscaping, such as writing on vehicles (*ibid*: 53). He includes graffiti in the first category, though I would prefer to classify it under the second, given that we often see graffiti being removed (painted over) or changing (where new graffiti covers older graffiti). Overall, Blommaert provides a critical analysis of research in LL and identifies some key elements to include in investigations in this field, such as the historical and semiotic and spatial background and conditions of an LL. In a collaborative publication with Maly (2014), Blommaert also introduces a methodological technique to approaching LL, namely Ethnolinguistic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (ELLA), but this will be discussed further in the Methodology chapter.

Closer to home, an increasing number of studies on LLs in South Africa (including those of Stroud and Mpendukana (2009, 2010)) have been published in recent years. These have typically also taken on an approach to LL investigation with geosemiotic analysis. Tessa Dowling produces two publications that focus on language visibility and its implications in the LL without such a geosemiotic consideration, but nonetheless offers insight on the language practices and situations of unexplored LLs in Cape Town and Johannesburg. In an earlier publication Dowling assesses the language use and what meanings this usage reflects in various LLs across Cape Town, from more suburban areas like Sea Point, Muizenberg, Kirstenbosch, to the townships of Langa and Masiphumelele (2012), and in a later one looks at the presence (and absence) of languages in the public signage of the township of Diepsloot

in Johannesburg. Amiena Peck and Felix Banda (2014), on the other hand, investigate the theme of mobility and how migration changes the LL of Observatory in Cape Town, while William Kelleher and Tommaso Milani focus on how signage plays a part in place-making in the Bosman neighbourhood in Pretoria (2016), and Mehita Iqani and Gilles Baro offer an interesting geosemiotic investigation of architectural adverts (large outdoor billboards) in the city LL of Johannesburg, and argue that advertising is used here to “cloak realities of urban neglect and inequality” (2017: 102). Work by Theodorus Du Plessis (2012) additionally provides interesting insights into rural LLs, where the author investigates the role that LP has in changes in the LLs of three rural towns in the Xhariep region in the southern Free State, providing one of the few examples of investigations into changes of public signage in the LL from one time period to another.

Stroud and Jegels’ (2013) study on semiotic landscapes, concentrated in the township of Manenberg near Cape Town, is particularly important methodologically. The authors investigate how signs are read and incorporated into personal narratives of place, and emphasize the multi-layered and mobile nature of such a place. Moreover, they provide interesting methodical approaches to investigating the LL, using narrated walking, in which informants are asked to guide the interviewer around the landscape and discuss the signage within the area. They also assess the materiality of different signage and use “genres” to differentiate its sources. This includes the “container” genre, where signs are factory produced and sponsored, and the “personalization” genre, which includes personal embellishments and where the identity of the service provider (who then typically is also the sign-maker) features prominently (ibid: 18-20). Their study is valuable because it introduces an interesting methodology of walking through place with an inhabitant (the locals of Manenberg) who can more intimately relate how people interact with people, signs with signs, and signs with people in a landscape. We see this similarly repeated in Lou’s (2017) geosemiotic analysis of three markets in Hong Kong, who, as part of her methodology, walked with her research participants as they navigated these places and recorded these walks with a camera. It is clear to see from Stroud and Jegels’ (2013) work and that of others (discussed above) that LL study in South Africa has received significant attention. Contrastingly, as mentioned in the Introduction chapter, there are no published investigations on LL study in Namibia to be found, and this, in conjunction with its accessibility and proximity, is part of the reason I chose to focus the study on an LL here.

The developments in LL research are refreshing when we consider the multitude of studies that have focused on multilingualism in the LL and ethnolinguistic vitality (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Gorter 2006; Backhaus 2007; Lanza & Woldemariam 2014; Tan 2014; Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael 2015; Grbavac 2015; Fekede & Gemechu 2016; Mirvahedi 2016; Rowland 2016; Nikolaou 2017). These studies, including that of work done in part three of Shohamy and Gorter's collection (2009) that focuses on LP and the LL, are nonetheless relevant to my investigation given that some have also taken LP into consideration in their analysis of LL. In light of this, as will be seen in Section 4.2 of the discussion of LP theory, predominant reference has been made to Spolsky (2004) and Shohamy (2006), as I find these works both comprehensive and easily accessible and readable. Particularly Shohamy (2006), who includes a whole chapter on language in public spaces, provides important and clear insight as to how LLs can be used as a mechanism for LPs.

Further new insights into LL research, though unfortunately still minimal in number, include investigations into online signage. As for the present study, the significant gap of research into online LLs means on the one hand that there is only limited literature for comparison, but on the other the opportunity to introduce new research to this area of study in the field. Ivković and Lotherington (2009) are the first to address this potentially rich domain of research (see Section 3.3 in the following chapter). The authors state that the VLL is largely analogous to the physical LL and is made meaningful through CMC on various different online platforms (*ibid*). Importantly, they also make the first distinctions between the physical LL and the VLL, stating that signage of the latter can be updated much faster (and regularly) and at a much cheaper cost than of signage of the former (*ibid*: 19). They continue to point out an obvious conclusion from these observations, arguing that while the physical LL is more stable (though signs here are also prone to mobility) and can be lived in, the VLL is far less fixed and cannot be inhabited in a real sense (*ibid*: 19). But in much the same way that individuals and communities engage in and express their identities in the physical LL, so do online users in the VLL.

Ivković and Lotherington also make the claim that English is the “lingua franca of the electronic universe”, which they support with findings of the number of Wiki articles per language and the number of internet users per language in millions found in 2008 (2009: 27). This resonates with what Robert Troyer later posits about the Thai VLL in a 2012 publication. Troyer (2012), who partly makes reference to Ivković and Lotherington's work,

focuses his study on the advertising that appears on Thai newspaper websites. The author draws on Huebner's (2006) study of multilingual signage in Bangkok and expands it to include online signage. The author comes to the conclusion that English is often favoured over other languages in the advertising of Thai online newspapers, and that it is typically used to associate products and services with "modernity, globalization, mass communication and media, commerce and wealth", while Thai is used to create a more personal connection between the advertising source and the reader (ibid: 110). Troyer's analysis is largely quantitative, and his and Ivković and Lotherington's work focuses on language use in the VLL with specific attention on the use of English. Although the present study similarly assesses the language use of online signage of entities found in the physical LL, it distinguishes itself by also incorporating a geosemiotic-based analysis of the design features of such signage.

Overall, new and older approaches have continued to emerge in recent studies of LL, making it a promising field with endless opportunities for investigation. The growing emphasis on the meaning of signs and their placement, and the role of people in making and interpreting signs, especially broadens the scope of study and opens new insights into LL that move beyond simply exploring multilingualism and ethnolinguistic vitality.

2.5 Critique in linguistic landscape study

As discussed, the nature of LL study has been incredibly interdisciplinary and as a relatively young field has struggled to delineate theoretical and methodological approaches. Moriarty (2014) and Blackwood (2015) point out that the multimodality of signage has to be taken into account in LL investigations and reiterate what older studies (Backhaus 2007; Gorter and Cenoz 2007) have said about the difficulty of determining a survey area and sign items and how to categorize these. Both authors, as well as Barni and Bagna (2015), stress that language in the LL should be seen as a reflection of ideologies, instead of simply as a case of degree of vitality through visibility (or absence). Moriarty (2014) and Blackwood (2015) particularly emphasize the importance of a qualitative methodological approach in data collection and analysis in LL study, Blackwood especially voting for a symbiotic approach, where quantitative data collection contextualizes language use and qualitative assessment

avoids superficial conclusions about language visibility and language vitality where that happens to be the focus of a study (2015: 38).

Blommaert (2016: 7), in his review of the first volume of *Linguistic Landscape*, also laments the complete lack of published research on online LLs in what should be an enlightening edition, and emphasizes the unlimited theoretical and methodological potential of the “virtual” linguistic domain, and that the reality of globalization cannot be understood without an engagement in this area. In the online magazine DiggIt, of which Blommaert and Maly represent two of several editors, brief mention is made of the notion that LL may be found both in the “offline” and “online” world, but no further articles discussing the online world can be found here (2016). I myself have only found limited examples of investigations into online LL (Ivković & Lotherington 2009; Troyer 2012). A rise in interest in this area of LL is foreseeable and certainly necessary, which is why I found it important to also consider how different producers of signs in the LL that I investigate use language and advertise their goods and/or services online (if they do so additionally).

Blommaert (2016) continues to critique Barni and Bagna’s contribution to the first issue of *Linguistic Landscape*. Barni and Bagna (2015), in their introduction to the first volume of the pivotal journal, highlight that LL study has taken a “critical turn”, becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and evolving from predominantly quantitative methodology to qualitative assessments. As Blommaert (2016: 3) points out, however, in what way this turn is necessarily “critical” they do not make clear, and they ignore the methodological approach of ELLA (which will be expanded upon in the Methodology chapter), which seeks to aid the ethnographic-historical analysis of an LL and would provide a more diachronic development of LL study. I also struggle to agree with their opinion of cities according to Chríst’s (in Barni & Bagna 2015: 9) description as “the most interesting and significant sources for examining and interpreting linguistic dynamics”. This disregards the intriguing LLs of economically poorer areas such as townships, or more rural landscapes. Banda and Jamaina (2015) demonstrate that rural LLs, in conjunction with a semiotic approach, can reflect highly diverse language situations and variations in meaning-making when we look beyond written signage and include faded and unscripted signboards, fauna and flora, mounds, dwellings, abandoned structures, skylines, and village and bush paths.

Much like Spolsky (in Shohamy and Gorter (2009), refer back to Section 2.3), Joshua Nash (2016) also questions the legitimacy of LL study as a field in its own right. The author approaches this query from a different angle, exploring the relationship between LL study and landscape study. He argues that “language demands landscape, and landscape expects language”, with the main point being that one cannot be studied without consideration of the other (2016: 380). He ponders whether LL as a separate subfield would be too complex, and if such a subfield is necessary if sociolinguistic, applied linguistic analysis and landscape analysis are done adequately in combination, or if by defining it as a subfield we broaden its scope to include, amongst other research areas, landscape studies (ibid: 382). Personally, I prefer to see it develop in this latter option, as a broad subfield under the discipline of sociolinguistics. The field has introduced its own journal, *Linguistic Landscape*, after all.

The focus in LL study is ultimately on language as visible in public signage, which makes it unique from pure landscape studies or geosemiotics for example, which focuses on the meaning of the placement of signs, and not necessarily their language. Blommaert specifically describes LL as a type of “diagnostic tool” for discovering the ethnographic and linguistic realities of a space (2013:2), and LL can be understood in this way, serving to illustrate sociolinguistic, cultural, political and economic conditions of a given territory. But it is more than simply a thing used to diagnose, and is ultimately a field that explores language in all its forms with all its actors and interpreters. LL can be investigated from various angles, such as the analysis of the visibility and power of languages in the landscape, LP and planning, semiotic and more specifically geosemiotic approaches, language and gender or race as expressed in a landscape, amongst others. I believe that the “critical turn” of LL study should, in light of its broad and dynamic nature, not only be thought of as the shift from synchronic to diachronic understanding of LL and its increased interdisciplinary richness, but a move towards investigating not only written signage in the LL, but all signage (including that of the online sphere) that reflects or mediates language and sociolinguistic-oriented ideologies.

Chapter 3: Theory in linguistic landscape study

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I introduced the frequently used definition of LL as put forward by Landry and Bourhis (1997). While the approach that emerges from this definition has been critiqued as “bias[ed] toward written language” (Itagi and Singh quoted in Backhaus 2007: 10), I will retain it as a broad description for the theoretical framework of my study as I do indeed focus on written signage in the LL. Backhaus (2007) and Blommaert (2013) describe the LL in a similar vein, both referring to LL as a place where language is displayed in its written form on public signs. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the analysis of written signage is not limited to the physical territory of Independence Avenue, but also considers public signage in the online world. The present study thus expands on the way in which Landry and Bourhis (1997) use the term LL, not limiting the analysis of public signage to the six types of signs they distinguish, but also incorporating the signage of online platforms.

Within this chapter some of the basic theoretical concepts pertaining to LL are discussed, and why this area of study suits itself so well to a multidisciplinary approach of investigation will be divulged. Many scholars have pointed out the inevitable interdisciplinary nature of LL studies (Gorter 2006; Backhaus 2007; Gorter and Cenoz 2007; Blommaert 2013; Gorter 2013; Moriarty 2014; Barni and Bagna 2015; Ben-Rafael and Ben-Rafael 2015), taking on approaches from studies of multilingualism and ethnolinguistic vitality, LP and planning, geosemiotics, landscape studies and tourism studies. This feature of the field accounts for my choice in including both LP study and geosemiotics in my research of the LL.

3.2 What is the linguistic landscape?

I introduced a definition of LL in the introductory chapter as formulated by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in their pivotal paper *Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study*. Since then this definition has been used by many scholars as a starting point for their investigations into LL. Increasingly, however, this delineation of the LL has been

criticized as too narrow and fixed (Moriarty 2014: 458). Resultantly, new and broader definitions of LL have developed in scholarly work. Ben-Rafael et al. consider it as “any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or private business in a given geographical location” (2006: 14), Blommaert (2013) describes it as “publicly visible bits of written language”, and Moriarty more broadly refers to LL as “a site where language, together with other semiotic resources, is involved in the symbolic construction of multilingual spaces” (2014: 457). The consensus, however, is that it is the study of the language of public signs (whether written or otherwise).

As Mpendukana puts it, the LL is ultimately a “space made meaningful as a result of human interactions, inscriptions, buildings and other structures; it encompasses the accumulation of social practices and historical meanings which people attach to that space” (2014: 464). Inscriptions are the written signs in the LL, and are “the result of intentional human meaning-making activities” (ibid: 466). While semiotically speaking one can look at both verbal and non-verbal signs in the LL, most studies in the field of LL have focused on verbal (written) signage. No justifications have been given for this approach, but one might assume that it has to do with the notion of written signage being the most directly visible expression of language in an LL. This is largely why the present study focuses on written signs.

Mpendukana’s notion of LL as “space made meaningful” (2014: 464) resonates with the distinctions prominent geography scholars Yi-Fu Tuan (1979) and Tim Cresswell (2004) make between space and place. As per the title of this study, how public signage is used as a method of “making” place is examined. Where space is considered a more or less abstract concept with geometric features (Tuan 2014: 388-389) that has areas and volumes (Cresswell 2004: 8), place is a “meaningful location” in which humans produce and consume meaning through various social actions (Cresswell 2004: 7). Tuan states that place ordinarily means two things: one’s position in society and spatial location (1979: 408). The author argues that place in reality is more than the basic notions of these two facets, but a rich collection of features that make it considerably more meaningful and give place a “spirit” or “personality” that only people within it can create and sense (1979: 409-410). While Cresswell claims that place and landscape are essentially different because the former is lived in and the latter is not, and that landscapes are instead what we “look” at (2004: 10-11), I contend that the concept of landscape in LL study is to be understood not only as a looked-at space but as place too. The descriptions that the two geography scholars provide of how space is made

meaningful by the humans within it, ultimately creating place, is precisely what Mpendukana claims about LL. In LL study we focus on one of many “human meaning-making activities”, investigating how public signage is both used to create meaning (and thus place) and reflects it.

Mpendukana adds that LL can be referred to as signage in particular places at different scales (2014: 466). These scales may be divided into more or less fixed places, such as a notice on a display board in a café (micro scale), or that of a whole city (macro scale). The LL can also appear on a less static scale and may be mobile, such as the signage on vehicles, flyers that get handed out to passers-by, or the signage on the clothing that people wear. Furthermore, Mpendukana makes further distinctions about the classes of signage we find in LLs, referring to these as typologies of signage, where signage may either be top-down or bottom-up (ibid: 468). What lies behind determining these typologies is establishing the producers of the signage. Top-down signage is produced by professional or official institutions and companies or government (ibid: 468). These signs usually involve greater economic investment and are professionally designed. Bottom-up signage on the other hand comes from less formal and more grass-roots sources, such as small shop owners, individuals advertising their products or job services on hand-made notices, or even graffiti (ibid: 468).

Mpendukana (2014) continues to distinguish signage in the LL in a geosemiotic orientation. As said, geosemiotic theory will be discussed in greater detail further on in this chapter, but for now the important point to consider about the signage in light of this area of study is how different places influence how a sign is made, and how the placement of a sign can contribute to how it is read (ibid: 469). The location and placement of a sign is thus an important part of interpreting it. Mpendukana (2014) recaps what he and Christopher Stroud introduced as “sites of luxury” and “sites of necessity” in earlier collaborative work (Stroud & Mpendukana 2009). Sites of luxury are usually locations in which signage (often in the form of billboards or similar larger advertising signage) is not necessarily in immediate or close physical contact with the product(s) or service(s) that it is advertising, and may be found in areas such as shopping malls or along highways (Mpendukana 2014: 469-470). The signage in these sites typically promotes official products and services, public awareness campaigns or products and services that are non-essential (for e.g. technological gadgets, home ware, sports equipment, alcohol, vacation packages, etc.) (ibid: 470). Sites of necessity, as the term implies, contain signage that typically advertise products and services that are necessities and

essential to daily life (for e.g. food, common toiletries like toothpaste and soap, service stations) (ibid: 469). Signage of this sort is usually found along minor or secondary roads and is designed to attract people who know exactly what it is that they want to buy and where to find it, and can often be found precisely in the same place where the product or service is being sold (ibid: 469).

Discussing the typologies and geosemiotic features of signage in the LL is particularly relevant because it is these factors that are considered when assessing the place-making meanings behind the LL and the variations across different signage. In distinguishing between the signage of the commercial-scape and the official-scape, these typologies and the distinction between sites of luxury and necessity are used for deeper evaluation. The method and reasoning for doing so will be discussed in greater detail further on in the Methodology chapter.

3.3 Linguistic landscape online

There has, thus far, been very little written on public signage in the online world in the context of LL. Dejan Ivković and Heather Lotherington (2009) offer us the first concrete distinction between the physical LL and the online LL, or what they term the “virtual” LL (VLL). The distinction between the two is relevant to the present study as signage both in the physical domain of Independence Avenue and in its parallel online sphere is examined. The two forms of LL are akin to each other in the sense that signs are used here to create and reflect meaning. Ivković & Lotherington point out that virtual terminology such as “information highway”, “chat room”, “virtual tour”, “surfing” the net and “visiting” a page, while not actual physical entities or actions, show that we “transfer lived experiences onto the virtual domain” (2009: 20). The clear difference then is that one is based in physical geography, and the other in a virtual world in which computer-mediated communication (CMC) takes place (ibid: 17-18). Nonetheless, in both spaces signs are part of the social actions of individuals, groups and communities (cyber-communities included) that create place.

The VLL is different from the physical LL, for one, because we can learn and use a “dead” language such as Latin, where this is unlikely to occur in the physical domain (ibid: 19). As such Ivković & Lotherington argue that the VLL is linguistically more dynamic than the physical LL, but does not necessarily reflect the spoken language situations of the real world (ibid). In the VLL signs can also be updated on a day-to-day basis at generally low costs and can thus change constantly (ibid). In the physical LL, while transitory signs such as those of advertisements on moving vehicles, posters, flyers and roadworks exist, signage is typically more fixed and stable (ibid). Physical LLs are also places in which individuals can immerse themselves “[residing and] interacting linguistically within demarcated spatial boundaries”, whereas VLLs are uninhabitable (ibid). Although individuals may solidify their membership in a cyber-community, the VLL is “delocalized” and anyone from anywhere (with access to the internet) can enter and engage in it (ibid).

For the present study I want to point out that both physical and virtual LLs naturally have limitations to access, however. To navigate and see the signage of the physical LL we have to be physically present within it. That limits the audience of signage significantly, specifically to those living and/or working within or in proximity to the LL, or foreigners with the means and resources to travel there temporarily. The VLL, on the other hand, is broadly-speaking assumed to be accessible to all people from all over the world with just the click of a mouse or a tap on a mobile device. The reality, however, is that not everyone has access to the internet and as such the VLL does not necessarily always have a broader audience than the physical LL.

In assessing the differences between in the physical LL and the online LL I want to emphasize that one is not better suited to public signage than the other. Rather, each offers opportunities to use language, space and design in sometimes entirely different yet equally creative ways. In broadening LL study by not only including the analysis of physical but virtual signage as well, more insight can be gained about the language practices and place-making activities of individuals, groups and communities. This is especially important given the great surge of technological advancements experienced in recent decades and humans’ increasing access to and use of the online world.

Chapter 4: An interdisciplinary approach to linguistic landscape study

4.1 Introduction

The dynamic nature of LL means that it can be studied from a variety of different approaches. The study of LL in relation to LP has been incorporated early on in the literature, and geosemiotic investigations into the field have increased in more recent years. Both these theoretical frameworks are important to the exploration of Independence Avenue. Namibia's intriguing linguistic profile and history mean that language use in the LL is an intricate and complex matter that merits investigations into how public signage may be reflective of LP stipulations and real-life language practices. Signs in the LL also vary greatly at times in terms of their placement and design (part of geosemiotic considerations), these being more than simply physical features but also markers of identity. The incorporation of LP theory (addressed in the following section) and geosemiotics (discussed in Section 4.3) in the present study provides a broader perspective of the sociolinguistic nature of Independence Avenue.

4.2 Concepts in language policy theory

As discussed, LL study can take on many different approaches. I have, for the first part of the present research, chosen to consider its relation to the field of LP research. As a first simple delineation, Spolsky defines LP as "all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity" (2004: 9). Why and how these practices, beliefs and decisions are implemented, and their real-life implications, are naturally complex. A useful point of departure is to distinguish between overt, explicit LPs and covert, de facto ones. In the former case an LP may be plainly recognized and stated in official documents such as certain bills or in a constitution. Article 3 of Namibia's Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990), as will be discussed in Chapter 5, is one such LP, where certain language practices and management plans are clearly stated. Covert LPs on the other hand may manifest themselves on the grass-roots, informal level (Schiffman 1998: 13). The basic distinction is that what is explicitly stated on paper is not necessarily implemented or reflected in reality. This lies at

the core of my first research question, where the objective is to discover to what extent Namibia's overt LP is reflected in the LL of Independence Avenue, i.e., where covert LP practices may be represented. As Shohamy (2006) points out, LPs are typically simply representative of language practice intentions, but that what is stated in an LP will not necessarily be put into effect or practiced by communities or individuals in reality.

4.2.1 Language ideology, practices and intervention

Spolsky distinguishes between three components of LP in his definition, namely language ideology and beliefs, language practices, and language intervention (also management or planning) (2004: 7-15). These three components influence and determine each other. Language ideology and beliefs are the ideas and values that individuals, communities and polities may have and allocate to language and certain language practices. As Spolsky puts it, "language ideology is language policy with the manager left out" (ibid: 14). At the core of this component lies what people feel and think should be done about one language or multiple languages or varieties, not what has been done yet. When a so-called manager then comes into play, language practices and language intervention become part of the whole that is LP. Language ideology influences both language practices and language intervention, and vice versa.

In basic terms Spolsky defines language practices as the sum of the sound, word and grammatical choices that individuals make and act upon (ibid: 9). These are the real-life language actions that take place as a result, or despite of, language ideologies and interventions. Language intervention then intends to manipulate and manage such language behaviour and situations (ibid: 8). The nature of the intervention may stem from certain language beliefs and expectations of language behaviour, and in turn may influence or alter existing language ideologies and practices. When we think of LP we typically view it in this light, as a type of plan (whether formally or informally documented or suggested) to manage and manipulate language use (ibid: 11). This type of intervention may be implemented by different types of "language managers", such as a legislative assembly, government entities from varying levels, law-makers and educational and private institutions or businesses (ibid: 8). In the case of the country in which the present research is situated, Namibia, the LP under

investigation was formalized by one such type of language manager. A legislative assembly introduced the status of English as official language of the country and its stipulated uses in the national Constitution. This is an example of an explicit, formalized LP, but, as discussed, the underlying language ideologies and actual practices of a community may differ from the management goals and plans of such an overt policy.

The language practices of individuals and communities are largely influenced by the status that specific languages are allocated. Understood as the “perceived relative value of a named language”, a language’s status is usually related to its social utility, its economic value as a mode of communication and other more subjective factors based in political, cultural and linguistic beliefs (Ricento 2006: 5). The relative perceived value of a language is thus not necessarily related to its officialised status but rather to the ideologies attached to it (ibid: 5). As far as the LL of this study is concerned, the official language of Namibia, English, need not be used exclusively in public signage. Whether this language does, however, dominate the LL of Independence Avenue or not is to be evaluated further on. This, along with the underlying language ideologies and practices of sign-producers in the LL, will be discussed further on in the Results and Discussion chapter of this study.

