Journal of Philosophy and Linguistics
Research Article Peer-review, Open Access

Language and Identity: A Study of the Linguistic Landscapes of Port Harcourt

Samuel F. Joshua, PhD [1]

Obomate Horsfall [2]

Abstract: This qualitative research study examines the socio-linguistic landscape of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Using a semiotic and critical discourse analysis approach, the study explores how language is used to construct identity and shape the cultural landscape of the city. The findings reveal that language as a powerful tool for shaping social and cultural identity, and that the linguistic landscape of Port Harcourt reflects the complex and diverse identities of its inhabitants. This study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between language, identity, place and has implications for policy and practice in the city. Using the selective purposive sampling technique that focuses on signs as text and visual graphics created to display information to a particular audience, that is manifested in the form of finding information in places such as streets or outside buildings, walls, boards, street signs; The study addresses the problem of a lack of understanding of the relationship between language, identity, and place in Port Harcourt. It has implications for policymakers in terms of promoting language diversity and cultural expression in the city. The results suggest that linguistic diversity is an important aspect of the cultural landscape of Port Harcourt, and that promoting this diversity can have positive effects on the city's social and economic development.

Keywords: Language, Linguistic Landscape, Identity, Visual Graphics, Linguistic Diversity.

[1,2]*Department of Linguistics & Language Arts, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Rivers State*

Introduction

Language serves as a means of communication and expression, playing a crucial role in human interaction and personal identity formation (Gorter, 2018). Gorter (2018) opined that identity, is a significant concept in language learning research, encompasses an individual's understanding of their relationship with the world, the organization of that relationship over time and space, and their perception of future possibilities. Recognizing language as a social practice, the concept of identity emphasizes the

reciprocal relationship between language and various interpersonal connections. Identity is viewed as multiple, subject to change, and a domain of conflict, as language learners engage with diverse social positions in their participation in society. Language learners' use of a second language in speaking, reading, or writing is influenced by power dynamics in different contexts, resulting in varying conditions. Learners who may face marginalization in one context could be highly valued in another. As a result, when language learners interact in the second language, whether orally or in writing, they are actively constructing and negotiating their identities. However, structural conditions and social contexts are not entirely predetermined. Through their own agency, language learners who encounter challenges in expressing their identity can reframe their relationship with others, adopting alternative and more empowered identities that facilitate the process of learning. In essence, individuals exhibit distinct differences and utilize language to express these differences or similarities. Language can serve as a unifying factor among individuals belonging to a specific social group, thereby establishing a close link between language and identity. An individual's identity is not fixed but rather influenced by the occasion, purpose, and context. When people find themselves in new geographic locations, they may redefine their identities to align with their surroundings. Language can be used to identify an individual with specific social statuses, races, nationalities, or genders. Typically, people who identify with a particular group share a common language, fostering a sense of belonging through shared experiences and accessible communication (Gorter, 2018)

The study of the linguistic landscape is a relatively new area, which draws from several academic disciplines such as applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology and cultural geography (Shohamy *et al*., 2010). The term Linguistic Landscape was first used by Landry and Bourhis in a paper published in 1997, when they defined it as; The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration. (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

In another study, Dagenais *et al*. (2008) introduced the idea of the Linguistic Landscape as ‘environmental print’, i.e., cities as ‘texts’. Linguistic landscape study is the investigation of displayed language in a particular space, generally through the analysis of advertisements, billboards, and other signs. A common definition used in the field is the one constructed by Landry and Bourhis (1997), when they opined that the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.

Huebner (2016) have since studied the trajectory of the scope of language landscape. He opined that the definition is so widened to include: Language in the environment, words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces, that is the center of attention in this rapidly growing area referred to as Linguistic Landscape (LL).