4.2.2 Language policy as nation building and for language spread

Departing from the last component of LP, language intervention, I want to examine more closely what form this intervention may take and how it relates to the idea of nation building. The relevance hereof lies in what was overtly stated as the main objective of Namibia’s choice in LP, namely a conscious decision to build unity and cohesion in a formerly segregated country. It is therefore salient to discuss how LP relates to such a dominant objective. Two specific forms of language management can be recognized as part of Namibia’s LP, namely status planning and acquisition planning.

The concept of status planning (alongside corpus planning) was introduced by Heinz Kloss (in Cooper 1989: 31-33). Status planning involves the choice of allocating one or more languages the status of “official language” in a given territory (Wright 2004: 43). As Wright explains, it is precisely this type of policy decision-making that has historically been used as

part of attempts of “nation state” building (ibid: 42). In order to foster such an attempt, the choice then has typically been to select only one language as the official national language. This, according to Wright, has three distinct purposes. Firstly, such a national language serves to fill a utilitarian role, where it facilitates communication across all sectors and promotes efficient political and economic living (ibid: 42). Secondly, it helps to promote cohesion between members of a community or society and establishes a sort of shared collective culture (ibid: 42). Thirdly, if this language also happens to be different to the one(s) used by a nation’s neighbours, this develops the country more strongly as a separate territory with inner cohesion (ibid: 42). The general belief, or ideology, behind the decision for a one-language LP approach is that if a whole group, no matter how linguistically and culturally diverse, can share one language it can develop unity and stronger social, economic and political bonds.

In Namibia, LP has not only been used to develop such unity through means of status planning, but acquisition planning as well. Coined by Robert L. Cooper, this type of language management refers to the “organized efforts to promote the learning of a language” (1989: 157). Indeed, as will be discussed in Section 5.2, English has been designated as the main language of instruction in schools from Grade 4 onwards. The LP of Namibia has thus incorporated both status and acquisition planning in its hope to develop English as a symbolic language of unity.

Wright additionally points out that explicit formal LP implementation such as that stipulated in Namibia’s Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990) was always *post facto*, i.e. after the political formation of an independent nation (ibid: 43). As will be discussed in the following chapter in Section 5.5, in Namibia’s case, a “*pre facto*” language plan and policy had already been developed and decided upon nine years prior to its attainment of independence. Namibia thus presents a somewhat unusual case in which the LP and plan for nationhood and unification had already been established well in advance of actual national independence. The beliefs and expectations that underpinned this decision have been discussed, but to what extent these are reflected, specifically in the LL investigated in this thesis, is to be assessed and discussed in following chapters concerning data collection and analysis.

Language spread was determined by Moshe Nahir (in Hornberger 2006: 30) as one of the 11 goals of language planning. Particularly the above discussed status and acquisition planning

were viewed as the most suitable mechanisms of LP for encouraging the increased use of a given language in a territory. While status planning would guarantee a language's increased functional uses in more formal domains (Hornberger 2006: 30), acquisition planning would at the very least ensure the learning of such a language and thus its likely increased communicative use.

While the choice of only English as the official language of Namibia was largely based in a goal of fostering national unity, such a goal first meant encouraging the spread of English. Although it had already been assigned official status alongside Afrikaans prior to the country's independence, it was used marginally in public domains (see Section 5.5 of the following chapter). In designating it as the sole official language after independence, policy-makers were aware that in order to achieve the objective of national unity, the spread of the language first had to be encouraged. As such, it was not only given exclusive official status, but also priority status in education in order to increase the learning of the language and facilitate its communicative uses.

4.2.3 Language policy and social change

Social change is an intricate and complex component of LP (and LL, for that matter). Described by Cooper in his influential work *Language Planning and Social Change* (1989) as the “appearance of new social and cultural patterns of behaviour among specific groups within a society or within the society as a whole”, the concept of social change emphasizes the disequilibrium of the world in which we live in. Cooper posits that social change on the one hand influences and accompanies language planning, and on the other that language planning is and can create social change (ibid: 164). The author distinguishes six sources of social change: 1) the physical environment, 2) population, 3) discovery and invention, 4) cultural diffusion, 5) ideas, and 6) decision-making (ibid: 164-167). LP can thus be determined by these sources, and/or influence them after implementation. Determining the precise nature of social change in a given context is certainly no straightforward matter.

In studying an LL in relation to LP, one might begin by looking at the first source, the physical environment, and the last source, decision-making. In a basic conceptualization LL

may be understood as a type of physical environment, since LL study has typically focused on the directly visible and concrete public signage within a space. The stipulations and implementation of an LP are likely to affect the decision-making of sign-producers for various reasons in an LL, and thus the physical environment is influenced and becomes a reflection not only of decision-making but overall of an LP. In turn, the language use of a physical environment such as an LL might encourage thoughts and decisions on language that can, perhaps in an idealistic view, lead to changes in overt LP.

In considering this relationship between LP, decision-making and the physical environment, LP that influences decision-making and consequently an LL, can moreover affect the other sources of social change, particularly cultural diffusion and ideas. Particularly in the case of Namibia, where a language that had previously not had significant power was introduced as part of a monolingual LP, social changes of the like are likely to have occurred. German and Afrikaans undoubtedly left social marks in the country and it is thus plausible to assume that the sudden status attached to English would have similar consequences of social change. Along with this change, Western cultural traits and ideas inevitably associated with English are likely to have diffused into the indigenous African society. At the very least, this change would have affected the language and sign-making practices of sign producers, and this change is likely to have made itself present in the LL of the present study. Although the public signage of this physical environment is not being compared to how it may have appeared prior to the implementation of Namibia's LP, one can reason that the LL must now look somewhat different to what it did nearly three decades ago. Public signage can thus not only reflect LP, but social change.

This relationship between LP and social change resonates with Alastair Pennycook's (2000) discussion of "language ecology". To be understood similarly to natural ecologies, the concept suggests that the introduction of a language into a language environment may have serious consequences for the other languages already existing in that environment and, as Pennycook argues, disrupts local cultural and ideological possibilities (2000: 111-112). A major concern of such an introduction is the possible shift to linguistic homogeneity that language planners had envisioned and considered as an ideal scenario for newly independent African countries (see Section 5.5 of the following chapter on Ricento's (2000) points on the matter). The popular notions behind language ecology instead emphasize the importance of environmental protection, i.e. the protection of indigenous languages and the promotion of

linguistic diversity (ibid: 112). This opposes the beliefs that underpinned the choice of monolingual LPs in many African countries (including Namibia), where the common perception was held that linguistic diversity in language planning would only present obstacles for the main goal of national unity. While it is not the aim of the present study to determine the language ecology situation of Namibia, the concept is nonetheless useful when the theoretical implications of this study and possibilities for further research are considered.

4.2.4 Linguistic landscape as a language policy mechanism

In this final part of the discussion of LP I want to impart the significant relationship between LL and LP. The first point to be made is that an LP, whether *de jure* or *de facto*, can be expressed through and derived from several different mechanisms. The reality is that formal documented LPs often have certain mechanisms in place, but other implicit and covert mechanisms may be at play that create *de facto* LPs (Shohamy 2006: 57). The different mechanisms that may be implemented result from language ideology and are intended to affect language practices (ibid: 57). Shohamy (2006) categorizes five distinct types of mechanisms that exist between ideology and practice, these being: rules and regulations, language education, language tests, language in public spaces, and finally myths, propaganda and coercion. The focus of the research in the present study naturally focuses on language in public spaces. LL falls under the category language in public places, these being spaces where language is displayed in written and non-written (pictures and symbols) form.

Such public spaces can be open and visible to all (such as a mall or a school), but can also be private (such as in a person's home) (ibid: 110). These spaces are sites where LP is put on display and practiced and messages about certain language beliefs are expressed. LL specifically pertains to spaces in the public sphere, where language items such as road signs, street names, billboards, shop names, flyers, posters and all other similar public signs are displayed (ibid: 112). How language is used on these items sends direct and indirect messages about ideologies, and here LP can be implemented, manipulated or deviated from (ibid: 110). The use of one language over another, for instance, may signal language preferences or language power relations and can symbolize the relative status and importance that that language is accorded by the sign-maker.

Importantly, Landry and Bourhis (1997) distinguish between those public signs that are produced and displayed by public authorities (government) and private ones (such as individual shop owners, institutions or firms). Public authorities are likely to use public signs in an LL as an overt mechanism for whatever officially documented LP is in place. Conversely, individuals and private institutions and firms may use these signs in different ways, displaying a different language than the one given official status in an LP for instance. In this way grass-root ideologies may come to the fore and de facto LP may be implemented. This dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up signage shows what a complex mechanism LL can be. In the present study LL will be considered in light of this framework for the data analysis and discussion.

4.3 Geosemiotics and the linguistic landscape

Geosemiotics and LL are two fields of study that may be closely interlinked and suit each other well to a combined approach of investigation. For the present research, while an LL is considered as a whole, it will be assessed more closely in this related discipline. Geosemiotics involves the study of the placement and use of signs in a given space. How they are placed and used, as discussed in Section 3.2, are part of meaningful actions that turn space into a place such as the LL of Independence Avenue under investigation. In their important contribution to the field, *Discourse in Place: Language in the Material World*, Scollon and Scollon more precisely define geosemiotics as “the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world” (2003: 2). The governing concept to be taken away from this is that the meaning of signs and symbols can be garnered from how and where they are placed in an LL (ibid: 2).

4.3.1 What is a sign?

While the concept of public signs as presented in the LL have already been discussed, ranging widely from written forms like road signs and street names to advertising billboards and posters, the term “sign” takes on a more complex meaning in semiotics. There is a plethora of literature on semiotics that falls outside of the scope of this study, but I will

nonetheless make reference to semiotic theory that has been more specifically incorporated into the sub-discipline of geosemiotic study. A public sign in the LL may be considered as a type of semiotic artefact, hence the importance of discussing the theory behind it.

In semiotic theory, a sign is understood as any material object and meaningful unit that may be understood as or refers to something other than itself (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 3, Backhaus 2007: 4). This property of signs may be referred to as indexicality. A sign directs (or indexes) to a corresponding object in the context in which it occurs (*ibid*). This context-dependency of signs accounts for the study of signs in relation to their setting and placement in space, and how this determines and reflects certain meanings (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 3).

The characteristic of indexicality is further intertwined in theory of the sign originating from pioneer scholars of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce. Saussure suggested that a sign consists of a relationship between signifier and signified, i.e. between a concept and the sound-image (a concrete representation with sensory properties) (Saussure 1916: 65-67). As Backhaus points out, Peirce introduced a more intricate theory of the relationship that develops from a sign, proposing a signifying “representamen”, a conceptual “interpretant” and a designated “object” (Backhaus 2007: 5). Within this theory importance is placed on the process of interpreting the object (a sign) and the role of the interpreter (a hearer or reader, for example) (Backhaus 2007: 5). Metro-Roland (2011) and Blommaert (2013) have also incorporated this Peircenian approach in their work on LL studies. To take away from these theoretical considerations is that semiotic signs, such as the public written signs we find in an LL, are represented in a certain manner, and are in turn interpreted by an audience. How this process is made possible, in which ways and to what effect, is to be investigated in the analysis of the LL of Independence Avenue.

In an earlier study Spolsky and Cooper (1991) also make an important contribution to how we may understand signs. While their framework is based less on a semiotic approach and specifically considers written signage as opposed to any and all types of semiotic signs, their “rules of signs” are nonetheless theoretically relevant when we continue to consider the importance of the process of interpretation in the LL. Spolsky and Cooper (1991) introduce three rules, or conditions, for signs, or more specifically the making of signs. The first is the “necessary condition”, which states that sign-makers should ideally be literate in the language that they use in the sign (*ibid*: 81). This of course is not always practiced in reality,

especially in the case of the sign-owner who is not necessarily simultaneously the sign-maker, who might then choose to use a language out of preference, and not one he/she is literate in (ibid: 83). The second rule is that of the “presumed reader condition”, which argues that sign-owners and makers prefer to write signs in the language(s) that they assume their intended readers are able to read (ibid: 83). The third is the “symbolic value condition”, stipulating that sign-owners or makers prefer to write signs in their own native language or in a language or languages with which they prefer to be identified with (ibid: 83). Such a condition is naturally likely to be based in political or socio-cultural reasoning, whereas condition two is more likely to be economic, and if condition three dominates, the first two may no longer be applicable (ibid: 83). These conditions naturally play a significant role in the interpretation process of signs. When a sign is written in a language that passers-by are able to read, the interpretation process for these readers is simplified and certainly more straightforward. When it is not, and the third condition is perhaps the prevailing one, interpreting a sign becomes a more complex process. The choice of a certain language(s) on a sign may then reflect certain values and notions, and thus its message may be manifold, with underlying ideologies and symbolic meanings.

Continuing from this point, I want to introduce what Landry and Bourhis (1997) consider the two main functions of an LL that can be detected through public signage. On the one hand signs in the LL may serve an “informational function”, acting as markers of geographical territories and dividing territories of different language groups, indicating that the most prevalent language on signage may be the most useful to communicate and obtain services in the place in question, and showcasing possible diglossic situations (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25). They claim that in diglossic situations a high-status language, such as an official language, may be found more frequently on public signage than lower-status languages that are used in the home or local community, even if this high-status language is spoken by a minority of the population of the area of the LL (ibid: 26). In the LL under investigation in the present study such a situation certainly seems to prevail (to be discussed later in the data analysis and discussion).

The symbolic function, on the other hand, relates to how the presence or absence of an individual’s language on public signs makes him/her feel about being a member of that corresponding language group, and how the degree of visibility of that language may symbolize the power or vitality of the ethnolinguistic group (ibid: 27-28). As will be

discussed in the Literature Review, this concept of language visibility equating language vitality and power has been criticized by several scholars as superficial and often inaccurate. Nonetheless, I want to keep both the informational and symbolic function of public signage in mind when assessing the language use of the LL of Independence Avenue, as these two functions reveal a lot about the ideologies that exist within a linguistic space.

4.3.2 Semiotic systems and social actors

In their work on geosemiotics, Scollon and Scollon (2003) introduce the concept of the semiotic system and its relation to signs. They consider their primary sign system (also a semiotic system) to be language, and explain that a more specific system, the geosemiotic one, is where language on signs gives meaning and is given meaning (ibid: 4-5). All semiotic systems may be understood as *social* semiotic systems, where social positioning and power relationships are at play at all social levels and among different groups (ibid: 7). They continue to propose three broad systems of social semiotics that are connected at sites of action (such a site might for instance be an LL) (ibid: 7).

The three systems are 1) interaction order, 2) visual semiotics and 3) place semiotics. For the first system, Scollon and Scollon borrow the term from Goffman (1983 in Scollon & Scollon 2003: 11). The interaction order may be understood as types of social encounters, where we assume and attempt to maintain the “current, ongoing, ratified (but also contested and denied) set of relationships” that we have with other people (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 16). The choice of public authorities or individuals and private institutions or businesses to display certain signage in an LL can be representative of such attempts. For the second system, Scollon and Scollon limit their interpretation of visual semiotics to that of “semiotic systems of framed images and pictures” such as public signs as assessed in the present thesis (ibid: 11). They concern themselves in particular with how the interaction order is represented visually and in turn how the placement of visual symbols (such as public signs in the LL) affects their interpretation on the other (ibid: 18). Finally, place semiotics is to be understood as an aggregate of all the semiotic systems that may be in dialogical interaction with each other at any given time or place, where we find all non-linguistic symbols that directly or indirectly represent language (ibid: 12-13). Scollon and Scollon (2003) emphasize that these three

systems are integrated and interact with each other in geosemiotics. As such, when we analyse a public sign in a given LL, we look at it from a visual semiotic view, but can also assess what interaction order it represents or influences, and how it functions in a place semiotic system.

Scollon and Scollon (2003) continue to point out another component of geosemiotics, namely the *social actor* who acts within the three systems discussed. The social actor is the human being that brings his/her history of experience and knowledge into a geosemiotic site (such as an LL) (ibid: 15). This individual is also a social agent of sorts, participating in certain behaviour or practices. We may relate this figure to the theory discussed in light of LP in Section 4.2.1. The social actor is directly involved in certain language practices, and he/she participates in these practices as a result of personal or collective language ideology, and this behaviour may be influenced by certain language interventions. Social actors in the LL can also choose to make and display certain public signs for example, or can choose to read, receive and interpret signs or ignore them. The social actor is thus also a “physical body in space and time”, choosing to move, or not move, within that environment (ibid: 15).

4.3.3 Landscape in a geosemiotic system

In the present section I want to discuss the theory of landscape in particular, as presented in work on semiotics by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010). Where focus has been drawn on the theoretical nature of signage and its relation to space, I now want to concentrate on that space specifically. Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) view landscape as a way of seeing, and in a broader sense consider it as “how we view and interpret space in ways that are contingent to geographical, social, economic, legal, cultural and emotional circumstances” and our actual use of such spaces in a physical sense (ibid: 3). They stress that this space is not fixed but mobile and influenced by many factors. The landscape is constantly altered by mobility (especially in urban landscapes) with transport infrastructure, architecture and *public signs* (ibid: 5). Special note is taken of the effect of signage in such spaces as it directly relates to the present study.

Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) also make mention of the social actor that was discussed in light of Scollon and Scollon's work (2003) in the previous section. Social actors use landscape on the one hand as a "physical (built) environment, a context for human action and socio-political activity" and at the same time as a symbolic system of signifiers in which they can position themselves and others (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010: 6). What Jaworski and Thurlow conclude from this is that landscape is both lived in and looked at, and not only physically but socially constructed (ibid: 6). This resonates with the notion discussed in Section 3.2, that landscape is not only something to be looked at but lived in and perceived not only as space but also as "place". The 'lived' versus 'seen' dichotomy falls in line with important considerations by renowned philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, who views space as an entity to be both read and constructed. Lefebvre distinguishes space (also landscape) as physically, mentally and socially constructed (1991: 11). Space is built, a place of social practice and sensory phenomena such as symbols (and I interpret public signs as such symbols) (ibid: 12).

As social actors we construct space through discursal construal and semiotic framing (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010: 7). This semiotic framing can be linked to visual semiotics as discussed in the previous section, where space (a semiotic system) can be framed by images and pictures and public signs to create place. Through discourse and semiotic framing social actors can create identities of self and others. In that same vein, a national identity (take for instance that of a nation state of Namibia) can be detected through a "nation's collective gaze at the physical attributes of landscape, especially the pictorial, cartographic and textual representations" (ibid: 7). These representations, especially of the textual kind, may indeed be found in the public signage of an LL.

Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) continue to point out that spaces are also sites where ethnolinguistic ideologies can be established and found. They argue that through "the presence or absence of a language on public signage, in combination with the type (genre) of signs, their contents and style", whether implicit or explicit, personal and public language ideologies can be detected (ibid: 11). This connects with the earlier discussion of the role of the LL in LP theory in Section 4.2.4. It is the LL, where public signage is presented in various forms, that serves both as a mechanism of LP and a space for possible representations of language ideologies and in this way creates a place filled with meaning. The social actors within an LL thus use semiotic framing to construct place both physically and symbolically.

It is here that geosemiotic and LP theory again blend together, accounting for my objective to assess the production and representations of signage in the LL against a backdrop of geosemiotic investigation with consideration of the influence of the LP in that LL.

Chapter 5: Profiling and contextualizing the environment of Independence Avenue

5.1 Introduction

In order to develop an intimate understanding of the LL under investigation, facts pertaining to the population and history (both politically and linguistically) of the country in which it is situated, need to be discussed. Namibia is often described as incredibly culturally and linguistically diverse, despite its small population size of only approximately 2.1 million people, with a population density of a mere 2.6 people per square kilometre (NSA 2011: 8). The country is home to approximately 12 ethnic tribes, namely: the Herero, the Damara, the Nama, the San (Bushmen), the Rehoboth Basters, the Coloureds, the Caprivian, the Kavango, the Tswana, the Himba, the Owambo and Caucasians (including English, German and Afrikaans speaking people). Considering this diversity, profiling the linguistic composition of the population of the country is a crucial first step. I then want to continue to discuss its history of colonization as this is particularly relevant when examining why English was chosen as the official language of Namibia (and not the former colonial languages Afrikaans or German), how this history may have left its mark on the ideologies of Namibians and how these are reflected in the LL. Finally, Namibia's current LP stipulations, how this LP was planned ahead of the country's attainment of independence and the critique of these decisions will be discussed.

5.2 The linguistic profile of Namibia

The number of languages spoken in Namibia has always been under contention – with countless dialects present in each indigenous language group, estimates sometimes range considerably. The languages of Namibia may be grouped into three distinct families: the Bantu (such as Herero, the Wambo, Kavango and Caprivi languages, and Tswana), Khoesan (such as the Bushman and Nama languages), and Indo-European (such as German, Afrikaans, English and Portuguese) (V Cluver 1990: 161). One might expect a country with such linguistic diversity to adopt a multilingual LP similar to that of its neighbour and former

colonizer, South Africa. South Africa has granted 11 of its multiple languages official status, a key motivation behind this decision being that about 98% of its population speak these various languages (National Language Policy Framework 2002: 5). This inclusive and diverse LP is admittedly unusual and unique in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), where most countries have typically implemented either bilingual or monolingual LPs.

Although the most widely spoken languages in Namibia belong to the Oshivambo group, with 48.9% of the country's population reporting the use of Oshivambo languages in their households, this language group has not received official status (NSA 2011: 68). Instead English, which is used in only approximately 3.4% of Namibian households (NSA 2011: 68) – this figure an even lower 0.7% at the time of the country's gain of independence and implementation of the new LP (Central Statistics Office 1994: 65) – was chosen as the only official language of Namibia in Article 3 of its 1990 Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 6-7). In 1991, just after gain of independence, only 4% of Namibia's population reported speaking English as a second language (Frydman 2011: 184).

English is a compulsory subject from Grade 1 to Grade 12 in schools in Namibia (Davids 2003: 201), and also the common language of instruction from Grade 4 onwards (Frydman 2011: 186). However, in 2011, only 49% of the population had completed their primary school education (NSA 2011: 51). That in itself not only means that over half of the population may not even have been exposed to English in the first place, but those that have may have only been instructed in it for three years, given that only another 21% of the population completed secondary school (ibid: 51). Davids also argues that there is a lack of proficiency in English amongst teachers in Namibia, and that at the same time many indigenous African communities do not acknowledge the pedagogical benefits of studying in their mother tongue (2003: 201-205). There are no figures in the census that reveal what proportion of the population can read and understand English, but one can argue that a significant proportion would struggle or be unable to read English signage when we look at the figures discussed. If many Namibian locals struggle to read English, its predominance in the LL may be problematic.

5.3 A history of colonization

Given that one of the main research questions of the present study aims to address to what extent the LL of Windhoek's CBD reflects Namibia's LP and the actual language practices of Namibians, a crucial step of such an investigation is laying a background to the conception of the LP. In order to understand the decision-making behind Namibia's LP it is pertinent to discuss the country's political history and the United Nations Institute for Namibia's (UNIN) 1981 report *Towards a Language Policy for Namibia: English as the Official Language*. Namibia's history of German and South African colonization is vital in discussing the reasoning behind its LP and actual language practices of Namibians, and how these are specifically reflected in the LL of Independence Avenue, Windhoek. It must be noted that the aim is not to give a detailed account of Namibia's political history but an overview to give insights into some of the ideological influences and linguistic attitudes that can potentially contextualize the LL under investigation.

Namibia has a history of European contact dating as far back as the late 1400s. The Portuguese explorer Diego Cam was the first to lay claim to the desert shore line, erecting a cross about 134 kilometres north of present-day Swakopmund in 1484 (Levinson 1961: 20). From this followed a long period of tentative explorations by Swedish, Dutch and French explorers, and as early as 1738 neighbouring Boers trekked into Great Namaqualand on a trading expedition with their Khoekhoe and San servants (Wallace 2011: 50). But for about 300 years after Cam's arrival Namibia's characteristic expanse of arid land seemed to have thwarted any significant European interest in conquest.

The early 1800s saw a more concerted effort of settlement by missionaries (such as that of the London Missionary Society), but these earlier missions were not concerned with reshaping indigenous societies (Levinson 1961: 26; Wallace 2011: 54). Inevitably, what was to follow was increased missionary presence with intentions of influencing and altering the Namibian people's religious and cultural activities, as well as increased German settlement. By 1884 the Berlin Conference ruled that Namibia was to become a colony of Germany (Wallace 2011: 97). While the country and its people were to be placed under official German rule, indigenous resistance carried on for the following two decades. This meant that during this time the German settlers still held no true power over their colony. The mounting tensions

ultimately resulted in the Namibian War, lasting from 1904 to 1908, ending in mass genocide against people of the southern and central regions of the country (ibid: 155). Their success in the war garnered German settlers the power that had previously eluded them, for the first time placing Namibia under full control of German colonial authorities. From the brief period of 1908-1915 Namibia then began to be shaped into a German colony, with typically stringent and at times aggressive control measures, with many survivors of the war being stripped of their rights to land and livestock and forced into labour (ibid: 183-185). The harsh realities of Namibia's history under German rule are important to note further on in this chapter when discussing the motivations behind the choices of its LP.

The brevity of the colonization came as a consequence of the beginning of World War I. Following its outbreak in 1914, South African forces invaded the country and sought to defeat its German colonizers (ibid: 205). South Africa succeeded and ruled Namibia under martial law until 1921 and gained mandatory power under the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 (ibid: 206; 217). During the time of martial law Namibians were hopeful that their neighbour would return to them the land that had been taken by German authorities (ibid: 213). Although for a brief time indigenous people had regained some of their land and mobility, the South African government quickly began employing harsher measures of control and policies of segregation. A land policy was implemented that gave rise to the establishment of reserves, these effectively creating "black islands" separating Africans from both German and South African white settlers (ibid: 218-219). Plans to settle poor white South Africans on Namibian farm land soon followed, and reserves ultimately became sources of labour for mines and farms (ibid: 219). The San communities of Namibia suffered from more violent action, often being hunted down and shot by police officials, or imprisoned and forced into labour (ibid: 221).

Unlike Germany's short reign of colonial power, South Africa continued to exert its control over Namibia for several decades, even once it had lost international permission to do so. In 1946 the United Nations (who had replaced the League of Nations after World War II) rejected South Africa's request to incorporate Namibia as its "fifth province" (ibid: 243-245). The apartheid regime that reigned in South Africa at the time was being dually implemented in Namibia. Its key objective had been the segregation of whites and non-whites, with at times violent control measures to exert racial oppression. Racial segregation was inevitably accompanied by cultural and linguistic prejudice and dominance. Where German had a

negative status attached to it by being associated as the language of oppressive German colonial regimes, so did the predominantly-used Afrikaans with respect to South African authorities and settlers. The years of increased resistance and violent clashes that ultimately led to Namibia's independence in 1990 would naturally have meant a growing antipathy towards that language of the oppressor. The arguments against the possible implementation of Afrikaans as Namibia's official language in the 1981 report *Towards a Language Policy for Namibia: English as the Official Language* are then not surprising, as will be henceforth discussed.

5.4 A look at Namibia's current language policy

In the present section the precise nature of the LP as presented in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990) will be discussed. This will later serve to draw comparison between the hopes of the UNIN report (discussed in the following section) and how these have or have not been met in the microcosm of the LL of Independence Avenue, Windhoek. This will ultimately, as per my first research question, establish to what extent the LP of Namibia is reflected in this LL. The LP of Namibia is stated in a brief article in its 1990 Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 6-7) with three stipulations:

Article 3 Language

(1) The official language of Namibia shall be English.

(2) Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prohibit the use of any other language as a medium of instruction in private schools or in schools financed or subsidised by the State, subject to compliance with such requirements as may be imposed by law, to ensure proficiency in the official language, or for pedagogic reasons.

(3) Nothing contained in Sub-Article (1) hereof shall preclude legislation by Parliament which permits the use of a language other than English for legislative, administrative and judicial purposes in regions or areas where such other language or languages are spoken by a substantial component of the population.

Nothing stated in the article prohibits the use of other Namibian languages by private entities. As for what we can interpret from Sub-Article (3), any other Namibian language can be used to provide services (and public signage) in the public legislative, administrative and judiciary domains of a given area, should that language be spoken by a significant proportion of the population of that area and if legislation is passed to allow the use of such a language. Independence Avenue is an LL that is at the centre of the Khomas region of Namibia, where 41% of households report Oshivambo as the main language spoken at home, and the second most frequently reported being Afrikaans with 19% (NSA 2011: 14). One might then expect that, under the stipulation of Sub-Article (3), Oshivambo will feature in the public signage of this LL, and not only English. Whether this is reflected in reality will be assessed through the investigation of the LL.

5.5 Towards a language policy

In 1981, nine years before independence, the UNIN had already considered the LP that was to be implemented in Namibia once the country was free of its colonial ties. I have looked at chapters five to eight of the lengthy document, these being the most crucial for the rationale and the considered consequences of the proposal of electing English as the official language of the country. In a foreword to the report, Hage G. Geingob, then director of the (UNIN) and current President of the Republic of Namibia, begins by announcing the cardinal objective of the prospective LP, namely that of unity. With undisguised contempt he discloses that “South Africa has always pursued a deliberate policy of ethnolinguistic fragmentation in order to divide the people of Namibia” (UNIN 1981). As I have pointed out, Namibia’s colonial history is not to be ignored when investigating any LL within its borders, given the *ethnolinguistic* consequences of such a past that Geingob himself immediately mentions. The oppressive nature of South African colonial rule in the country thus inexorably affected the linguistic attitudes and ideologies within the country.

Geingob points out that it is to be the first time in the history of a non-self-governing country that a language other than that of the colonizer or of its indigenous people will be chosen as its official language. What he reiterates, the need for such an LP in order to bring together the people of the nation, is continuously emphasized throughout the report. In its rationale for the

decision, it is stated that racial and ethnic separation, linguistic isolation and fragmentation, are of the many crimes that Namibia suffered under apartheid (UNIN 1981: 37). The focal mission of the new government would be to move in the opposite direction, limiting attempts at any form of division and aiming for “national unity”, doing so by creating “conditions conducive to national unity, whether in the realm of politics, economics, religion, culture, race or *language*” (ibid: 37 [*italics added*]). Where it states that South Africa’s action against languages of “divisiveness is clearly an ideological position” (ibid: 37), Namibia’s choice in LP is then clearly an ideological counter-reaction.

Although Namibia’s choice in a non-colonial official language was unusual, the motivations behind this choice echoed that of many language planning goals of newly independent African countries. Thomas Ricento (2000: 11) points out that a monolingual LP was part of the language planning model for many such African nations, with the primary reasoning behind this policy being that it would best serve the aim of attaining unity and modernity in a formerly divided state. A popular belief at the time (held predominantly by “Western(ized) sociolinguistics”) was that linguistic diversity only presented obstacles for such goals of unity, and that homogeneity (by way of a monolingual LP) would better serve this aim (ibid). A situation of diglossia was envisioned in which a major European language such as English would be reserved for the use of formal and specialized domains, and indigenous local languages would serve other lower-status functions (ibid). Whether such a diglossic situation exists in the LL of this study will be discussed further on in the results and discussions in Chapter 7. As LP and language planning scholars point out, however, language planning is rarely based on one exclusive goal (Cooper 1989; Ricento 2000; Ager 2001) and the choice of a specific language is usually meant to serve several functions. In the UNIN (1981) report a number of such goals are specified.

Prior to Namibia’s independence, English already had the status of being an official language alongside Afrikaans, but Afrikaans was the language predominantly used in all public domains and by 90 percent of the population as a second or third language, and was thus considered the lingua franca of the country (V Cluver 1990: 161). The UNIN’s decision to advocate English as the sole official language of Namibia would consequently involve not only a drastic linguistic, but economic, political and social change. In aiming to justify its decision, the UNIN produced eight major criteria that any language ought to meet in order to qualify for such a position. What Pütz (1995) and Frydman (2011) point out, is that by the

time the report had been produced, English had already been chosen as the official language, and the criteria served less so for purposes of decision-making between languages, but rather to support and justify the implementation of English. I will not go into detail of each criterion here as their characteristics are easily discernible from their titles, instead they shall be listed in the order that the UNIN considers the most appropriate, from national to more international requirements: 1) Unity, 2) Acceptability, 3) Familiarity, 4) Feasibility, 5) Science and Technology, 6) Pan Africanism, 7) Wider Communication (on the international level), 8) United Nations (to facilitate bonds with the organization) (UNIN 1981: 37-38). The report briefly considers the few languages that may be viable for official status (that is indigenous Namibian languages, Afrikaans, German, French and English) in accordance with these criteria.

The choice of an indigenous language may have met criteria three and four, but fell critically short of the rest. Particularly in terms of unity, the primary objective of the prospective new government, any one indigenous language would not be suitable because none had a large enough majority of speakers within the country, which could have plausibly led to “intra-linguistic competition and strife” should one be officialised (ibid: 39). Afrikaans similarly satisfied criteria three and four, but none of the rest. Especially given its association with Namibia’s cruel colonial past and times of oppression, Afrikaans was especially unacceptable in terms of unity and acceptability. Linguistic attitudes and ideologies were at the core of the decision not to implement the language of the colonizer as the official language.

German and French differed from the former two considerations in that they met the criteria of science and technology and wider communication. However, German, much like Afrikaans, because of its history of colonial presence in the country, failed the first two criteria of unity and acceptability. Where it satisfied the criteria of familiarity and feasibility, unlike French, it could not meet the criteria of Pan-Africanism and United Nations (which French could only satisfy partially in the former case). When it then came then came to the point of assessing English in light of the eight criteria, the situation was distinctly different and its suitability as the official language of Namibia became clear (ibid: 39-40).

The report suggests that English did not simply satisfy some of the criteria, but all of them to a greater or lesser extent. At the time English already had the significant role of being the language of the Liberation Movement and thus was deemed particularly suitable for the first

criterion of unity. English also satisfied criterion two, acceptability, particularly because, unlike German and Afrikaans, it had no direct negative association with times of former colonialism. It certainly met the requirements of the other six criteria, the report especially praising its suitability for “wider communication” given the increasing spread of English around the world. For the purpose of not only African, but also global connection and interaction, English was thus deemed the most viable choice. (ibid: 40)

Following the discussion of English in light of the most significant requirements, the report continues to assess what issues and implications may arise as a result of the use of English as an official language (ibid: 45-47). While there are numerous concerns, at the core of such considerations arguably lie two main points, namely the possibility of Eurocentrism and linguistic elitism, and the possible marginalization of local ethnic and linguistic communities. Although, as has been said, the objective of the research is not to assess these possible consequences when investigating the LL, how the linguistic make-up of public signage may garner certain impressions of that nature, may nonetheless be discussed.

5.6 Criticism of the UNIN report and the English-only choice

The report continues to argue that despite some of the concerns that are examined, a “linguistically and politically neutral, a common non-indigenous language” such as English has the advantage of supporting inter-tribal communication and the possibility of breaching gaps of understanding or conflict between different local ethnic groups (ibid: 48). With this in mind, the UNIN considers that such a development may on the other hand “hinder the formation of Namibian cultural identities” (ibid: 45) and argues, in line with the rest of the report, that in order to prevent such a consequence and to further encourage the use and status of indigenous languages, LP and planning has to facilitate incorporation and inclusivity of local languages as well. Such LP endeavours should ideally find a balance between “modernity and tradition”, with a clear acknowledgement of indigenous languages (ibid: 53). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discern whether these goals have been achieved and whether it is indeed possible to deem the current LP a successful one, it is valuable to discuss some of the critique of its monolingual propagation.

In a highly informative and noteworthy collection of sociological papers on the topic of “language in Africa”, Martin Pütz (1995) details some of the main points of critique of the UNIN’s 1981 report and the choice of English as the official language. The author begins by stating that the arguments that were made in the report in favour of English were not simply linguistic and functional, but if anything grounded in ideological and political motives (Pütz 1995: 155). Pütz points out that although English has adopted the symbolic function of the “language of liberation”, many critics argue that it is “antiethical to democratic participation and equality of access to knowledge, resources and power” (ibid: 156).

The author continues to critique each of the criteria outlined in the UNIN report that argue for English as the official language. For criterion one (unity) he struggles to accept that the implementation and teaching of one specific language such as English will make tribalistic tendencies, and thus differences and resulting conflicts between tribes, disappear (ibid: 164). Although English had co-official status in Namibia prior to independence and could thus be seen as satisfying in part criterion two (acceptability) (ibid: 160), Pütz argues that this does not actually necessarily mean that people will accept it as the sole official language or use it as a means of communication, especially when considering a HSRC survey done in 1982 that showed a rather low preference for English (ibid: 164). The obvious fallacy that he argues against is the assumption of the population’s familiarity with English that criterion four stipulates, noting that there is (at the time of his publication and still at present) a minute proportion of the population of Namibia that speaks English as a mother tongue (ibid: 164).

As for criterion four (feasibility) he considers the arguments against choosing an indigenous language here as invalid, citing Ansre’s view that the perception that providing material resources in an indigenous language would be too time-consuming and costly as “short-sighted” (ibid: 165). Ansre additionally says that creating educational materials in a local language and using it as a medium of instruction is an “economic must”, and as such the creation of material resources in such a language is unavoidable (ibid: 165). For criterion five (science and technology) the argument that is made against choosing indigenous African language is that these do not have sufficient terminology for these fields, but Pütz argues that there should be no reason to leave them underdeveloped and points out that increased use of these languages in science and technology will generate a new vocabulary (ibid: 165).

Finally, for criteria six indigenous to eight, Pütz criticises the report's general disregard for the importance and value of African languages and the hegemony of English (ibid: 166-167).

In his concluding remarks, Pütz highlights the three main criticisms of the report. Firstly, that there is a significant imbalance in the treatment of the choice of languages suggested in it (ibid: 167). The Indo-European languages (Afrikaans, German, French and English) are each assessed as separate languages, whereas all the African languages are clumped together in one category. Secondly, while the criteria are set out to be linguistic and functional in nature, they seem to serve the educated élite (ibid: 167). Thirdly, all the criteria can be counter-argued with assertions such as “ease of learning, Namibian cultural authenticity, empowering the underprivileged and self-reliance” (ibid: 167).

In a more recent critique, Frydman (2011) responds to the lack of discussion of language or language policy in the Namibian government's national development strategy, Vision 2030. In the author's response she proposes that the LP needs to be revised, arguing that the choice to emphasize the use of only English in all sectors of the country has resulted in poor academic outcomes in education and an unfair inability for indigenous non-English speaking people to communicate in economic and political domains (ibid: 186). She also claims that the dominant use of English discourages appreciation of Namibia's indigenous African languages, and that “the exclusive use of English in Namibia's important public domains serves to prevent the learning of Namibian languages, thereby leading to the erosion of these languages” (ibid: 186). One such important public domain to be considered is that of Windhoek's CBD, and while Frydman's notion may be somewhat dramatic, if we indeed find the exclusive use of English in this area, I would agree with the author. An LL such as Independence Avenue, that is a locus for a city that boasts the most significant proportion of Namibia's population, can indeed be a host for language learning and appreciation.

Chapter 6: Methodology

6.1 Introduction

As the interest in LL studies has grown, especially from scholars in other disciplines, so too have the methodological applications in the field. Methodology in older LL studies typically centred on counting signs, usually in order to ascertain how often different languages featured in a multilingual LL. Having grown up in Windhoek and visited its CBD countless times, as well as having assessed this area's signage in the lead up to my research proposal, I established that basing my entire study on this approach would not only be outdated, but not provide any significant amount of data on multilingualism. As will be explicated in further detail in the following chapter, the public signage in Independence Avenue is predominantly English, with few examples of signs displayed in a different language or multiple languages. These are nonetheless significant, and their occurrences have been counted for quantitative proof of some of my conclusions. However, the approach in the present study is ultimately qualitative. I assessed signs that were written in more than one language in terms of their reading paths, and then continued to evaluate the language-use patterns between commercial and non-commercial signage in the area and compared the placement and design of these two categories of signs both in the physical LL and the online LL.

The analysis of public signage in the present study may largely be described in terms of ELLA (mentioned in Section 2.4 and 2.5), a term introduced by Blommaert and Maly (2014). This qualitative analysis, while not necessarily new, was first given a name and concretely described by the two scholars. They posit that this methodological approach accounts for what the presence and distribution of languages tells us about and means for individuals and communities, and how the modality and placement of signs are used to create socially meaningful places. In the analysis of public signs four key points need to be considered (Blommaert & Maly 2014: 3-5).

The first point Blommaert and Maly (ibid: 3) make is that public spaces are social arenas where social power relations are at play, and that space is disciplined and regulated. Consequently, and their second point, communication in public spaces is ultimately communication in a field of power and is used to and reflects semiotic regimes (ibid: 3-4). In

ELLA the focus is then on analysing this communication in the form of public signs. In the third key point of analysis, Blommaert and Maly (ibid: 4) describe how these signs can be assessed according to three axes, namely the past (their origins and modes of production), the future (their intended audiences and preferred uptake) and the present (their current and consciously-chosen placement). Analysing signs in such a manner reveals their social function, how they demarcate public space and how they affect communicative relationships between sign-producers and sign-readers (ibid: 4). The fourth and final point of consideration is then how public signs and their three axes can be used to explore LL in an ethnographic and historical context, and can point to the social relationships, interests and practices of the people within an LL (ibid: 5). This “ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis” is both theoretically and practically useful and is particularly important and relevant for the ever-increasing qualitative approach to LL investigations such as the one used in the present study.

Ultimately, in counting the use of English and other languages on signs in the LL, assessing the reading paths of multilingual signage and comparing the placement and design of commercial and non-commercial signage, I wanted to discover what these investigations could tell us about the language and meaning-making practices of individuals, groups and organizations within the LL and what this might reveal about their ideologies. The LL is ultimately a social, cultural, political and economic space and studying its public signage can reveal the thoughts and values of the people that live or work and move within that space.

6.2 The data collection process

As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the focus of the investigation was initially based on the physical space of Independence Avenue, but the online space (i.e. the internet) in which sign-producers make themselves visible as well, could not be ignored. As Blommaert (2016) emphasizes, the online world can no longer be overlooked in LL study. The internet has become an incredibly important place for communicative transactions and advertising, and as such its study is particularly valuable to many disciplines, including LL study. The data collection process for the study was thus two-fold, involving collecting evidence of signage by walking along Independence Avenue in the physical space, and then following up this initial step by looking at the way sign-producers of this area also make themselves visible

in the online world (if they did so, that is). Here I looked at both formal websites and social media pages such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The initial step, as said, involved surveying the area of Independence Avenue by means of walking and taking photographs of numerous signs with a Nikon digital camera. The photographs mostly consisted of signs displayed outside of buildings/stores, but photographs were taken of signs indoors wherever possible. The next step involved going online, researching whether the producers of signs in the physical LL also utilized online platforms, and if so in which ways. From the outset I knew that I on the one hand wanted to discover to what extent Namibia's LP is reflected in this LL by looking at its public signage, and on the other how different sign-producers presented themselves in the space through this signage (in particular through the placement and design of their signs, but also their language use, i.e. did they only use English or another language/other languages on the sign?). In doing so I wanted to a) establish exactly how predominant English was in the public signage of the LL, and b) examine and evaluate how public signage is placed and designed by different sign-producers. As for my first enquiry, I counted how many of the signs I had taken photos of were written in i) only English, ii) English and one or more languages, and iii) a language/languages other than English. The reading paths of multilingual signage were also analysed. For the second part I then discerned where different forms of public signage were placed in the LL, how this signage was designed and made, and what this might reveal about the sign-producers.

Having looked at these features of the physical LL, I then continued to analyse the language use and design of public signage in the online space. I did not count the number of signs because the online boundaries between signs is not always clear cut, and there were so few instances of online sources of public signage being written in a language other than English that counting for the sake of determining the predominance of English was unnecessary. Approaching the geosemiotics of online signage was also quite different to analysing physical signage. I focused not on the placement of signs, but rather on their presence or absence (i.e. did the sign-producers found in the physical LL even utilize online platforms), and the design of written online platforms and how this differed to that of physical signage in the LL.

6.3 Data categorization

Categorizing signs in studies of LL has always been a complex matter for scholars in the field. Some, like Spolsky and Cooper (1991), have given multiple taxonomies and a range of sign categories, while others have separated signs into broader classifications such as “top-down” or “bottom-up” (see Section 3.2). For the present study the broader route of classification has been chosen, taking influence from Stroud and Mpendukana’s (2009, 2010) focus on studying commercial signage. In being concerned with the geosemiotic value of signs, I was less concerned with the function of signage than I was with its source (i.e. authorship). While a top-down versus bottom-up distinction would have been useful in this light, I found the distinction between these two groups were not always suitable to the type of signage found in Independence Avenue. That is to say that while there are a lot of small business owners who might be considered bottom-up sources of signage, their signs were still produced professionally and with considerable economic investment, much like top-down signage would be.

Having read Stroud and Mpendukana’s (2009, 2010) investigations of commercial signage and noticed two broad yet distinct groups of authorship of signage in the LL of Independence Avenue, I chose to distinguish the signage I photographed and assessed between ‘commercial’ and ‘non-commercial’ signage. This was in part in consideration of Landry and Bourhis’ (1997) designation of LL as language use “on public and commercial signs”. While the term “commercial” was appealing once again, I felt that, given my existing reference to public signage as encompassing all signs in the LL, that the term “public” was not quite suitable as its counterpart. Instead, the simple opposite “non-commercial” signage, while equally broad, seemed to me less ambiguous. Commercial signage is to be understood as all signs that are produced by entities who want to sell a product or a service. Non-commercial signage on the other hand is not displayed to sell, but rather to inform or instruct. This means that a sign advertising a language learning academy for instance, while organisational and professionally made and one that could thus be described as top-down, is different from a municipal warning sign that can be defined similarly, because it attempts to sell a service. I then distinguished the signage within these two broad categories further. Under commercial signage I noticed the clear differences between signs produced by smaller (and also usually local) businesses, and those of larger companies (and usually non-local). Within the non-

commercial category, I found three more specific types of signage, including government/municipal signs, public awareness campaign signs and religious-organizational signs.

6.4 Analysis of language use in the LL

Having categorized the public signage in the LL, I wanted to begin with the brief quantitative assessment of the area. When I carried out the data collection process, walking along Independence Avenue taking photographs, I photographed every sign that was outwardly visible to me, and went into several businesses to photograph signage within these establishments. I knew that it would be difficult to account for each and every sign, so I want to clarify that the number of signs I have counted is not a grand total of all signs in the LL. Nonetheless, the figure is substantial and significant for revealing language-use patterns in the LL. I then counted the number of signs that were written either in English and one or more other languages, or that did not include English at all and were written only in another language(s). The results of the data would be able to tell me to what extent the official Namibian LP is reflected in the LL and what the real-life language practices of individuals, groups and organizations in the LL are.

I then wanted to continue with assessing the language use in the LL, specifically investigating what language-use patterns emerged between and within commercial and non-commercial multilingual signage. Were multilingual signs more frequently found in commercial or non-commercial signage, and then by which specific sign producers? I additionally looked at what the reading paths of signs that were written in two or more languages could reveal about the language ideologies of sign-producers. I drew my approach from Gunther Kress' work *Literacy in the New Media Age* (2003), in which he includes a chapter titled "Reading as semiosis" where he introduces the concept of reading paths.

6.5 The reading paths of multilingual signs

Kress states that signs can be both an outward production (visible, audible and communicable) and an inward production (when we read, view and listen to these signs) (2003: 144). This we can relate back to the Peircenian approach I discussed in Section 4.3.1, where a sign is represented in a certain way (i.e. outwardly produced with intention) and then interpreted (and in turn inwardly produced). In doing so Kress argues that we follow certain paths while we read. Particularly in Western-language cultures we are raised and thus have a predisposition to read from left to right and from top to bottom (ibid: 157). When there is a cluster of texts we then tend to follow this order to orientate ourselves and organize the writing in front of us. In this way we follow a “linear” path of reading, but there are “non-linear” paths that do not follow these orders of reading and can also be implemented (ibid: 157-158). Kress adds that signs in the physical space tend to be more “traditional” in terms of organization, so we are more likely to read written signs in a physical LL in a linear fashion, but the online space often produces new and unconventional organizations of signs, and thus here reading may tend to be non-linear (ibid: 160). So while I focused on assessing the order of languages displayed on multilingual signs in the physical LL, and thus their reading paths, I also kept in mind that the online organization of signs meant that reading paths here might be different and interpreted differently.

6.6 A geosemiotic approach to sign analysis

Following my assessment of the reading paths of public signage in the LL, I continued with a geosemiotic-oriented approach, comparing the placement and materiality of the different categories of signs. I investigated how commercial and non-commercial signage is spread and placed throughout the LL, and how the design (i.e. the materials with which the signs are made, the size of signs and their graphic design features in regard to font and colour) of signs varied across and within these two broad categories. Looking at these factors could reveal possible relationships between different sign-producers, their ideologies and how sign-producers choose to express their identities in the LL.

The placement of signs on online platforms is of course less easily defined. For this part of my investigation I analysed instead whether entities in the physical LL actually utilized online signage. If they did, I compared how the design features of the online signage of these various entities differed to each other, and how the physical signage of individual businesses and organizations compared to their respective online signage. I considered differences in the amount of text displayed and level of professionalism with associated features of font choice and images.

6.7 Methodological challenges

The data collection process involved few major obstacles, but inevitably there were challenges along the way. One of my first and on-going issues was collecting data of signage inside the businesses/organizations of the LL. While taking photographs displayed on the outside of the businesses/organizations was straight-forward, going inside and asking whether I could take photographs of the signage within these places often yielded negative results. People, especially employees or owners of smaller businesses, were typically wary and unwelcoming to the idea of photographs being taken inside. This meant that I had a lack of physical evidence of the signage within businesses/organizations in the LL, and I thus took to taking field notes of what I could observe about the signage instead.

Another challenge, and one that I was aware of before I began my data collection, was that not all of the businesses and organizations in the LL would have online platforms. This could, however, reveal other ideological dimensions and practices. From this I could make some assumptions as to why some sign-producers advertised themselves on online platforms additionally, and others not. So while this meant that I could not compare all sign-producers in the online space, it meant that other interesting conclusions could be made about the public signage of the LL.

As I have mentioned, the categorization of public signage in LL study has often been pointed out as a methodological challenge. In determining what typology to use for my data analysis, I certainly struggled to decide which route was most suitable. Because I became increasingly interested in how sign-producers expressed themselves and their possible ideologies through

public signage, I focused my categories not necessarily on the type of signage that is found in the LL, but the source (authorship) of the signage. Consequently it became easier to distinguish sign categories, as I noticed clear differences between signs belonging to small and big businesses trying to sell a product or a service, and those of a non-commercial nature. Within these two different types of signs more specific groups could be identified, on the one hand small business and big business commercial signage, and on the other government/municipal, public awareness and religious-organizational signage.

Chapter 7: Results and discussion

7.1 Introduction

In the current chapter I begin by assessing language use in the LL, particularly looking at the frequency of exclusively English signs and the reading paths of multilingual signage. This will serve to draw conclusions about how strongly Namibia's LP is reflected in this area and what language practices and ideologies may exist within the space. Included here is an analysis of where multilingual and non-English signs are found in the physical LL, i.e. assessing how frequently they appear in commercial or non-commercial signage, and in which areas (or zones) of Independence Avenue. This analysis is then followed by a discussion of how different types of commercial and non-commercial signage are placed and spread along Independence Avenue, how their design features differ and what this may reveal about the different sign-producers in the LL, as well as how this signage differs in the online world.

7.2 Results

The total number of physical signs that I counted amounted to 679, this including brochures and pamphlets collected from inside some of the establishments. Of the 679 signs that were photographed, 636 of these were written exclusively in English. The remaining 43 were either written in both English and another language, or English and two other languages, or solely in a language other than English. For these 43 signs Table 1 (page 61) has been created.

The table shows which languages were used in the public signage of LL and how many times they appeared. What I noted here was that all bilingual and trilingual signs contained English. Nowhere did Portuguese bilingual signs, for example, display a second language that was not English. This applied to every multilingual sign. The language that appeared most frequently (after English) in the LL was German (20 signs), followed by Afrikaans (10 signs) and

Portuguese(6). Namlish¹ was found three times, Oshivambo, Italian and French appeared two times each, and Amharic and Mandarin once each.

As for Table 2 (page 62), I wanted to indicate the composition of the 679 signs counted in the LL. The data revealed that only 46 of the total number of signs were of a non-commercial nature, the remaining 633 being commercial. Of the 46 non-commercial signs and 633 commercial signs, 15.2% and 5.7% were either multilingual or non-English, respectively. This meant that although a greater number of the multilingual/non-English signs were commercial, non-commercial signage was proportionally composed by more of these signs.

In a following section (see Section 7.8.1 on the zones of public signage in the physical LL) three distinct zones (Zone A, B and C) are identified in Independence Avenue, these having varying characteristics in terms of the type of signage found within them. A table with a break-down of the number of commercial vs. non-commercial and multilingual/non-English signs in these areas could be included here, but these zones are conceptual areas with no clear physical boundaries, and as such I did not want to specifically count one sign bordering, say, Zone A and Zone B, as belonging to one or the other. Instead I conclude from observation that most of the non-commercial signs were located in Zone A and C (peripheral areas) and very few were located in the central area of Zone B. Although multilingual/non-English signs were spread out relatively evenly throughout the zones, I observed the appearance of German, Portuguese and French on public signs more frequently in Zone B, while the remaining languages tended to appear more often in the signage of Zone A and C

¹ Namlish is known as a particularly interesting variety of English, only spoken by Namibians. It is influenced by vocabulary from the various indigenous languages of the country and spoken rather frequently. Namibians tend to be quite proud of this unique and native form of English that presents itself as an “in-group” phenomenon that distinguishes Namibians from their neighbours and foreigners. Although unfortunately no academic studies of this variety have been published yet, local sources like that of Gondwana Collection Namibia (see Visagie (2016, 27 May)) and The Cardboard Box Travel Shop (n.d.) list many of the interesting terms used in the Namlish vocabulary.

Table 1: Languages used in the 43 multilingual and non-English signs in Independence Avenue

Language(s) on sign	Number of signs
German only	12
German and English	4
Afrikaans only	2
Afrikaans and English	4
English, German and Afrikaans	4
Portuguese only	2
Portuguese and English	4
Namlish	3
Oshivambo only	1
Oshivambo and English	1
Italian and English	2
French only	2
Amharic (Ethiopian script) and English	1
Mandarin and English	1

Table 2: The composition of commercial and non-commercial signage in the LL

	Commercial signage	Non-commercial signage
Number of signs counted	633	46
Signs that were only written in English	597	39
Signs that were multilingual/non-English	36	7

7.3 Language use in Independence Avenue – the frequency of English

Given the number of English-only signs noted in the previous section, it is clear that English has a distinctly strong presence in the LL. From the data one can immediately state that the LP of Namibia is strongly reflected in the LL of this study. This may initially seem unsurprising given that it is the official language of the country. It seems reasonable for official government and municipal entities to adhere to the exclusive use of English in light of Article 3 of the Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 7), particularly in the capital city of Namibia where not only locals traverse the CBD but also many tourists. Producing official signs in only the official language makes the space of Independence Avenue more easily navigable for all visitors, as it is far more likely for all passers-by, especially tourists, to understand English instead of the indigenous Oshivambo language, for example. Logistically speaking it thus makes sense for these sign-producers to use not only one language, but one that is more likely to be readable by most visitors to the LL.

Politically speaking, as the 1981 UNIN report had suggested, English is also considered a language of neutrality, which is especially important given the location of the LL. Windhoek, being at the heart of the country, is a place of convergence for all of the ethnic groups of Namibia as well as foreigners (whether tourists or migrants) and easily the most culturally and linguistically dynamic area of the country. Again it makes sense for official organizations

to adhere to using English in their public signage to avoid appearing culturally or linguistically biased towards specific ethnic groups.

Government and municipal authorities certainly seem to directly use public signage as an LP mechanism. Most of the signage from these entities is English, and in this way they reinforce what is stated in the Namibian Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990) and propagate its status as official language. Where we do find few instances of multilingual/non-English signs in this type of non-commercial signage, it comes in the form of street signs or directions (as seen in Figure 2) from municipal sources. The use of German names here, for example, is merely based on the fact that these are historical monuments with no alternative-language names. Overall, government authorities predominantly use English in their signage.

On the one hand the motives are administrative, on the other ideological. We can assume that such official entities believe that English supports the goals set out by the 1981 UNIN report of unity, acceptability, familiarity, feasibility, science and technology, pan Africanism, wider communication and United Nations communication. In adhering to the use of only English they signal to readers of their signage that they believe that the language facilitates these goals and is not only the best choice of language to do so, but the only one. Inevitably these language practices also signal possible negative ideologies. While using English exclusively may seem reasonable to most since it is stipulated as the only official language, when we consider Sub-Article (3) of Article 3 of Namibia's Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 7), we can argue that there is nothing that prevents Parliament from passing legislation to allow the use of any other language in the public domain, especially, as stipulated by this Sub-Article, if a predominant proportion of the population of a specific region under question speak another language. Using none of the other widely spoken languages in the area, such as Oshivambo or Herero, may symbolize to passers-by that these are not regarded as important or useful.

Another issue with such an exclusion of indigenous African languages is the general English literacy of the population, or rather the lack thereof. As discussed in Section 5.2, given the education attainment figures of Namibia's 2011 Population and Housing Census, a significant proportion of Namibia's indigenous African language speakers are likely to have a poor grasp of the English language. That means that important information such as that displayed in the sign in Figure 3 might not be received by many people. A sign like this is an especially

interesting case, because we might expect that someone who is “loitering” or “begging” is likely to be homeless, unemployed and/or uneducated given the figures just discussed, and as such would be unable to read a sign warning them of these actions. This situation in the LL reflects what may be a greater problem in Namibia overall.



Figure 2: A municipal sign showing directions to various important sites in the LL



Figure 3: Town clerk warning sign

As noted in Section 5.4, given Sub-Article (3) of Article 3 of Namibia's Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 7), one might expect Oshivambo to appear, if not frequently, then at least from time to time in the LL given that 41% of households report speaking Oshivambo in the region (the Khomas region) in which it is situated. Instead we find it appearing only twice in the public signage of the LL. Moreover, we find other minority languages such as German, Afrikaans and Portuguese appearing more frequently than Oshivambo. As discussed, while there may be logistical reasons behind the use of English by official entities, there are different reasons that may motivate and explain the use of English by other non-official, commercial sign-producers.

The personalization of the signs featured in Figures 4, 5 and 6 include incorporating the name of the business-owner in the sign. These names, especially in the context of Figure 3 which advertises "African Wear", suggest that the owners are likely to be indigenous African language speakers. Beyond this however, the signs are written exclusively in English.



Figure 4: Kitenge Tailoring signboard



Figure 5: #Oa#Amsa Trading store



Figure 6: Shaetonhodi Optometrist

The motives behind this language practice may on the one hand be related to Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) second rule of the sign, namely that sign-producers will write signs in a language that they assume their readers are able to read. This is based predominantly in economic reasoning. The sign-producers are likely to be aware of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the passers-by within the LL, and thus, in order to accommodate and attract as many customers as possible, will likely prefer to write in a language that they believe is readable by a larger number of people. When we look at the signs in Figures 7, 8 and 9 however, we see similar personalized signs, owned likely by German-speakers, that include not only English writing, but also German and/or Afrikaans. The reasoning may again be somewhat economic, as the sign-producers may feel it necessary to appeal to German and Afrikaans-speakers as well. However, both the language practice choices in these signs and those of the previous group may reflect the third sign rule that Spolsky and Cooper (1991) stipulate, namely the symbolic value condition. As noted in Section 4.3.1, under this condition sign-producers prefer to use their native language or a language with which they prefer to be identified with in their signage. This usually has political or socio-culturally motivated reasoning behind it.



Figure 7: Mitzi's Pharmacy



Figure 8: Niemeyer Pharmacy



Figure 9: Pfohl's "Herrenmoden", "Outfitters", "Uitrusters"

When indigenous African language speaking owners use English exclusively in their signage, despite having the freedom to use their own native language as well, it reflects to us as readers that their language ideologies may fall in line with those of the sign-producers of official signage previously discussed. That is to say, that English is the most suitable language for communication, and also viewed as having the highest language status in the LL. This suggests that for these African language speakers English (with the accompanying status that they may believe English speakers have) is perhaps symbolically an aspirational language.

Other sign-producers, who choose to use languages other than English either exclusively or in conjunction with English, signal instead that while they understand the necessity for English, they perhaps identify more with another language or feel that it holds a high-status value as well. The choices are then less economic-based, and rather socio-cultural or political. By using German and Afrikaans in their signage, as in Figures 7, 8 and 9, sign-producers make visible that they associate with these languages and respective cultures more strongly than say, Portuguese or Herero, and are proud of this connection. In this way it seems that they reflect their daily language practices (i.e. they probably speak these languages in day-to-day interactions or in the home) in their signage. One might then assume that the use of these languages reflects the sign-producers' actual identity rather than an aspirational one (as one might suspect is the case with African language speaking sign-producers).

From what has been discussed it seems apt to say that the language use in the public signage of Independence Avenue reflects a diglossic situation. As mentioned in Section 4.3.1, Landry and Bourhis suggest that in a region in which a diglossic language situation occurs we are more likely to see a high-status language, such as an official language, rather than a low-status language on display in public signage, even if that high-status language is only spoken by a minority of the population (1997: 26). This certainly seems to be the case in the LL under investigation, though the diglossic situation here is not so much between one high-status language and one low-status language, but rather several such so-called low-status languages.

Not only is a large proportion (97%) of the public signage in the LL written exclusively in English, but in all of the bilingual/trilingual signs, English appeared. That is to say, there was no multilingual sign that did not include English. English has been a high-status language

since Namibia's attainment of independence not simply because it is an official language, but because of its association as a language of freedom and unity. As pointed out in the figures in Section 5.2, English is also undoubtedly a minority language in Namibia. And so despite the linguistic diversity present in and around the LL, a diglossic situation in which English dominates the public signage clearly prevails. Again, it is apparent that the LP of Namibia is reflected to a great extent in this LL, but the public signage here does not necessarily reflect the actual language practices of Namibians. While English is certainly used at times in conversation between business owners and customers on a daily basis, many of the other national languages of Namibia can not only be heard frequently spoken here but in the country in general. Given the small proportion of not only first but second language English speakers Namibia is likely to have (refer to Section 5.2), it can be easily argued that English is infrequently spoken not only in the homes but likely in the public spaces of Namibia.

7.4 The absence of indigenous African languages

In the LL the clear dominance of English in public signage has been noted. Another feature of the LL that is salient is the significant lack of indigenous African languages. As said, Oshivambo, spoken by nearly half of the population of Namibia (and of the Khomas region) only appears twice in the public signage of the LL. None of the other indigenous African languages is present. This is partially understandable given that only small proportions of the population in this area speak these other languages, but there are more Nama/Damara (main language spoken in 12% of households in the Khomas region) and Otjiherero (main language spoken in 10% of households in the Khomas region) speakers than there are German and Portuguese speakers, for example (NSA 2011: 68). What then explains the absence of these languages when minority languages such as German and Portuguese are present?

One might first argue that there might be no business owners in this area who are native speakers of the other indigenous African languages. Although there are no decisive figures regarding business ownership amongst the ethnic groups of Namibia, this is unlikely given that 85% of the population of Namibia report an indigenous African language as their main language spoken at home (NSA 2011: 68) and that in 2014 74.2% of firms in the country were domestic owned (World Bank Enterprise Surveys 2014: 13). Thus, it is plausible that

least some of these firms are owned by indigenous African Namibians. But if we are to follow the initial assumption, there are clearly ideological reasons at play given that some sign-producers choose to use certain languages over others.

The two examples of the use of Oshivambo in public signage include signs in Figures 10 and 11. Figure 10 shows an anti-domestic violence public campaign poster. The use of Oshivambo here seems to signal that domestic violence is particularly a problem within the ethnic group of this language, its use otherwise being oddly arbitrary. The First National Bank (FNB) brochure (Figure 11) is the only example of an exclusively Oshivambo-written sign. In such a case we might argue that the corporation is appealing to a large local ethnic group of the country. But if this bank (which originates from South Africa) is attempting to appeal to indigenous African locals of the area, why exclude the other indigenous African languages? Through their advertising (that happens to usually be in English), whether intentionally or not, the sign-producers express commitment to one specific language group. This signals to other indigenous African language speakers that the bank finds targeting this language group more important and places higher value on these customers. The same is true when we consider the number of signs in which German, Afrikaans and Portuguese appear. Although minute in comparison to the occurrence of English, the visibility of these languages and no other indigenous African languages in the LL reflects that these languages are viewed as more important. Why, for instance, are the previously discussed signs in Figures 7, 8 and 9 written in only Indo-European languages, especially in the case of pharmacies where the products and services provided are of an essential health nature and ought to be available for everyone?



Figure 10: Anti-domestic violence campaign signs where Oshivambo appears

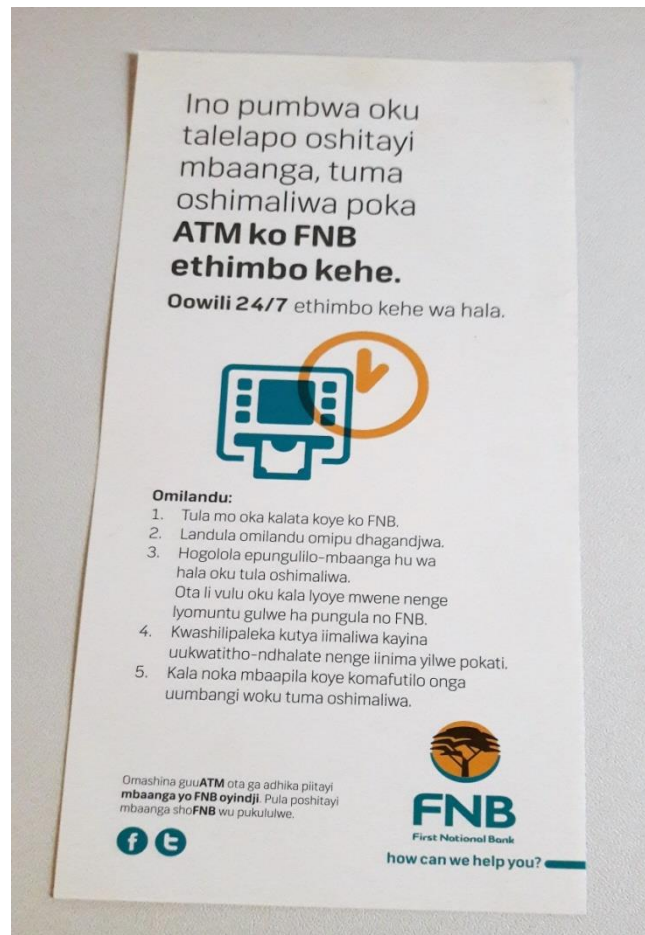


Figure 11: An FNB brochure written exclusively in Oshivambo

One might argue that sign-producers simply believe that indigenous African language speakers are able to read English, and thus find it unnecessary to include one or several of these languages. When we consider how few first and second language speakers of English there are in Namibia (refer to figures in Section 5.2), however, this seems unlikely. Since, as has been noted, 85% of the population of the country report an indigenous African language as their main language spoken at home, and if we are to assume that most of this population does not have English as a second language either, then the lack of other indigenous African languages is concerning.

7.5 Multilingual and non-English signage in the linguistic landscape

In having addressed the plethora of English public signage in the LL, it was noted that where there were instances of signs with more than one language written on them, English was always present. In the following section such signs and signs that were written in only one language (but one other than English) will be examined. Table 1 shows the number of non-English and various bilingual and trilingual signs in the LL. Table 2 shows us that most of these multilingual/non-English signs are commercial.

As discussed in Section 7.2, the most frequently seen languages in the public signage of the LL were German, Afrikaans and Portuguese, with the remaining languages only appearing once or twice each (or three times in the case of Ndebele). If we are to assume older approaches to multilingualism in the LL, we would conclude that German has the greatest vitality other than English since it is the most visible. This is certainly not the case here, given that in the Khomas region in which the LL is situated, there are more Afrikaans and Oshiwambo speakers than German speakers, for example. Rather, these occurrences again signify certain language ideologies and rather power relations between languages.

It would seem that German, Afrikaans and Portuguese speakers are more likely to make their relationship with these languages visible. For several reasons, the sign-producers want to be identified with these languages. As discussed, the reasons for the choice of English may be largely economic or status related, the choice of another language may be similar, but is likely to be more ideologically bound in socio-cultural or political reasons than economic

ones. Most Namibian sign-producers will be aware that the Indo-European languages are spoken by a minority of the population, and yet they appear more frequently than Oshivambo (and no other indigenous African language is visible in the LL). Thus, attracting customers in this way for economic reasons is unlikely to be the case. As readers we are inclined to believe that the owners associated with these signs speak the languages that are displayed and that conversing and negotiating in these languages is the best option for attaining goods and services. Although this might typically be the case, the sign-producer of a bilingual Afrikaans and English sign, for example, may not necessarily be either Afrikaans or English speaking, yet nonetheless choose these languages for specific reasons. In any case, while the reasons for using English are apparent to most, the choice of another minority language such as German, Afrikaans or Portuguese may be interpreted differently.

The choice especially of German and Afrikaans in the LL is particularly interesting (odd, even) given the dark history of colonization of German and South African Afrikaans forces as discussed in Section 5.3, and their ineligibility according to the UNIN report discussed in Section 5.5. These two languages were considered particularly inadequate in terms of “unity” and “acceptability” because of their associated history. Today the past of colonization and oppression certainly has not been forgotten, and it is therefore somewhat surprising to find these languages more visible in the LL than any indigenous African languages. What this signifies is that sign-producers, whether actually speakers of these languages or not, still place importance on these languages and view them as high-status languages.

The use of languages such as Italian, French, Amharic, Mandarin, and the variety Namlish, in public signage, although appearing as rarities in the LL, merits discussion as well. As has been described in Section 7.2 (see footnote), Namlish is a variety of English that is influenced by a number of other Namibian languages. It appears in the advertising of the local business, Teleshop (Figures 12 and 13) and a mobile board (Figure 14). In the former cases, the business is making the use of Namlish very clear, with several idiosyncratic terms included. The use of Namlish in Figure 14 is more subtle. Although the word “Brotchen” is German, it is a word substituted for the word “roll” by many Namibians and typically considered part of the Namlish vocabulary. One might argue that the likelihood that the sign-producer is German is also low, given that the correct spelling of “Brötchen” is not used here. The sign-producer is thus likely to be using the word in the context of Namlish. Particularly in Figures 12 and 13 it appears that the sign-producer is specifically appealing to a local clientele market



Figure 13: Another Namlish Teleshop sign



Figure 14: The use of Namlish in a hand-written signboard

The bilingual Italian/English signs both belonged to Sicilia restaurant. The sign displayed on the outside of their building describes the business in Italian as a “ristorante”, “pizzeria” and “gelateria” with the added English description “A delectable cuisine experience”. As for the menus of the business (Figure 15), although all ingredients are listed in English, each page has an Italian quote with a corresponding English quote underneath. In this way, much like the sign-producers who use German, Afrikaans and Portuguese, the sign-producer of these signs seems to want to express his/her identity and connection with the language



Figure 15: The use of phrases in both Italian and English in the menu of Sicilia restaurant

In the case of the two French signs, these were both examples of the use of the term “bureau de change”, a frequently used borrowing for exchange businesses in general and as such not a peculiarity, but there was an occurrence of the alternative English term “foreign exchange”. In the French examples the sign-producers were South African banks FNB and Nedbank, and in the case of the English example the source was local Bank Windhoek. This could be because the local business pays closer attention to the use of the country’s official language. The sign displaying Amharic in conjunction with English belongs to Ethiopian Airlines, the use of this being unsurprising as it is the official language of Ethiopia, and the Amharic text

is part of their logo. The singular sign in which Mandarin appears with English belongs to a small convenience store called “My Choice”, and here again the sign-producer seems to want to reflect his/her identity and linguistic practices, considering that the use of the language for attracting customers seems unlikely given that only 461 of all Namibian households report speaking an Asian language as a main language at home (NSA 2011: 68).

7.6 The reading paths of multilingual signage in the LL

In much the same way that the visibility of languages in an LL does not necessarily reflect their vitality, the reading paths of multilingual signage do not always reveal language ideologies, language practices or power relationships between languages. Nonetheless, we can make tentative arguments about what the reading paths of multilingual signs say to readers and represent, particularly when certain patterns emerge.

As discussed, the most frequently seen language in the LL other than English was German. It appeared in 20 of the 43 multilingual/non-English signs, and of those 20 it appeared in combination with English in four signs, and in combination with English and Afrikaans four times as well. In the instances in which it appeared with English, two out of the four times the German clause appeared “first” in terms of reading paths, (i.e. either first from top-to-bottom or left-to-right). In contrast, when Afrikaans appeared on signage in conjunction with English, in none of the four signs did it appear first in terms of reading paths. When it came to the four signs that were written in all three languages, English, German and Afrikaans, German appeared first two out of the four times, English once and Afrikaans once. As for Portuguese and English signs, two out of the four times Portuguese appeared first. In the case of the less frequently appearing bilingual signs, in the two Italian/English signs Italian appeared first, and in the Amharic/English and Mandarin/English signs, English was physically displayed above the second language (so first in terms of reading paths).

The basic assumption to make, if we follow Spolsky and Cooper’s (1991) rules of signs, is that the language that appears first in a multilingual sign is either the language of preference or one that the sign-producer identifies most with, or is the language that the sign-producer assumes readers will prefer to read or associate most with. That is not to say that in either

case that the sign-producer is more literate in that language than the one that appears second or third. A sign-producer's first language may for instance be German, and their second English, but they might identify more closely with English and thus represent this in the reading paths of their signage accordingly.

In most of the multilingual signs in the LL, save for many of the signs including German, English was displayed first (either read from left-to-right or top-to-bottom in terms of reading paths). What this signals is that many sign-producers in the LL, while displaying the desire to be associated with a language other than English or to appeal to certain customers, consider English the more important or useful language. In the case of the bilingual Mandarin/English sign for example, the business owner is likely to be Chinese, yet places Mandarin writing underneath that of the English writing.

German could be seen as displayed “first” in terms of reading paths more than any other non-English language in the LL. Out of the eight multilingual signs in which it appeared, it was displayed first four times. The greater presence of German as opposed to other national languages, but also the tendency for it to come first in terms of reading paths, signals certain ideologies and may symbolise power relations between languages. As readers, when we notice these patterns, we may come to the conclusion that German has a “higher” status than all the other languages. Its presence does not indicate its vitality (there are, for example, more Afrikaans speakers than German speakers in the Khomas region in which the LL is situated in), but rather indicates that it may be a preferred language of use in the LL, or perhaps more aptly that German business owners are more inclined to be proud of their linguistic origin and willing to show it. I say German business owners because it is apparent when looking at the names of the businesses that they are German-owned (such as in Figures 7, 8 and 9). Having grown up in Windhoek I can say that I certainly believe that the presence of German in the public signage of the LL has to do with the local German-speaking community's pride in their culture and language. There are many sports clubs and associations specifically orientated towards fostering German pride and communication within the city, and there are several traditional German festivals, such as the WIKI carnival and Oktoberfest, that occur annually. The German community in Namibia is also incredibly small, with only 0.9% of households reporting it as a main language spoken at home (NSA 2011: 68). As a result this community is known for its close ties.

In the same way that one can recognize German business owners by the inclusion of their names on their signs, so one can recognize the indigenous African language-speaking business owners of the space. Many smaller businesses such as the one producing the sign in Figure 16 include their names in the title of their business. And yet, while we can recognize that the owner of the business probably belongs to one of the indigenous African tribes of Namibia, they choose to only use English in their signage. This contrasts the practice of German business owners, for example, who are inclined to place German writing before English or Afrikaans in their signage.



Figure 16: Ounyonyolo Kiosk

7.7 Language use in the online space

Language use in the online sphere of the LL is arguably significantly similar to that of the physical space of Independence Avenue. Again, we find a clear dominance of English in this cyber-space. Of the businesses and organizations that did have online platforms and virtual signage, very few were multilingual. In most cases, these businesses have websites in which

one can choose to read the entire website in either English or another language. In other cases the multilingualism was less obvious and some businesses showed inconsistency in their language use in the physical space and in the online space. Mitzi's Pharmacy for example used English and German in their physical signage (see Figure 7), but English and Afrikaans (note the Afrikaans word for pharmacy "Aptek" in Figure 17) on their Facebook page. Windhoek Pharmacy, although predominantly English, had some Portuguese writing on its window front but was exclusively English on their Facebook page, and Luisen Pharmacy used German, English and Afrikaans in their physical signage (see Figure 18) but refer to themselves exclusively in English as Luisen Pharmacy and yet display a German "Apotheke" logo in their profile picture (Figure 19). The Karseboom business, recognized as Afrikaans-owned, displays English signage exclusively in the physical space and on its Facebook page, only demonstrating some affiliation to Afrikaans by posting a photo of an old Afrikaans newspaper clipping (Figure 20), this, however, seeming to be used more as a reference to how long they have been operating as a business.

Although these smaller local businesses demonstrate some variation in their multilingualism between the physical and online space, they nonetheless predominantly use English to communicate on their online platforms. In accentuating these virtual spaces with other languages they further emphasize their relationship with these language groups. It is particularly apparent that these businesses want to be specifically identified with certain languages and cultural groups, since, unlike the physical signage of the LL which is mostly visible to those who live and work within this space, the signage of online platforms is open to readers from all over the world. Although these local businesses might not target a global audience, they must nevertheless be aware that the content of their Facebook pages may be seen by a big foreign audience and that the use of certain languages will reflect solidarity to them. As discussed, the reasons for wanting to express this relationship are manifold, but it is likely that the sign-producers in these spaces either speak these languages and are proud to be identified with them, or want to appeal to speakers of these languages for either economic, political or socio-cultural reasons.

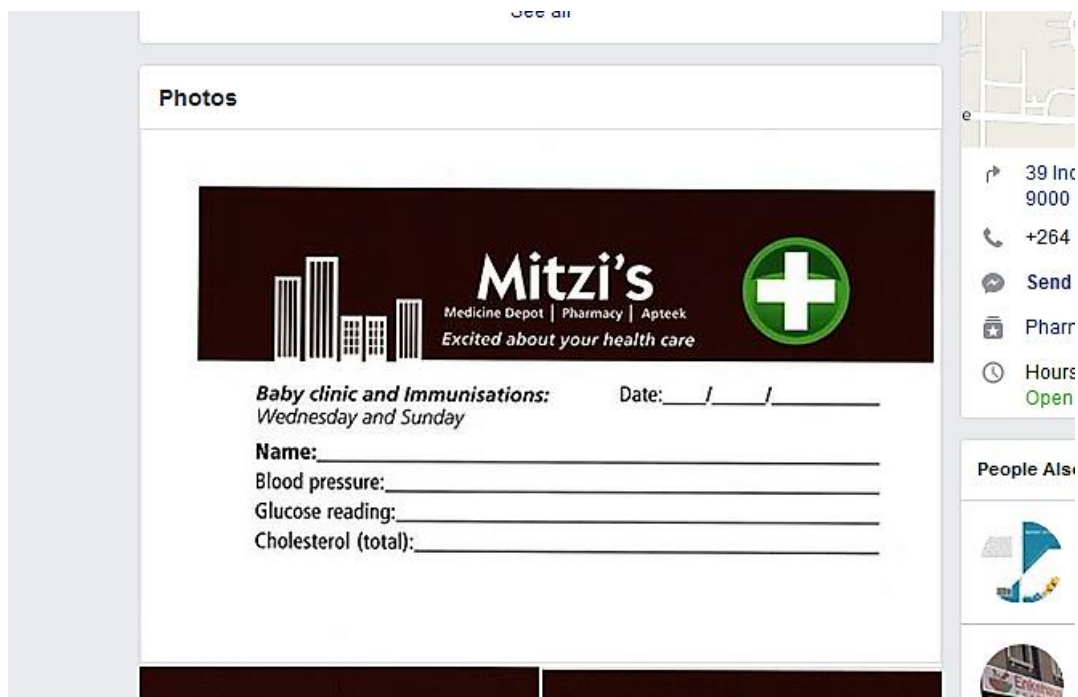


Figure 17: Mitzi's Pharmacy Facebook signage



Figure 18: Luisen Pharmacy physical signage in the LL



Figure 19: Luisen Pharmacy Facebook profile page

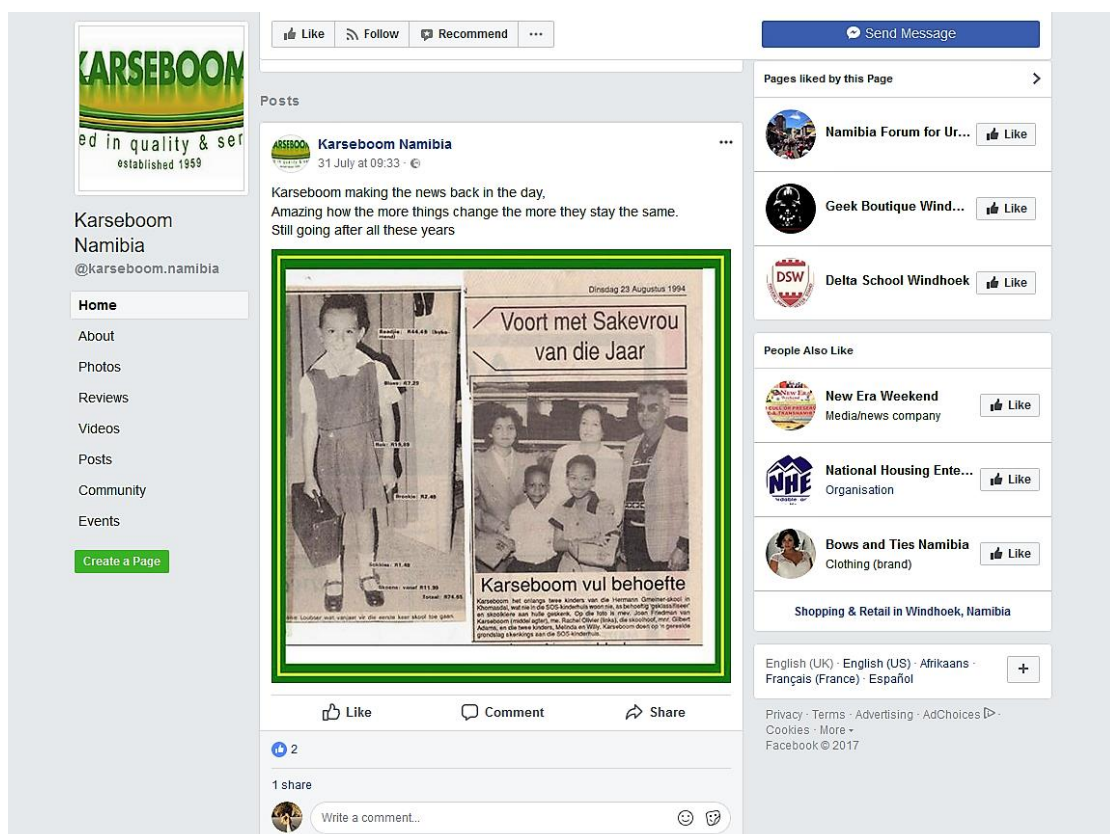


Figure 20: Karseboom Afrikaans newspaper clipping Facebook post

Other businesses/organizations represent themselves multilingually in a different way. In the case of the Novacâmbios (a currency exchange business) website (Figure 21), when we find the webpage it is immediately displayed in English (despite being a Portuguese corporation founded in Lisbon), but its entire content can be changed to either Spanish, French or Portuguese. This contrasts with the business's physical signage, which is displayed in both (and only) English and Portuguese (see Figure 22), and their Facebook page, where posts are predominantly written in Portuguese, or their Twitter page, which is instead predominantly English. The website of Ethiopian Airlines (Figure 23) also offers their entire webpage's content in multiple languages, and is displayed first in English, but can be changed to French, Portuguese, German, Spanish, Italian and Arabic, though its physical signage in Independence Avenue was exclusively English (except for the Amharic script in its logo).

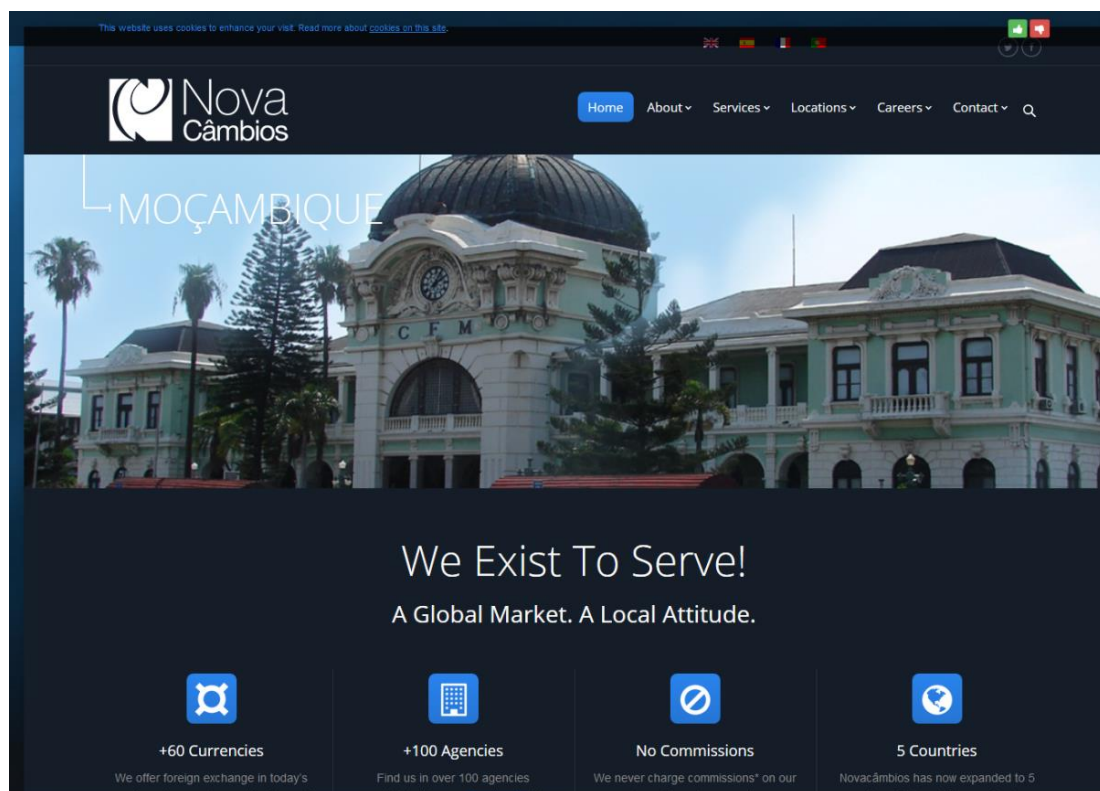


Figure 21: Novacâmbios webpage



Figure 22: Novacâmbios physical signage in the LL

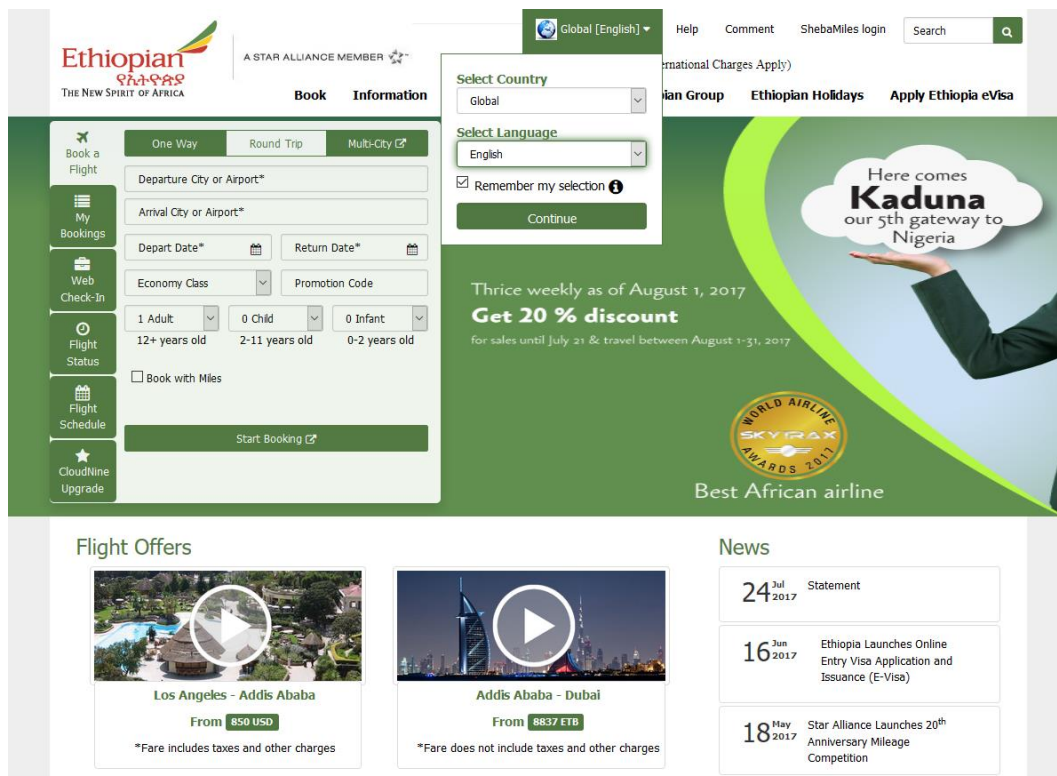


Figure 23: Ethiopian Airlines homepage

These are examples of foreign companies, however, that have a clearly broad and international customer base in mind. Their target market consists of international travellers, so it is unsurprising that we find multiple language options available in their online space. In the physical space their language use seems more niche-oriented and limited to a smaller market. This may partially be because these businesses must be aware of the language situation and the speakers within and around the LL, and also be due to the limitations of the physical space. It is difficult to use several languages in one physical sign, and thus choosing to use one or two that are likely to be readable by a big proportion of passers-by seems reasonable. The task of appealing to multiple customers with different language backgrounds and making virtual signs (entire webpages in fact) available in more than one language is significantly simpler in the limitless and easily navigable online space.

The websites of local Namibian businesses like the Windhoek Buchhandlung (“Windhoek Bookshop”) (immediately displayed in German), the Goethe Institute (immediately displayed in English), and SWA Safaris (also immediately displayed in English) are somewhat different from those discussed above in that they can be changed to be read in either English or German exclusively and no other languages. The former two of these businesses/organizations are German-owned or targeted at providing products and services in German. The Windhoek Buchhandlung sells both English and German books, and the Goethe Institute provides a library with German books and offers German language-learning courses, but also hosts cultural events such as the event advertised in Figure 24, in English. It therefore makes sense for these businesses to use not only both English and German in their physical signage as they do, but also make their online platforms available in both languages (though the Goethe Institute’s Instagram page happens to be entirely English).

The SWA Safaris website on the other hand is a less straightforward case, as this business is focused on advertising holiday destinations in Namibia and providing safari packages and does not specifically sell any products or services orientated towards German culture as the other two businesses do. The signage within the SWA Safari office and their physical outdoor sign in the LL (see Figure 25) is exclusively in English, so why then offer a German-readable version of their website? On the one hand one might argue that they are trying to appeal to local German speakers for certain ideological reasons. They may assume that the customer base is more likely to travel or be able to afford the packages offered. On their Facebook page, on the other hand, although predominantly English, they post an amusing photo with a

caption written in Afrikaans (see Figure 26). From this we might gather that the SWA Safari Facebook page is more personalized and targeted at local Namibians, and that the website may be a more professional platform. The option of a German version is then likely to serve to appeal to foreign German tourists (Namibia is indeed notoriously known for attracting mostly German tourists).



Figure 24: An event hosted and advertised by the German Goethe Institute



Figure 25: SWA Safaris outdoor sign

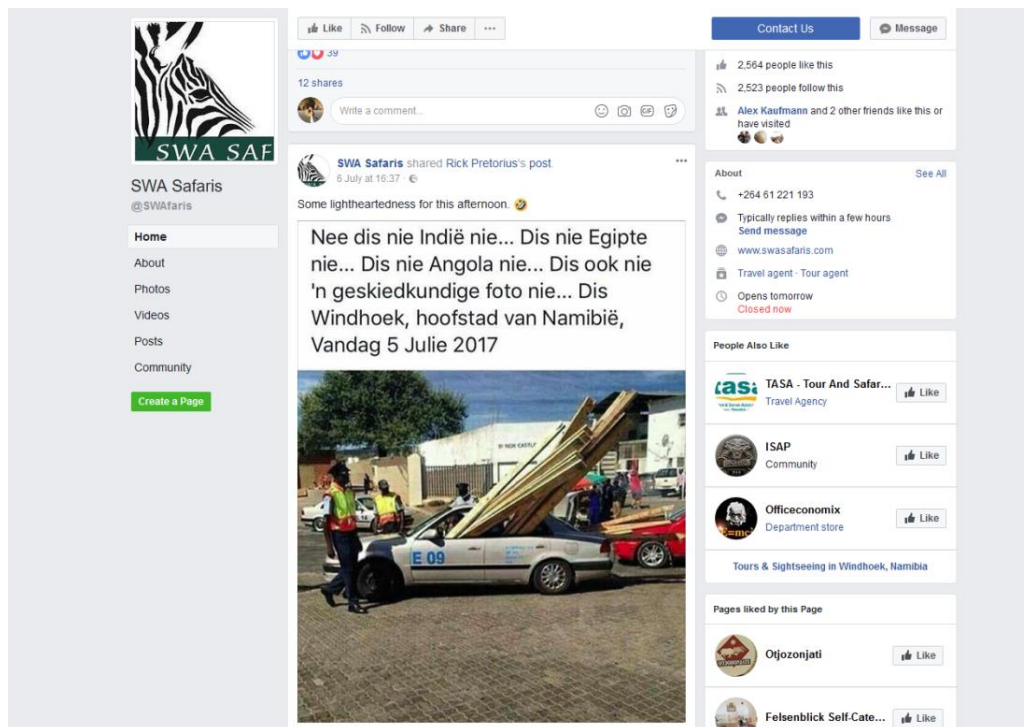


Figure 26: An Afrikaans Facebook post by SWA Safaris

What stands out from all these cases (except for that of the Windhoek Buchhandlung website) is that the websites of both local and foreign businesses are introduced first in English, but may be changed to another language. So while they do offer multilingual online signage, by first and foremost displaying their products and services in English they signify that they perceive this to be the most widely-understood language and perhaps the best choice to appeal to customers, much like all the other businesses/organizations who only present their online platforms in English. However, when we consider again the language statistics of Namibia and more specifically of the central region of the country, ideological reasons of a socio-cultural and political nature must again be involved. In the same way that I have questioned why multilingual signage in the physical space of the LL mostly incorporates Indo-European languages and the lack of indigenous African languages present in the space, the same can be asked of the online sphere.

In the case of international businesses like Novacâmbios and Ethiopian Airlines it seems reasonable to assume that their preference for using English first lies in the global nature of the language and its international reach. The choice of the other Indo-European languages may hold similar reasons if we consider how widely spoken Spanish and French are, for example. Novacâmbios' choice in Portuguese and French may also largely be based on the locations in which the business operates. In Europe the business operates in Portugal and France. In their African locations, Portuguese is either the official language of the country (Angola and Mozambique), or is quite wide-spread (in Namibia a whopping 29% of tourists who visited the country in 2015 were from Angola and thus likely speakers of Portuguese (MET 2015: 7). Given that their clientele base is likely to predominantly be speakers of these Indo-European languages, it explains Novacâmbios' exclusive choice of these languages. Ethiopian Airlines on the other hand operate more globally, yet, other than Arabic, also only offer their website in a limited number of European languages and interestingly not in Amharic, the official language of the country of their namesake. Their limited choice in languages may not necessarily be based in ideological reasons attached to language status, but rather in their market size. The website of Emirates airline for example is offered in a much greater variety of languages, but this airline is much more established than Ethiopian Airlines and has more destinations. As such it is not surprising to find that African languages are not offered in the online platform of Ethiopian Airlines.

Local businesses, however, are likely to be aware of the significant number of indigenous African language speakers in the region of the LL, and not only do not include these languages in their physical signage, but neither in their online signage². As mentioned, given the limitless space of the online sphere, providing visitors with an online interface in multiple languages, while perhaps more costly, is significantly easier than producing physical signs in multiple languages. The choice to typically use only English online, and if another language then another European one, again signals a belief that English is of greater import and more valuable and that indigenous African languages have been assigned a lower language status.

7.8 The placement and design of public signage in the LL

Having looked at the use (or lack thereof) of languages in the LL both in the physical space of Independence Avenue and on online platforms, the present section sees a departure to a geosemiotic analysis of the public signage and how commercial and non-commercial entities use placement and materiality to promote and distinguish themselves. When the LL was initially investigated, attention was paid to the language use of public signage, as this was for some time considered the focus of the study. Along the way I could not help but notice how Independence Avenue seemed to have distinct regions of certain types of businesses/organizations, and how the signs of these businesses differed in composition and how this in turn affected the impression they made on me. Consequently, I realized that a geosemiotic study of the LL would enrich my understanding of the space.

² Some might argue that, given a general stereotype of African countries as having poor internet access compared to say, European countries, it would not make sense for businesses and organizations to target African language-speakers and use their languages in online signage. However, when we consider that 392 181 internet users (18.6% of the population*) were reported in Namibia in 2016 (Internet Live Stats) and 520 000 internet users (24.6% of the population*) counted in March, 2017 (Internet World Stats), these users presumably mostly being from urban areas (and especially from the capital city Windhoek), we might assume that there is a significant enough market of African-language speakers for entities in the LL to continue to cater for in the virtual world.

*Percentages calculated according to the population total as reported in the Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census Main Report (NSA 2011).

7.8.1 The zones of public signage in the physical LL

While walking along Independence Avenue and taking photographs I felt very much “in-space” and focused on individual signs. Once I took my final photographs I considered the LL again from an “out-space” perspective and looked at it as a whole. Here three distinct zones of public signage became apparent, as depicted in Figure 27. The zones have been drawn as overlapping to reflect that the LL is still dynamic and fluid and that the spatial organization of public signage is not always separated by clear borders.

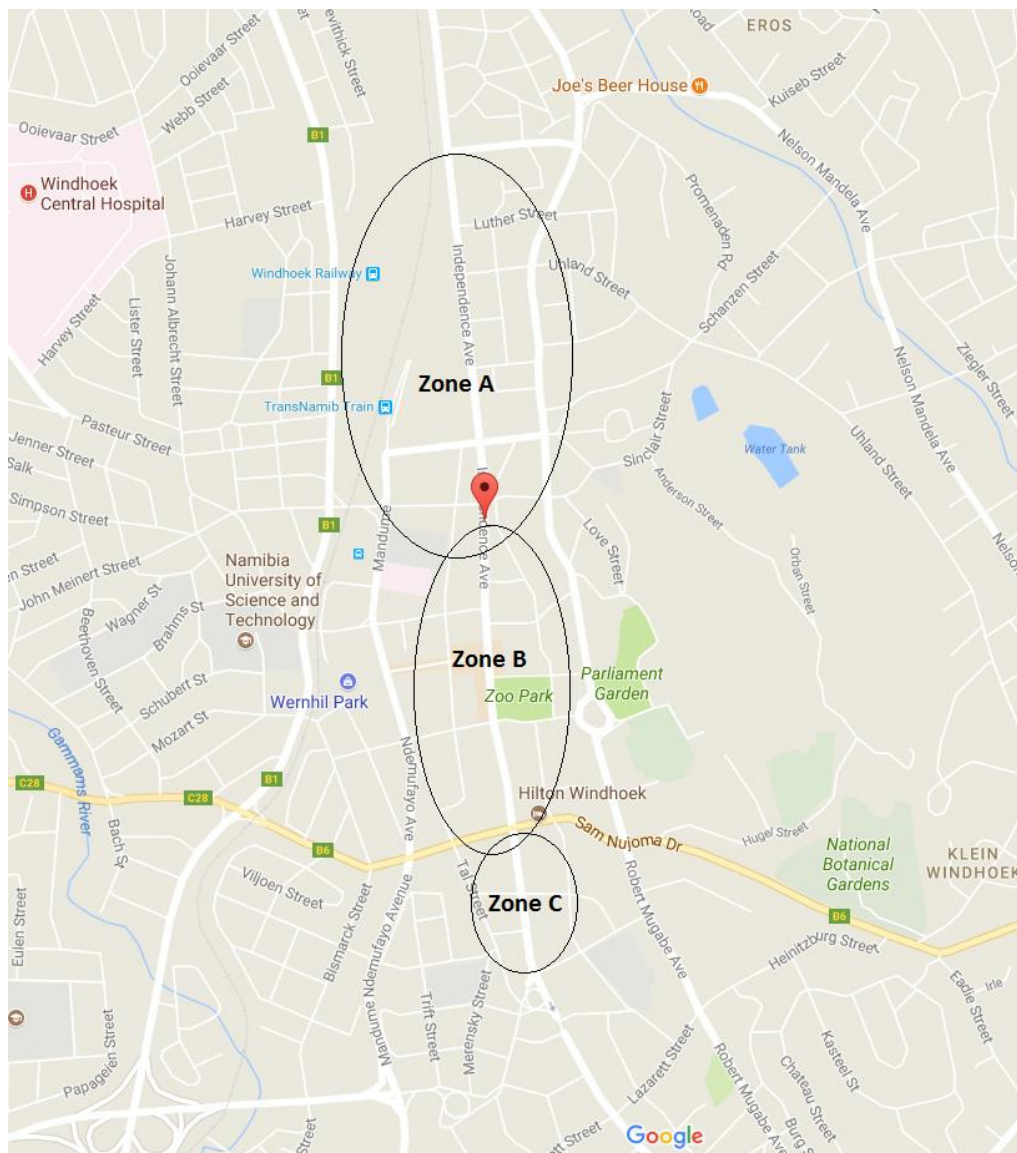


Figure 27: The three zones of Independence Avenue

Zone A, where the data collection began at the corner of Independence Avenue and Nelson Mandela Avenue, is particularly varied and mixed in appearance of commercial and non-commercial signage. The first businesses here are a big car dealership called “Pupkewitz” (on the right side of Independence Avenue when looking at the map) and (to the left) an African cuisine restaurant called “Talia” and several smaller businesses such as a tailor, a small clothing store and small “beauty boutiques” (pictured in Figure 28). Here, at what may be considered the quieter end of Independence Avenue, we also see the only big advertising billboard (a Nivea advert) in the LL. What follows after Pupkewitz to the one side of the avenue are the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Namibian Police Force Tourist Protection Unit.



Figure 28: Small local businesses in the LL

The parallel sides of the LL then become distinctly similar, with a section consisting predominantly of small businesses such as fashion boutiques, small medical practices, optometrists and pharmacies, as seen in the Figures 29 and 30, for example. Here both sides of the avenue in this zone then begin to change again. The side on which official institutions such as the Namibian Police Force are situated (on the right when looking at the map) then displays non-commercial government signage again by the Ministry of Home Affairs and

Immigration, and is followed by the big commercial signage of the national Namibian postal service (see Figure 31). On the other side of the avenue, however, we now find less-local and rather large retail businesses such as PEP, Shoprite and MAD Price (see Figure 32) and banks such as FNB and Nedbank. Although on the other side we find commercial signage by local corporation Bank Windhoek and South African franchise restaurant, Spur, in Zone A, on the right side of Independence Avenue (when looking at the map) non-commercial signage is significantly more frequent than on the parallel left side.



Figure 29: A small fashion boutique



Figure 30: A small medical practice and adjacent pharmacy



Figure 31: Large signage on the Namibian postal service building



Figure 32: Retail businesses in Zone A

In Zone B a progression to more commercially concentrated signage is visible as well as an increase in the appearance of larger businesses (many of which are originally South African franchises). Particularly towards the left side (again when looking at the map of Figure 27) high-rise buildings and bigger commercial signage dominate the landscape (see Figures 33 and 34). Here the small Carl List Mall and shopping centre Wecke and Voigts are also situated. On the opposite side we find a break in public signage as a leisure park appears after the Namibian postal service building. Following this, however, is a large office block building with an FNB ATM, a coffee and ice-cream shop, and then the Hilton Hotel.

On either side of the avenue in this Zone B we see not only public signage of an exclusively commercial nature, but also signage that more specifically promotes more high-end luxury goods and services. Particularly on the side in which the two shopping centres are located we find an increase in businesses like souvenir shops and jewellery stores (see Figures 35 and 36). While no signage is present, in this zone local crafters also sell their traditional African art and souvenir pieces to tourists (see Figure 37). The predominance of businesses that offer luxury and non-essential goods and Namibian souvenirs, as well as the presence of accommodation like the Hilton Hotel, gives the impression that this central zone of Independence Avenue is more targeted towards appealing to tourists.



Figure 33: The high-rise buildings of Zone B



Figure 34: The big signage of franchise businesses in Zone B



Figure 35: A local souvenir shop



Figure 36: A small jewellery store



Figure 37: Local crafters sell their handmade souvenirs and art

Zone C mirrors Zone A in many ways. Here we see the emergence of smaller businesses and non-commercial signage again. After walking past the Hilton Hotel in Zone B one comes across The Office of the Mayor and the Debt Management Division of the City of Windhoek. Following this, and on the opposite side of the avenue, smaller local businesses (reminiscent of those located in Zone A) are situated. These include small salons, medical practices, accounting services and pharmacies, as well as several local fashion boutiques and tailors such as those in Figures 38 and 39. At the end of this zone and ultimately Independence Avenue, we find several small gambling houses, a used-car dealership, a church and signage advertising an auctioneering firm. Much like Zone A, the public signage in Zone C displays a dynamic and interesting mixture of commercial and non-commercial entities. It seems quite unusual, for instance, to see a gambling house (Figure 40) located across the road from a church.



Figure 38: Some of the small fashion boutiques and salons typical of Zone C



Figure 39: More small local businesses located in Zone C

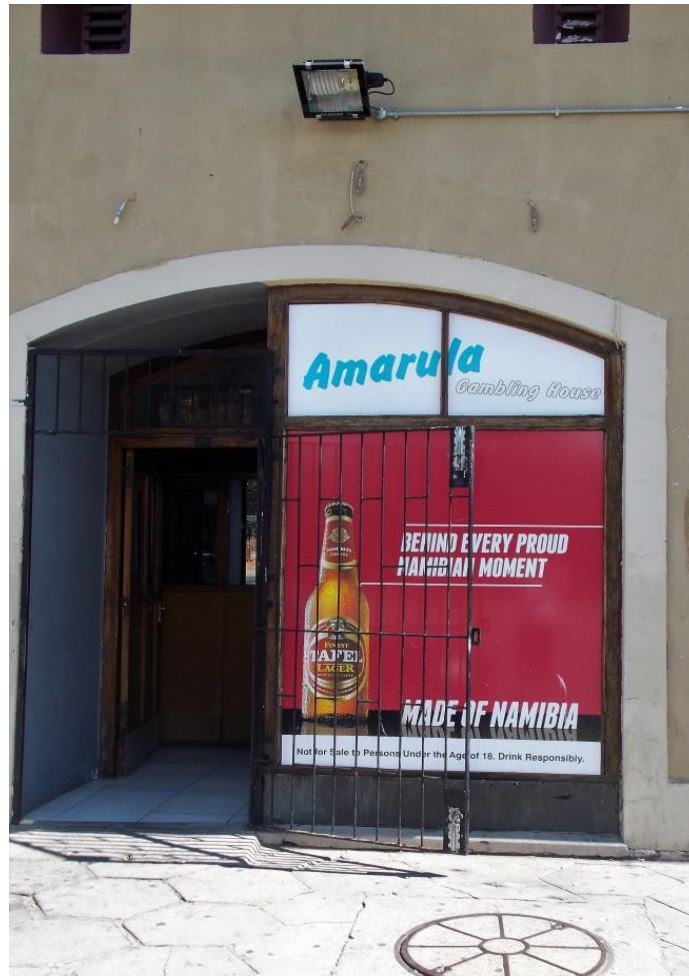


Figure 40: A local gambling house situated across the road from a church

Looking at the zones it becomes clear that the LL has a central area where commercial signage is concentrated and where passers-by are more likely to find luxury goods and services and non-local business. Zone B seems to have been designated as the more “up-market” exclusive scene of Independence Avenue with largely retail and, more specifically, tourist-oriented signage. What is noteworthy is that a lot of German and Portuguese multilingual/non-English signage is present here, and that Angola is considered first of the top ten tourist markets in Namibia, and Germany fourth (see also Section 1.2 and Section 7.7 (page 89)) (MET 2015: 7). The frequency of this multilingual/non-English signage in conjunction with the predominant appearance of high-end commercial signage indeed suggests that this zone is to a great extent catering for tourists.

In some ways this zone seems to act as a site of luxury. As discussed in Section 3.2, signage in these sites may often be found in malls and typically promotes goods and services of a non-essential nature, and Zone B certainly has these features. Sites of luxury, however, also tend to display signage of a non-commercial official nature such as that produced by government, but signage of this sort is instead found in Zone A and C. These zones seem to typically provide products and services of a more essential nature that are more likely to be sought after by local inhabitants rather than tourists fleetingly moving through the space. In terms of public signage the zones may be described largely as sites of necessity (see Mpendukana (2014) in Section 3.2), even though these sites are typically located in minor or secondary roads. Although these zones are not found in such secondary roads, they still have a peripheral nature in that they are both situated towards either end of Independence Avenue, whereas Zone B is centrally located.

The public signage in all three zones remains highly dynamic and is open to change at any time, but at the time of my data collection the LL seemed to me organized in such a way that these three areas could be distinguished with their own unique features as discussed above. So while Zone B will not be exclusively identified as a site of luxury, and Zone A and C as sites of necessity, I conclude that the central zone boasts signage produced predominantly by larger commercial businesses or niche shops that aim to attract tourists and passers-by seeking luxury goods and services, whereas the two peripheral zones display a variety of commercial and non-commercial signage that seem targeted rather at local passers-by and those seeking essential goods and services.

7.8.2 The design features of commercial and non-commercial signage

The nature of humans is such that we tend to judge a book by its cover, despite being told not to. When we look at a public sign we focus on the one hand on its writing and its content, discerning what language it is written in and if we can consequently read it, then receive and interpret that written code to find the sign's meaning. However, much like the cover page of a book, when we see a public sign we not only analyse its writing, but what surrounds and supports that writing as well. Thus, we look at the sign itself and its various elements, judging its colour, possible age, how it is made and what materials might have been used in its

production. When we examine these features we inevitably make assumptions about the sign-producer and the product or service being sold or offered. Most of us would admittedly be more inclined to hire a plumber who has advertised his services in a professionally-designed printed advert in a newspaper than one who has made a hand-written sign and pasted it to a street pole. Such sign variability certainly exists in the LL of Independence Avenue and inevitably affects how different commercial and non-commercial entities are perceived.

The overall distinction that has been made in the present study between commercial and non-commercial signage in the LL is that the latter is always “factory” produced. That is to say that this signage is always printed professionally, whether in the form of poster material or harder material such as that of metal street signs, and never hand-made and hand-written. This is perhaps not surprising given that this signage is also of either an official or more formal and serious nature, produced by the three main sign-producers identified in the Methodology chapter, namely government/municipal authorities, public awareness campaigns and religious organizations. These sign-producers have to display continuity between their public image and their public signage (it would, after all, be unfitting for the official and highly-regarded Ministry of Justice to identify itself by sticking a hand-written piece of paper with its name on it to a building). Such non-commercial entities, particularly in the case of government/municipal authorities, also have to show financial stability by producing professionally-made signs, and are also likely to have the financial capital to do so.

The signage produced by non-commercial entities also tends to be simplistic in style, with block-letter fonts, few to no images and usually black and white colouring. These signs, like the one in Figure 41, are from ostentatious and reflect the serious nature of the sign-producer. However, though nonetheless still professionally-produced, the anti-domestic public campaign posters displayed in Figure 10 (refer back to page 72) are vastly different from these other signs in that they use hand-scripted irregular font, graphic images and hard-hitting language. The sign-producer, as is typical of public campaigns, is clearly trying to shock and gain attention and so continuity between sign-producer and the signage is still achieved.



Figure 41: A municipal sign by the City of Windhoek

Commercial signage demonstrates less restriction than non-commercial signage and a myriad of design features. Here we also find personally-made signs such as those in Figures 42, 43 and 44. These types of hand-typed and produced signs are found all along the LL, typically stuck to walls or poles. Many of these small commercial signs in which individuals offer their services or request work were spotted, and most were located in Zone A and C. Interestingly simple in design and reminiscent of the structured black and white, block-letter features of a lot of government/municipal signage, the impression given off by these signs is that despite what seems like a clear lack of financial capital to have the signs produced professionally, the sign-producers want to appear professional and experienced.

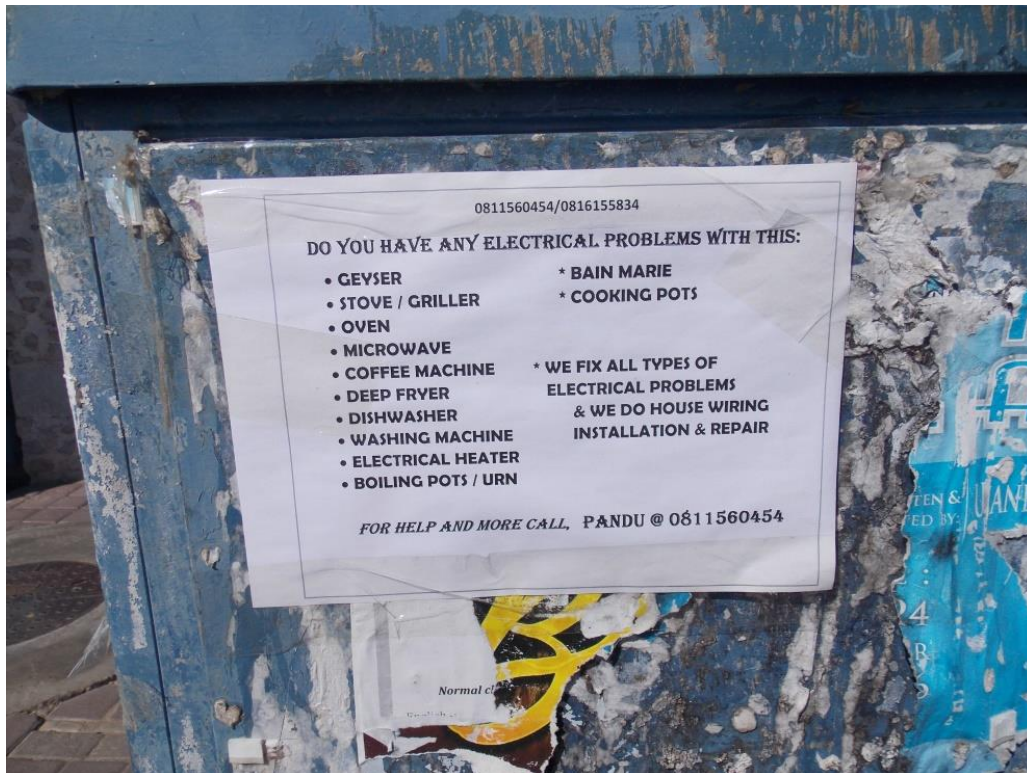


Figure 42: A personally-made sign advertising electrical services

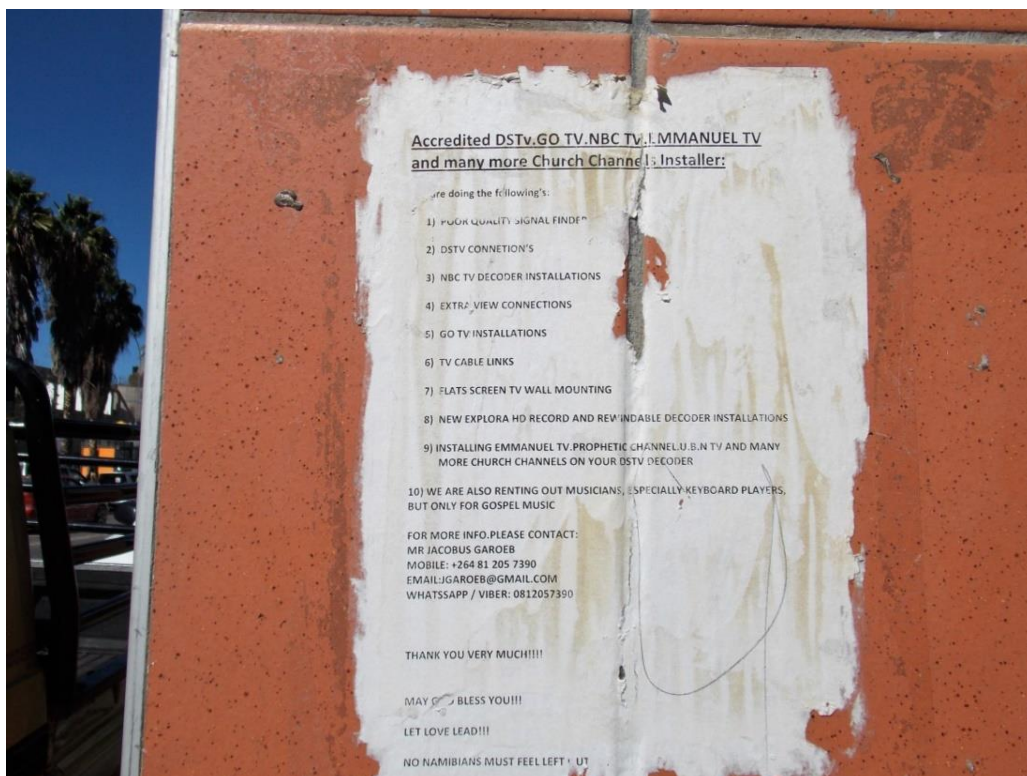


Figure 43: Another printed notice offering television installation services

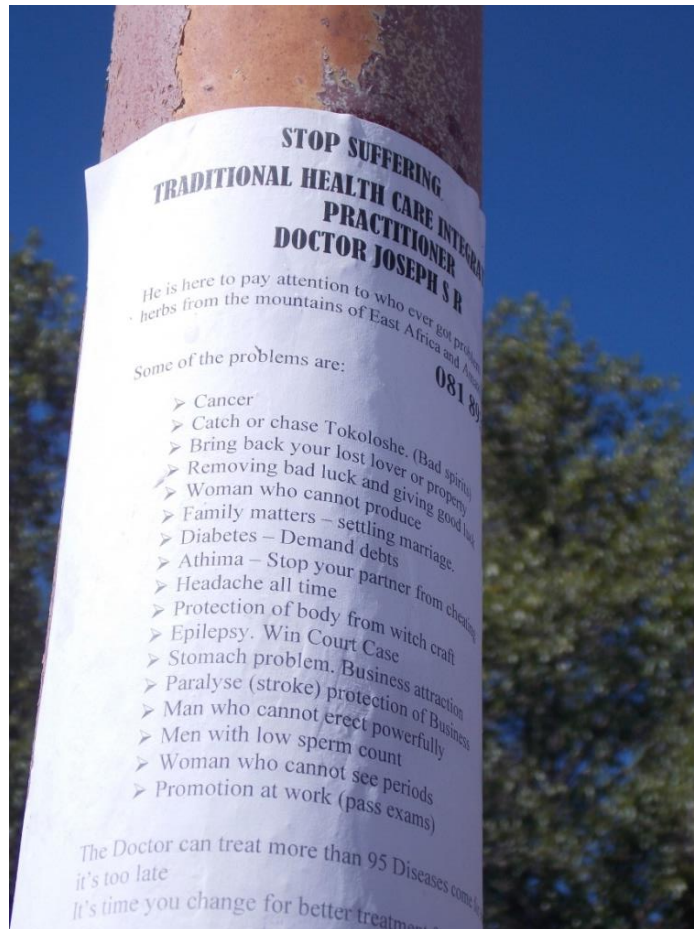


Figure 44: A traditional healer listing his services on a personally-made sign

Within commercial signage in the physical space of the LL we see distinct variations in the design and appearance of signs produced by small (and typically local) businesses and larger companies (that often happen to be originally South African franchises). Signs of smaller businesses, while mostly printed and professionally-made, tend to be relatively simplistic in both font and colour with few to no unique markers of identity such as a logo or images. It is, for instance, difficult to tell what services Kozonguizi and Associates (Figure 45) offer. These signs also usually come in the form of inexpensive looking thin placard-type material and are relatively small, such as those seen in Figure 46. This contrasts with signage of larger corporations such as Shoprite (featured in Figure 47) and the likes of South African franchises Mr Price and Checkers. These signs are much larger and bolder and hoisted mechanically onto buildings, unlike the small business signs that are usually hung from a ceiling or stuck to a wall. What we find again is that public signage reflects the identity and

image of the sign-producer. Bigger corporations have bigger and bolder signs, signifying that they have a larger customer base, greater economic investment and income. Smaller grass-roots businesses on the other hand have smaller and simpler signs, reflecting the size of their business and market. These businesses likely consider the design and appeal of their signs less important when the products and services they provide are likely to be advertised by “word-of-mouth” by frequent customers.



Figure 45: Kozonguizi and Associates – a sign simply showing the name of the business



Figure 46: The simplistic signs of some small businesses in the LL



Figure 47: The big signage of a franchise grocery store

These are obviously not exclusive features of small and big businesses. Many economically larger firms who sell high-end luxury goods and services such as the Hilton Hotel and American Swiss (see Figures 48 and 49) use noticeably simple fonts and colouring. Although similarly minimalistic like the signage of the small business discussed above, these signs are again materially more costly looking, and in context with their products and services reflect a sophisticated nature. So while some big businesses like the grocery and clothing stores mentioned above use their signage to draw attention to themselves, probably because they have many competitors who provide similar inexpensive and often essential goods, businesses who provide luxury products, such as jewellery, try to maintain an exclusive image through simple and more subtle signage.

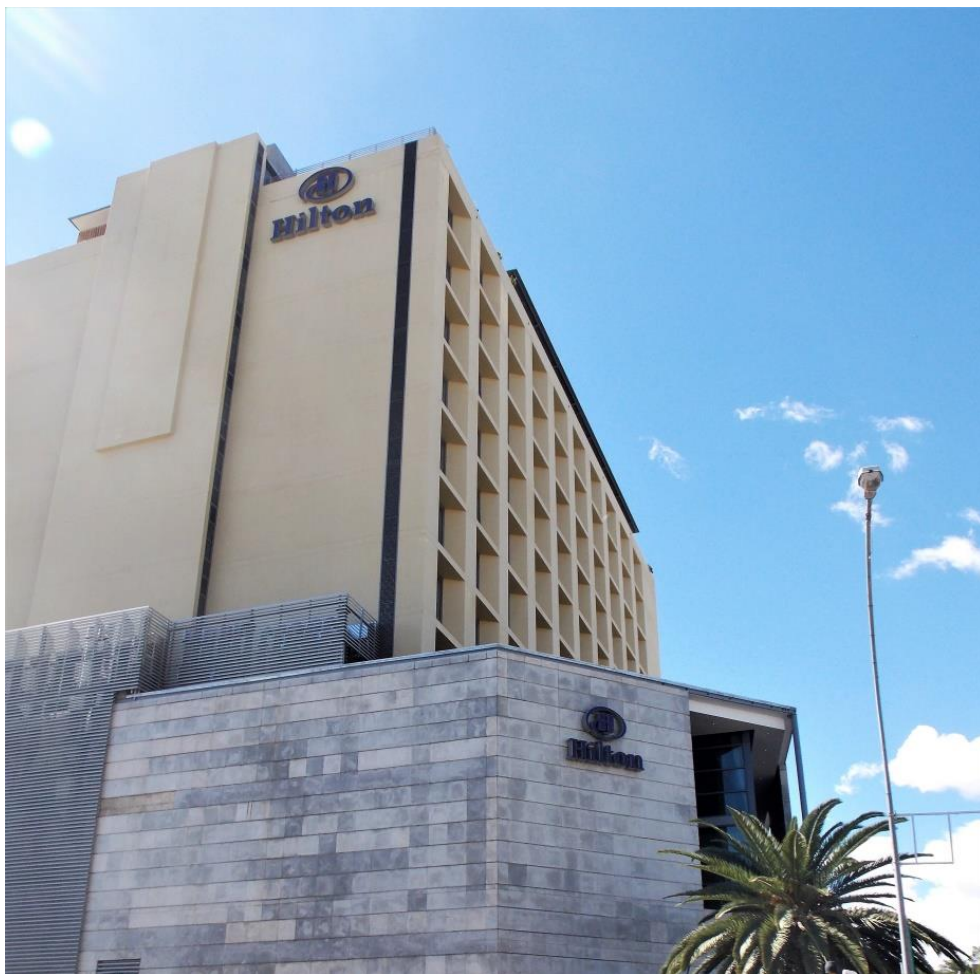


Figure 48: The simple signage of the Hilton Hotel



Figure 49: Plain black and white signage of jewellery franchise American Swiss

Although a lot of small-business signage in the LL is typically very simplistic, some, much like big franchise signage, is multi-coloured and embellished with logos and/or images. The sign-producers seem to want to draw attention to their shops by using bright colours and large fonts, as seen in the signs of Lock and Key Home (Figure 50) and Trisha's Take Away (Figure 51). This contrasts with some of the other small-business signage in the LL, and it is apparent that the sign-producers have different goals in mind. These small business owners perhaps find it necessary to produce bold signage so that they can be noticed among the larger and striking signage of big franchises in proximity. These signs, however, often appear slightly worn or old or produced using low-cost material. This leaves the signs sometimes looking unsophisticated and is likely to signal to passers-by that the sign is produced by a low-income business. A number of these smaller shops advertise themselves by placing mobile boards outside their stores in which they write additional information about the business (see Figures 52 and 14 (refer back to page 76)). By doing so they draw more attention to their store and create direct interaction with customers and appear more personally engaged. The impression that this additional signage sometimes gives off, however, is that the business is in greater need of customers.



Figure 50: The colourful signage of Lock and Key Home



Figure 51: The bold red sign of Trisha's Take Away shop



Figure 52: A hand-written blackboard guiding customers to the Biltong Den

The materiality of neither commercial nor non-commercial signage has fixed design features, but some characteristics seem to pertain more to one than the other. Non-commercial signage is typically rather plain, usually black and white with basic block-letter fonts and few to no other graphic features. Commercial signage on the other hands tends to be more dynamic and varied. Small-business commercial signage is usually smaller than that of big-business signage and more cheaply made, sometimes consisting of hand-written and hand-made signs. Colour and font design characteristics vary greatly between small and big-business signage, but the latter tends to appear professionally designed and more sophisticated. The public signage of all entities typically reflects the economic standing of the sign-producer and their image. The sign of a doctor's practice is, for example, naturally more likely to be simply designed and not colourful and boastful like that of a fashion franchise outlet might be. Through public signage we can typically make assumptions about the financial situation of the entity to which a sign belongs to and draw connections between design features of the sign and the corporate or non-commercial image such an entity wants to project.

7.8.3 Signage composition in the online space

The design features of signage in the online space are naturally significantly different to that of signage in the physical space. The fundamental difference is that the latter is tangible and the former is cyber coded and intangible. In the physical LL we can only engage with signage if it comes in the form of brochures, pamphlets and the like, but in the online LL we immediately interact with it. By searching for the website or social media page of a business/organization and clicking on its link and navigating the online platform, we actively interact with the signage and choose to read it. In the physical LL, whether we want to or not, we are automatically bound to read signage in our line of sight, but in the online space the reading of signage is in part determined by conscious decision-making when we intentionally visit a page and continue to navigate its content. The online space is also less spatially restricted and offers sign-producers the opportunity to reveal significantly more about their identity and products/services should they have an online platform. In the physical LL signs are often limited to the location of the products and/or services which they advertise, or are allocated specific locations and sizes by different authorities. Signs in the physical LL typically account for the movement of people and do not include large amounts of text that would require significant time and attention. In the online realm space is much less restrictive and substantially more information can be displayed. A website for instance can be composed of several “pages” and be navigated quickly, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram offer the limitless option to constantly post new information (and thus signs).

Approaching the online space I knew that not every business/organization would have an online platform, but this in itself can reveal something about such entities. This was the reality of lot of smaller businesses in the LL. Many small businesses such as doctor’s practices, salons, pharmacies and law or accounting services had no online signage platform. This may reveal a number of things. One assumption to make is that these businesses cannot afford to have a website designed or maintain a social media page. Conversely, another reason may be that these business owners consider their customer base as large enough and find it unnecessary to advertise themselves online as well. And while most people today embrace social media, some business owners might have more traditional ideologies and not want to engage with the online world.

Interestingly, several tailors, fashion boutiques and hairdressers tend to have a Facebook page but no other online engagement. This may be because Facebook is a free domain to advertise merchandise and engage with customers, and creating websites is a costly matter that some might not be able to afford. Some businesses might simply believe that one online platform is sufficient for their target market. The goods and services such businesses provide are typically straightforward and creating a website may not serve any useful purpose. These small and typically local stores characteristically presented a lot of personal engagement on their Facebook page. Talia Restaurant, for example, continuously either posts images of their food or updates its status to thank its customers (Figure 53). Characteristic of a lot of these smaller businesses as well is that their online signage mirrors that of their physical signage. The Talia Restaurant sign (see Figure 54) is for instance simple and inexpensive looking, and on their Facebook page the photos of the food that the restaurant makes have low clarity and are not taken professionally, and written signage is simply limited to short status updates. The design features of the physical signage of such businesses then usually carry over to the online platform, so that even online written signage is usually brief and typed with no accompanying graphics and thus similarly simple like that of the physical signage.

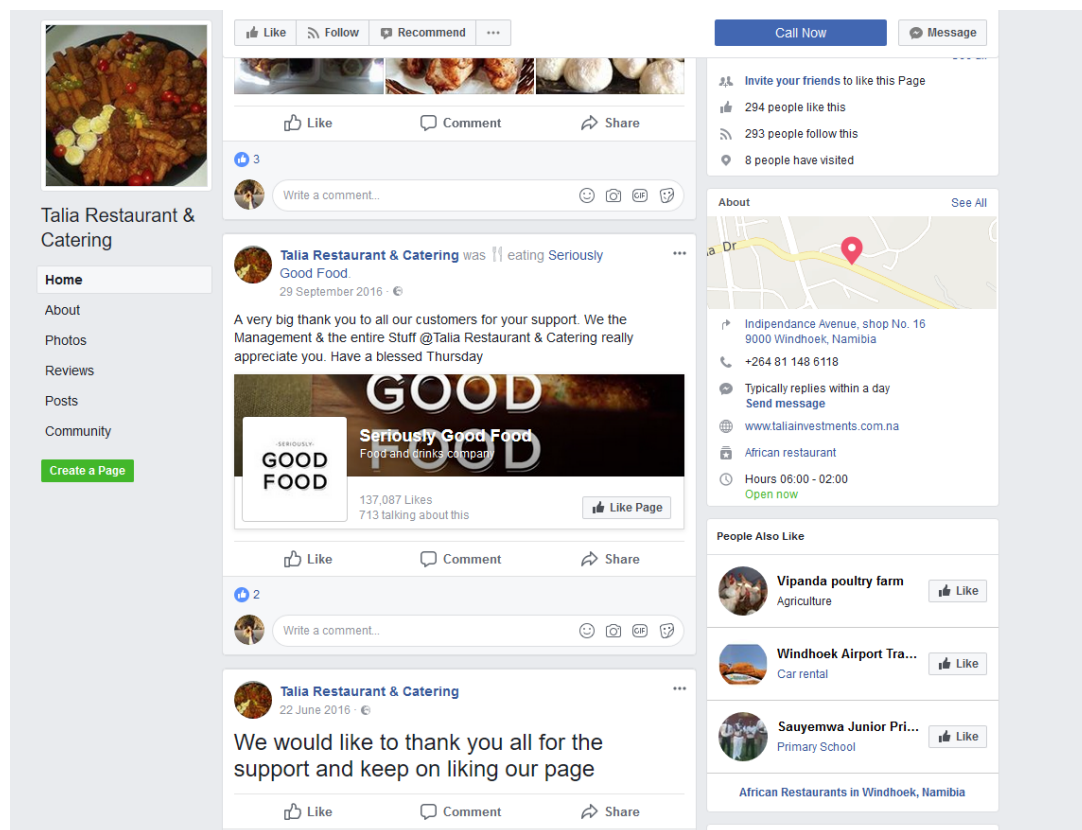


Figure 53: Talia Restaurant using its Facebook page to thank its supporters



Figure 54: The physical sign of Talia Restaurant in Independence Avenue

Much like some smaller businesses, government/municipal authorities also typically only use virtual signage on one platform. As discussed in the previous section, the physical signage of these entities is distinctly rudimentary, but on their online platforms (usually websites) signage becomes colourful and a multitude of images are added. Many websites of government organizations like the Office of the Prime Minister (featured in Figure 55) have similar design features and offer a significant increase in written information to inform readers of the purpose of the organization. Except for the Ministry of Justice, no other such organizations use social media pages. The Ministry of Justice (see Figure 56) seems to use Facebook as a platform to promote the initiatives it is involved in and continuously updates readers on the causes it supports. While the physical signage of these organizations is notably plain, their online signage is far more descriptive and engaging.



Figure 55: The homepage of the website of the Office of the Prime Minister



Figure 56: The Ministry of Justice showing local engagement on their Facebook page

Not all small businesses are limited to one online platform though, and many usually have both a website and a Facebook page. This is particularly the case of older, more established businesses. Through their webpage they can relate the history and purpose of their business, and on Facebook they can engage more easily with prospective customers. Business like Otto Mühr (Figure 57) and Pro Ex Auctioneers (see Figure 58) use their websites to relate their history and use the space to provide a more detailed description of the products and services they provide. In the physical space these sign-producers would be limited by spatiality and could not relate all the information that they have on their online platforms. As for all other businesses and organizations, the online space is thus an opportunity for entities to display significantly more detailed signage and provide a personal account of their image and goals.

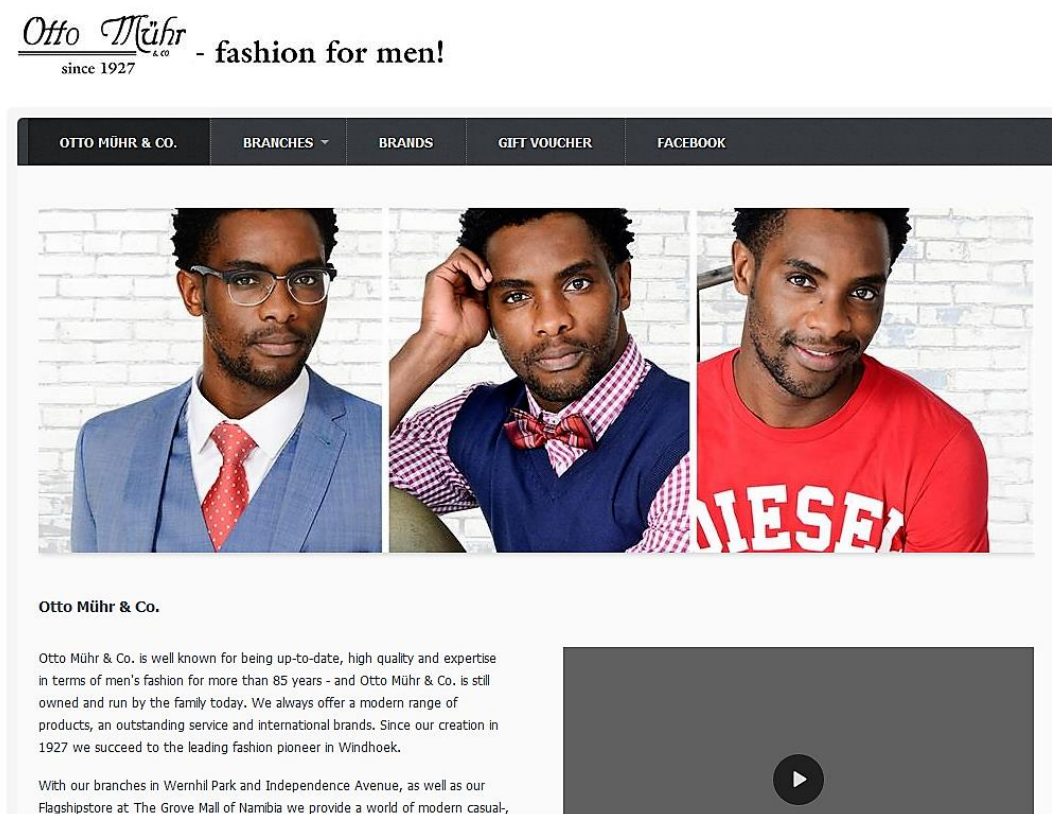


Figure 57: The website of men's outfitter Otto Mühr

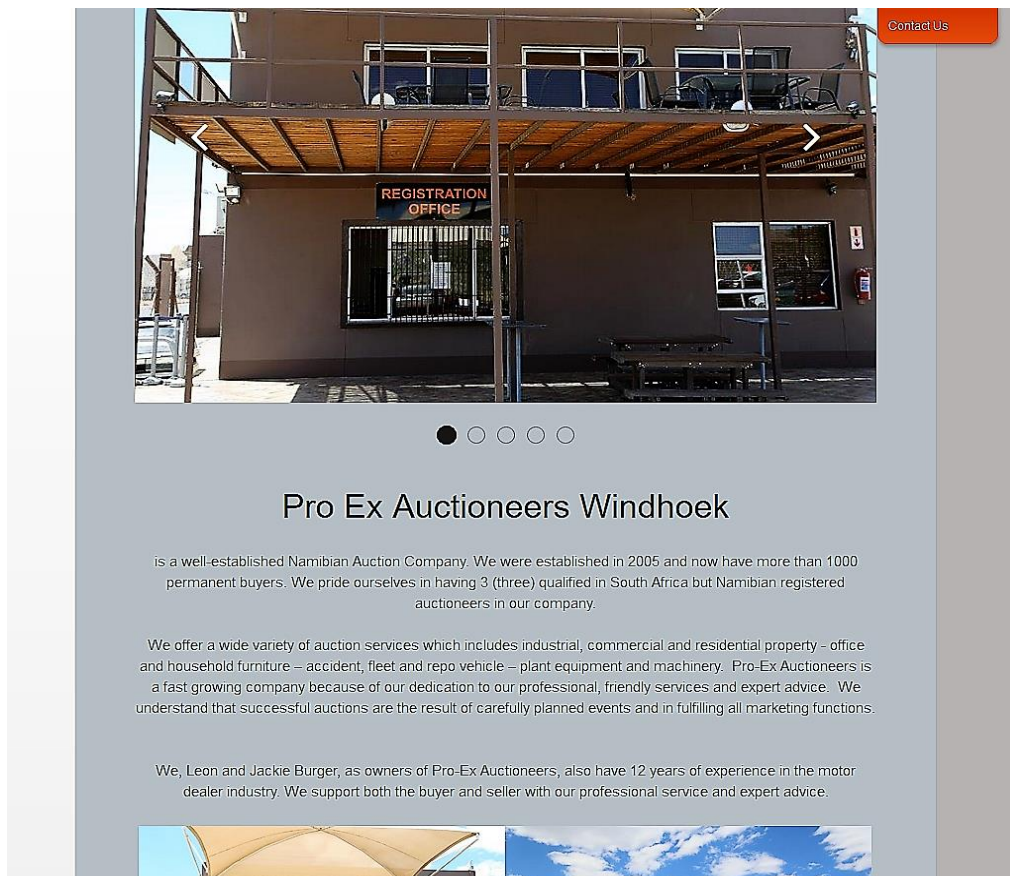


Figure 58: The website of Pro Ex Auctioneers

It is also interesting to note how the impression created by the physical signage of some smaller local business and non-commercial organizations varies greatly to that of their online signage. As discussed above, the online signage of government/municipal organizations is significantly more detailed and bold. The commercial signage of some smaller businesses in the physical LL is plain and appears to have been made cheaply, but in the online space signage becomes a lot more sophisticated. Signs like SWA Safaris (see Figure 25 again) and Tobie's (see Figure 59) simply use black font on a white background, and the latter sign looks relatively old and worn. When we look at their webpages however (featured in Figures 60 and 61, respectively), we see more colour, variation of fonts and neat presentation. The impression that this creates is that these businesses are more concerned with appearing professional and sophisticated in the online space, perhaps because it is here that they have greater room for signage and expanding on their image.



Figure 59: The slightly tattered looking sign of Tobie's clothing store

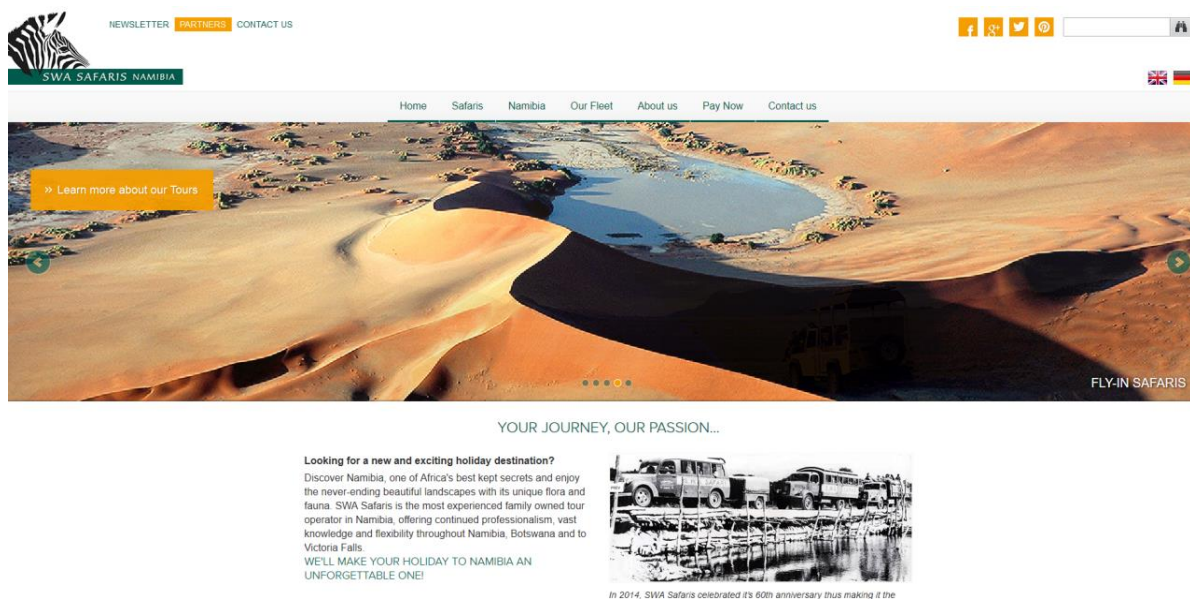


Figure 60: SWA Safaris' sophisticated webpage

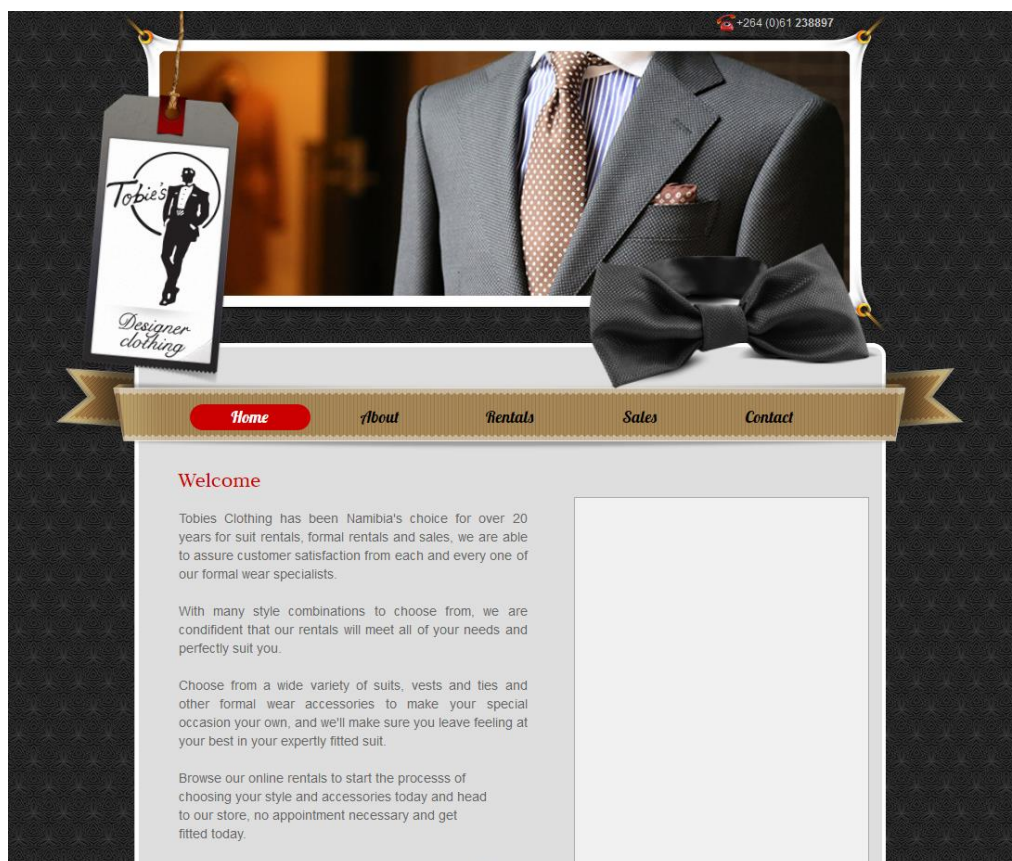


Figure 61: Tobie's website

Unsurprisingly, unlike most of the smaller businesses and official organizations in the LL, big corporate firms and franchises typically have several online platforms, including a website, a Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram page. This reflects that these businesses have the financial capital to engage in all of these online platforms and maintain them. In the same way that their physical signage in the LL is usually bigger in size than that of small business entities, their online outreach and presence is bigger too. Some of these franchises, although not local, use online signage to demonstrate local Namibian engagement. Nedbank for instance is one such corporation. Although a bank of South African origin, they have a Namibian-based website and use their Facebook page to regularly post information about the local events or causes they are involved in (see Figure 62). While FNB provides one of its brochures in the local language Oshivambo (see Figure 11 again), and also has a Namibian website and a specific Namibian Facebook and Twitter page, this originally South African bank only markets its services and does not show any local engagement like Nedbank

does. This contrast is a regular feature of the public signage of the LL, where some non-local businesses use their online platforms to create a more local image, but others choose to maintain a strictly standard corporate image.



Figure 62: Nedbank promotes a local festival and posts about a cause it has donated to on their Facebook page

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Language policy and language practices in the LL

In the previous chapter it was established that there is a clear predominance of English signage both in the physical and online space of the LL. Particularly in the latter case there were fewer instances of signage visible in other languages. Even in those rare cases where websites, for example, could be altered to read in a different language, the content was always first displayed in English (except for one website that was first available in German). Social media platforms like Facebook were also almost always exclusively English, with some sign-producers, who displayed multilingual signage in the physical LL, also occasionally displaying online content in a language other than English. The predominance of English signage in Independence Avenue and in its corresponding online domain, means that for part of the first research question of the present study, namely to what extent the LL reflects Namibia's LP according to its Sub-Article (1) (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 6), the answer unmistakably is that it strongly reflects its stipulations.

Considering Sub-Article (3) (Namibia (Republic) 1990: 7) however, one can conclude that nothing prevents private entities, thus commercial and un-official (i.e. not including government/municipal authorities) non-commercial sign-producers, from freely using other languages in their public signage. And yet, even at the grass-roots level, sign-producers rarely chose to deviate from the use of the official language. Indeed there were some 43 cases of public signs in the physical space of the LL written either in multiple languages or in a language other than English. This, however, is an exceptionally small number when we consider the total number of signs in the LL. There were also only two instances of an indigenous African language (Oshivambo) appearing in the physical public signage of the LL, and yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, there are several small stores in the area in which the name of the owner is included in the business's signage, and from these we can stipulate that they are likely to be owned by local African language speakers. When we consider this and the ethnolinguistic diversity of not only Namibia but more specifically the central Khomas region in which the LL is situated, it is perplexing that not more multilingual signs can be found in the physical LL. Where it may make sense for sign-producers to use English so predominantly in the online space as the signage here has a more global reach,

sign-producers must be aware that English is actually a minority language in the context of the physical LL. What then explains the dominant use of English here by sign-producers?

In the data analysis it was noted that it is reasonable to find the exclusive use of English in non-commercial signage by official government/municipal entities for logistic and political reasons. For commercial sign-producers it then also makes sense to use English for economic reasons as it is increasingly considered a lingua franca of the world and businesses will want to attract not only locals but tourists as well. However, since we do find instances in which some commercial and non-commercial signage is written in English and one or more other languages, certain language ideologies must be at play when most other entities freely choose to only use English. English is spoken by a minority of the population of Namibia, so its predominant appearance in the LL and the lack of presence of the other languages of Namibia clearly does not reflect the actual language practices of everyday Namibians. This means that for the other part of the first research question, namely to what extent the actual linguistic practices of Namibians are reflected in Independence Avenue, the answer is that we see very little evidence of the real language practices of local inhabitants here.

What it does reflect is that English is given an important status and considered by sign-producers as the best language to use in their public signage. The language has been symbolic of freedom and unity since the country's attainment of independence, and one might assume that local sign-producers have inevitably allocated high-regard for it and consider the public use of English as a display of that regard and as support for what it symbolizes. But what makes numerous sign-producers use German, Afrikaans and Portuguese either exclusively or in conjunction with English, but indigenous African language speakers (and all other producers of monolingual English signs for that matter) stick to the exclusive use of English?

These local sign-producers may want to avoid showcasing tribal affiliation and thereby deterring local customers of different ethnic backgrounds if hostilities between ethnic groups exist. This may be the case when one considers how many small-business owners in the LL personalize their signage by including their names in it and in this way giving clues to their ethnic background, but still only produce their signage in English. Alternatively, however, we might assume that local African business-owners regard their own languages as low-status and insignificant. This may be a general attitude of sign-producers in the LL given how rarely we see indigenous African languages displayed here. This is supported by Davids' notion that

many indigenous communities do not regard their mother tongue as useful in educational domains (see Section 5.2) (2003: 201). It is perhaps through years of colonial oppression and the suppression of the use of these local languages that Namibians have an engrained notion that these languages are inferior. With the strong promotion of English after the country's independence and its dominant use in education and legislative, administrative and judicial sectors, it is not surprising that this notion may then be further entrenched and manifest itself in how sign-producers use language in the public space. Even more so one might find this to be the case in the LL of the present study – it is after all named “Independence Avenue”, in homage to Namibia's attainment of freedom.

The LL of Independence Avenue is more than just a clear reflection of Namibia's official monolingualism. From what has been discussed above, it becomes apparent that several ideologies are perpetuated here. To see such a great extent of the use of English in the LL, despite sign-producers having the freedom to use any other language(s), and the more frequent visibility of other Indo-European languages and not indigenous African languages, reveals something about the status that is allocated to these languages. As noted in this study, the visibility of languages does not necessarily indicate their vitality. When we look at the linguistic context of Namibia one can certainly say that the language use in the LL does not reflect the vitality of certain languages, but rather the status they are allocated. It is clear that English has been given a high status with equivalent power and thus dominates public signage in the LL, and that other languages spoken in Namibia, particularly indigenous African languages, are allocated a low status.

8.2 Why does language use in the LL matter?

Why is studying the language used in the public signage of an LL important, one might ask? What we learn about an LL can reveal language ideologies and practices that ultimately have certain implications and consequences. This might tell us what positive and negative attitudes individuals and groups have towards different languages, and, should the latter be revealed, we can work towards changing these negative ideologies.

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In the context of the LL in this study, while I do not agree with Frydman's view that "the exclusive use of English in Namibia's important public domains serves to prevent the learning of Namibian languages, thereby leading to the erosion of these languages" (2011: 186), I believe that such an exclusive use diminishes the importance of other languages and supports the unsettling notion that these languages are inferior. Although English is indeed predominantly used in public domains, I do not believe that this practice will be carried over into the homes of Namibians and lead to their disappearance, as Frydman suggests. What I do feel, however, is that it reflects a disregard for the importance of other languages in the country and promotes a monolingual landscape. This ultimately leads to the continuous absence of such languages, perhaps not in the private domain, but in the public domain. This means that the diglossic situation envisioned by many language policy planners for newly independent African countries, in which a European language such as English would be used for formal and specialized domains, and indigenous languages for other lower-status functions (see Section 5.5 on this) has not been met. While these "lower-status functions" have not been described, one might assume that public signage by non-official entities would fall under this category, since it is neither formal nor specialized. Such a language situation is cause for concern, because as linguists we surely consider the appreciation and respect of every language paramount.

An LL not only reveals a sociolinguistic reality, but offers an opportunity to implement changes where negative language ideologies and practices prevail. Perhaps through indigenous-language learning initiatives and public awareness signage that incorporates greater multilingualism, for example, such negative linguistic ideologies can be mitigated. And as discussed in Section 4.2.4, an LL may be used as an LP mechanism. While this typically holds negative connotations of manipulation, public signage in an LL can actually be used to influence language ideologies and practices positively. The probable reality is that most sign-producers at the grass-roots level might not be aware of the exact stipulations of the LP as stated in the Constitution (Namibia (Republic) 1990), while official government/municipal entities are. If one were to effectively begin to change the LL to encourage the development of a multilingual landscape that reflects the ethnolinguistic reality of all Namibians and supports the appreciation for other languages, one might propose that the signage produced by official non-commercial entities may be part of the first step of such a change. If government/municipal entities were convinced to embrace the open-endedness of Namibia's LP and use some of the most widely spoken languages in Namibia in the public

signage of an LL such as the one in this study, it may foster the increased use of multilingual signage by all other sign-producers. If such evident change from a predominantly monolingual to a multilingual LL occurs, it may then encourage the revision of Namibia's LP, as Pütz (1995) and Frydman (2011) suggest it should be, to invest in multilingualism not only in public signage but in education and legislative, administrative and judicial domains.

8.3 The geosemiotic distribution of public signage in Independence Avenue

When the placement of signs within the LL was examined a pattern of distribution was noticed that led to the distinguishing of three zones of signage. It became apparent that Zone B acted as a central point for all commercial signage, particularly that of bigger franchises and luxury product sellers. Here there was thus also a decrease in the presence of smaller local businesses. Zone A and C were instead areas where small-business signage was concentrated. Signage by small medical practices, pharmacies, optometrists, salons, fashion boutiques and individuals advertising their services or requesting work was particularly prominent here. In these zones we could also find the most significant proportion of non-commercial signage, mostly in the form of signage produced by government/municipal authorities. Interestingly, such official public signage was almost exclusively situated on the one side of Independence Avenue (the right side when looking at the maps in Figure 1 and Figure 27).

Commercial and non-commercial entities, whether by intention or not, seem to have demarcated certain boundaries in which they exist in the LL. Smaller local businesses and official authorities tend to situate themselves in peripheral areas, Zone A and C acting as sites in which local inhabitants are more likely to find the essential goods and services they are looking for. Zone B on the other hand seems to be a focal point for big businesses and foreign franchises that typically provide luxury goods and services. This zone also provides goods and services that are targeted towards foreign tourists. As such it seems that, while all zones are welcome to and host a variety of different visitors, Zone B provides a central experience for tourists and displays signage that gives the impression that this is a more high-end luxury market area. Moving from this zone into either Zone A or C sees an arrival into more local environments where we might see fewer tourists and rather Namibian passers-by.

Whether planned or not, it is apparent that Zone A and C are peripheral areas of the LL in which smaller and typically local business or official entities choose to situate themselves. This creates an interesting dynamic of movement in which local visitors who know precisely what it is that they want or need typically move within these areas on a frequent basis, and tourists or consumers interested in niche products and services that are likely to be non-essential tend to frequent the central domain of Zone B. How the public signage in an LL is distributed can therefore tell us what relationships and boundaries exist between different commercial and non-commercial entities, and how visitors are likely to navigate and use the space.

As part of the second research question, examining how the placement of commercial and non-commercial signs differs in the LL and what this reveals about their identities, I conclude that most commercial signage of high-end and tourist-oriented goods and service providers, and of typically larger businesses, is placed in the centre of Independence Avenue, while commercial signage of smaller businesses and non-commercial signage is typically found in peripheral zones. When entities place themselves and their signage in the central Zone B, they thus mark their identity as exclusive with favouritism towards tourists and niche customers. As for the entities that we typically find in peripheral Zones A and C, by placing themselves and their signage here they reflect an identity of a more local background and that they seek to provide every-day goods and service for frequent customers who know what they need and want. The placement of many small commercial businesses and their corresponding signage here is also often reflective of their market size and economic status, given that these zones lean towards a low-end market.

8.4 The design features of commercial and non-commercial signage in the physical LL

In the three zones of public signage in Independence Avenue some distinct features of design could be distinguished between the different types of commercial and non-commercial signage. What marked non-commercial signage was that it always appeared professionally-made. And while some of the public campaign posters that were seen were bold and full of graphics, most non-commercial signage in the LL is especially simple in design with few to

no graphic embellishments and black and white colouring. Commercial signage on the other hand varied greatly.

The design of the signage of different commercial entities showed that these different sign-producers wanted to project a certain image. While some small-scale businesses had exceptionally simply designed signs that seemed to reflect the sign-producer's desire to appear professional, others had colourful and busy-looking signage that showed the sign-producer's desire to stand out and gain customers' attention. One of the most notable features of such small-business signage was the use of additional hand-written signs or the inclusion of the business owner's name in the signage to create a more personalized business profile. This may represent the desire of such sign-producers to appear transparent and appeal to prospective customers more intimately.

Big-scale businesses on the other hand show personalization in a different way, repeatedly displaying signs of the same logo and design as a form of branding. Often the signage of these businesses appeared much like that of small-business signage, signs were either simply designed and reflected a more serious and sophisticated business-owner image, or were brightly coloured and embellished with logos or images. This less-subtle form of sign design perhaps reflects a desire for sign-producers to stand out in what appears to be a competitive market. The more garish big-business signage does usually come from stores that provide essential goods like groceries and clothing, so it makes sense to see these design features when there are several of these entities in the area providing the same products.

In light of the second research question, which beyond sign placement investigates the design features of commercial and non-commercial signage and what this reflects about the identities of their respective sign-producers, the first conclusion to be made is that non-commercial signage tends to be displayed with simpler font and minimal colours and appears professionally-made, while commercial signage varies greatly across all entities. Some smaller businesses either use similarly simple design features in their signage in much the same way non-commercial entities do, or embellish it with vibrant colours and varying fonts, sometimes also incorporating additional hand-made signs. In the former case it seems that these smaller businesses want to project a professional image despite having a small market size and selling goods/services that are not necessarily considered high-end. In the latter case, these small businesses seem to want to stand out and emphasize a distinct business

“personality”. The signage of larger businesses, many of which are also foreign, can at times appear simplistic yet sophisticated, and through the materiality of the signs (these are usually larger placard/metal signs) the sign-producers signal a greater economic status than many small business shops. Other bigger corporations on the other hand, though appearing similar in materiality, are brightly coloured and contain large bold font. This seems to suggest the entities’ need to compete with other businesses that provide similar products/services.

8.5 Language use and design of public signage on online platforms

For the third research question the objective was to discover how language use and signage design compares between the physical and the online LL. What had been noted in Section 8.1 was that as for language use, much like in the physical LL, sign-producers continued to predominantly use English on online platforms such as websites and social media pages. Entities that did incorporate other languages in the online realm were either large foreign companies, or smaller local businesses who used German and Afrikaans (which they typically did in their physical signage as well). What this revealed was much of what was discussed in Section 8.1. Sign-producers clearly favoured English for various politically, economically and socially based ideological reasons, and again used other languages to reveal their actual linguistic backgrounds or their linguistic preferences. The English-predominance found here is reminiscent of what Ivković and Lotherington (2009) and Troyer (2012) find in online LLs.

In some ways, the physical features of signage in the LL were reflected in the online domain. Here small-business sign-producers and non-commercial organizations typically only had one online platform in which they promoted themselves. Where the signage of non-commercial entities such as government/municipal authorities and the one church situated in the LL was generally very simplistic in design and had serious messages in the physical space, these entities used the online space to elaborate on their functions and goals, appearing more engaging and charismatic in their virtual signage. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the corresponding online signage of business that had cheaply-made and slightly frayed signage in the physical LL did not appear professionally-designed or particularly sophisticated. Many smaller businesses like hairdressers, pharmacies and fashion boutiques either had no online platform

or simply used the free social media page Facebook. By using this page, sign-producers on the one hand show a desire to appear modern and more easily accessible to customers, but by having particularly simple profiles that often only display photos with limited writing or personal status updates, they reinforce the impression that they are low-income businesses, much like their physical signage does.

In contrast big-scale entities, particularly of the commercial kind, displayed signage on several different online platforms. This appeared as an extension of their physical signage, which was typically larger and more sophisticated both in materiality and design in the physical LL than that of small local businesses. Many big commercial entities like banks, franchise clothing, jewellery and grocery stores had websites and Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube profiles. This demonstrates a corporate image with a greater market and more competitive ideology in mind. These businesses thus not only dominate the physical LL in a visual sense with their larger signage, but also demonstrate their economic scale and market size by using a multitude of online platforms to continue to display signage. In some rare cases, the physical signs of some small-businesses appeared especially plain and even worn, but these sign-producers then displayed professional online signage either on one online platform or on several like bigger corporations. It seems that these sign-producers believe the online space is a more marketable extension of their business and hence choose to rather invest in its online professional appearance to appeal to and reach a greater customer base.

8.6 Theoretical implications

In light of the findings, it is salient to relate what they mean for the theoretical concepts discussed throughout the present study. Particularly in consideration of LP, the data in some ways reflects the theory but deviates from it in others. For one, the predominance of English in the signage of specifically non-commercial government/municipal authorities was not surprising, since, by their nature, they are bound to adhere to the official (and overt) LP. The LP is, however, distinctly open-ended and allows all other non-official (both commercial and non-commercial) entities to use other languages without legislative permission. If we consider this and the theory that is discussed in Section 4.2 and Section 4.2.4, in which

Landry and Bourhis (1997) suggest that through bottom-up signage (i.e. by all such non-official commercial and non-commercial sign-producers) we often see actual language practices and ideologies in the form of a type of de facto LP reflected in the LL, one might expect to see a significant amount of multilingualism in the signage produced by these entities, especially by local Namibians. Instead we see exceptionally little multilingualism on this grass-roots level, which, according to the LP theory, is where real-life language practices typically manifest themselves. Consequently, what we can take from this is that the assumption that the real linguistic profile of a country will make itself evident in the public signage of LLs, especially when the monolingual LP has officialised a minority language, is not always accurate. A more suitable point of departure will be to understand LL more broadly as a reflection of ideologies (see Moriarty 2014; Barni and Bagna 2015; Blackwood 2015 in Section 2.5 on this).

What the presence and absence of languages in the LL tells us is also more closely related to how individuals, groups and communities allocate status to languages within a place. As Ricento (2006 (see my discussion thereof in Section 4.2.1)) states, a language's perceived value (i.e. status) is not necessarily based on its position as an official language, but rather on certain socio-cultural and political ideologies. This certainly rings true in the case of the LL investigated in the present study, where languages other than English (especially indigenous African languages) rarely appear. Sign-producers have clearly accorded English a high status, regardless of the fact that they may use any other language in their signs. English is then not only deemed highly valuable because of its status as official language of Namibia but for other ideological reasons by most sign-producers in the LL. LL study in relation to LP theory and multilingualism should ideally move towards a greater focus on what the visibility of languages tells us about ideology and language status in public spaces.

Another theoretical concept that makes itself evident in the present study is that of language ecology, which has been previously discussed in Section 4.2.3. While what the LL looked like before the implementation of Namibia's LP has not been examined, one may assume that it looked substantially different given the lack of English history in the country before its attainment of independence. Such a change is of course not merely physical, but reflective of social changes. Thus, given that the LP of Namibia indeed meant an introduction of a new language (English) into an existing language ecology and evidently increased its absorption in all public domains, inevitably leading to some form of change, the notion that the

introduction of a language can have serious effects on existing linguistic environments becomes visible here.

As for geosemiotic theory, sign-placement and use in the LL undoubtedly reveals meaning-making (and thus place-making) processes. Through public signage various entities have found ways to reveal their identities (in terms of economic, political, linguistic and/or social-cultural backgrounds) and associated beliefs and values. A significant amount of the commercial signage of larger (and often foreign) businesses is located in a central zone of Independence Avenue and has a greater presence online, while the signage of smaller (and often local) businesses is placed in peripheral areas and is significantly less visible in the online realm. This trend signals that geosemiotic studies of LL can take on more critical approaches. The theory can incorporate perspectives on the marginalization of local entities by looking at sign-placement, providing insights into how the physical relegation of signs to certain areas of the LL reveals power relations between big foreign conglomerates and local business owners.

8.7 Final remarks

The LL of Independence Avenue is a dynamic and intriguing source for linguistic enquiry. Here a great dearth of multilingual signage has been discovered, and of these few and far between cases most are sources of small-scale commercial businesses. Although Namibia's LP does declare English as the country's official language, it is nonetheless an unrestricted policy that offers the freedom to use other national languages in public domains. The significant absence of multilingual signage in the physical and online LL might not reflect conditions of language vitality, but does demonstrate the overwhelming influence of English and its regard as a high-status language. The hegemony of English in public landscapes of Namibia such as Independence Avenue underplays and ignores the great linguistic and cultural diversity of the country.

We also find that larger and typically foreign (usually South African) corporations dominate the landscape with their signage by being situated in a central zone of the LL and displaying larger and more ostentatious signs. Although there are many small local businesses and

several official Namibian government/municipal organizations in this area, the signage of big commercial business entities leaves these appearing less important. Despite being a diverse source of sign-producers and languages, the LL of Independence Avenue demonstrates a neglect of multilingualism and the relegation of local businesses, while big (usually foreign) conglomerates and English dominate. If these facets can be recognized by local official authorities and Namibian business owners, perhaps a move to a multilingual and more corporately inclusive LL can be encouraged.

8.8 Possibilities for further research

Given how unexplored Namibia's public signage is, a first step towards further research would be to investigate more LLs in the country. Independence Avenue is but one small space in which language use in public signs and place-making can be investigated, and a more extensive study can incorporate other areas of Windhoek and parallel online domains. Further study can also go beyond exploring the LL of a city. The public signage of the urban township of Katutura (situated just outside of Windhoek), for instance, can also be investigated. How language is used and what commercial and non-commercial signs occur here could then be compared to that of LLs in the city.

A more critical dimension would involve orientating the study of LL in Namibia towards the theoretical concept of language ecology (see Section 4.2.3 again), looking not necessarily at the language use of public signs but of other sites of communication such as homes or schools. The notions that underlie this concept, namely that the introduction of a language into an existing language environment can have serious consequences on other languages and the value of language protection, can be useful points of theoretical departure in light of some of the discussions I had with Namibian locals. In discussing the various elements of the present study, a particular topic of concern was brought up a number of times by these individuals. They had pointed out a language situation of urban Namibian households that they had become increasingly aware of. They explained that in a city such as Windhoek, where many indigenous African language speaking parents spend most of their day at work, children of these parents typically go to English-medium schools and are exposed to their home-language for a comparatively minimal period of the day. As a result, many of these

children struggle to acquire an adequate competence in their mother tongue. There is no concrete evidence for these observations, and thus a study that investigates this possible phenomenon could reveal facets of Namibia's language ecology and aid towards acknowledging the need to protect the indigenous African languages of the country. This, in turn, might see an increase in the use of these languages in public LLs.

Furthermore, while urban areas provide rich sources of public signage, rural places can also offer intriguing and new dimensions for study of LL. A similar approach to that of Banda and Jimaima (2015) (see Section 5.4) can be used, in which signs are investigated against a semiotic backdrop and not only written signs (if there are any) but more abstract ones like fauna and flora are examined. The great dearth of LL study in Namibia means that there are many opportunities for further research in the country.

The present study focuses largely on the observable characteristics of the public signage of Independence Avenue in conjunction with theoretically based assumptions. The investigation of the LL can take on more critical approaches. I would be immensely interested in discovering the personal attitudes of sign-producers and passers-by of language use and sign-placement and design in the LL. Through the incorporation of interviews more concrete conclusions can be made about the ideological motivations of language choices in the LL, as well as how local and foreign visitors feel about the presence and/or absence of certain languages. One might then either integrate or investigate separately how local business-owners and people moving within the LL feel about the predominant visibility of signage of larger and typically foreign corporations.

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