In this day and age, languages surround us everywhere; languages appear in flashy advertisements and commercials, names of buildings, streets and shops, instructions and warning signs, graffiti and cyber space. The dynamic field of Linguistic Landscape (LL) attempts to understand the motives, uses, ideologies, language varieties and contestations of multiple forms of ‘languages’ as they are displayed in public spaces. The rapidly growing research in LL grants it increasing importance within the field of language studies. LL research is grounded in a variety of theories, from politics and sociology to linguistics, and education, geography, economics, and law.

Jan Blommaert claims that linguistic landscape analysis offers a first diagnostic of the language situation of a certain area (street, village, building, country, online environment). This might include questions of multilingualism, dominance of languages, language policies. In a linguistic landscape analysis, the focus can be on questions such as: How many and what languages occur on signs in a specific public space. Are the signs monolingual, bilingual, multilingual and in what ways, i.e. what combinations of languages do occur. Are different languages used for different contents and in different domains. In what forms do

signs occur (notice boards, traffic signs, billboards, shop windows, posters, flags, banners, graffiti, menus, T-shirts, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogs, Websites). What about the language in terms of normativity: orthography, handwriting conventions, lexicon, syntax, literacy level. The linguistic landscape is important not only because it provides the backdrop to our day-to-day lives, but also as a valuable language learning resource. It shapes how we interact as a society and gives us our identity. And the best thing about it is that it's everywhere, open to everyone and free. (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara and Trumper-Hecht, 2006).

Port Harcourt is the capital city of Rivers state. It is located in the southern part of Nigeria, along the Bonny River and in the Niger Delta region with coordinates 4.8156º N and 7.0498º E. Port Harcourt is a major economic and industrial center in Nigeria, known for its oil and gas industries as many oil and gas companies have their operational bases there. It is also home to several other companies, including manufacturing, construction banking and trading industries. The city has an international airport, several seaports and well mapped out road network. Port Harcourt has a number of educational institutions and colleges, notable among them are the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Port Harcourt also is blessed with landmarks and attractions including the Port Harcourt pleasure park, the Isaac Boro park, the Port Harcourt zoo etc. The city also boosts of a rich vibrant culture. The city hold several cultural festivals throughout the year to showcase their rich cultural heritage. These features possessed by the city makes it desirable and hence persons from all over the country dwell in the city regardless of their difference in culture, language, identity, status, political and religious affiliations.

Statement of the Problem

The study of language and identity is crucial in understanding the intricate relationship between language usage and the formation of individual and group identities. However, there is a paucity of research specifically examining the linguistic landscapes of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the lack of comprehensive knowledge regarding the linguistic landscapes of Port Harcourt and their implications for language and identity.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the linguistic landscapes (Sociolinguistic Landscapes) of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, and analyze the ways in which language use contributes to the formation and expression of individual and group identities within the local community. Specific objectives of the study include to:

- examine the various languages and scripts present in the linguistic landscapes of Port Harcourt.
- analyze the spatial distribution and prominence of different languages in public signs, advertisements, and other visible textual displays.
- examine how language use in the linguistic landscape contribute to the formation and expression of individual and group identities in Port Harcourt?
- investigate the role of language and identity in shaping social interactions and community dynamics in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

- What languages and scripts are present in the linguistic landscapes of Port Harcourt?
- How are different languages and scripts distributed spatially in public signs, advertisements, and other visible textual displays?
- How does language use in the linguistic landscape contribute to the formation and expression of individual and group identities in Port Harcourt?

- What is the role of language and identity in shaping social interactions and community dynamics in Port Harcourt?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on language and identity by focusing on the linguistic landscapes of Port Harcourt, which remains relatively understudied. The findings will enhance our understanding of how language use influences the construction of individual and group identities in this specific cultural and linguistic context. Additionally, the study can provide valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and educators, informing their decisions regarding language policy, language planning, and educational practices in Port Harcourt and similar multilingual settings.

Scope of the Study

The study will be conducted in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, with a focus on the linguistic landscapes (Sociolinguistic Landscapes) within the city. The research will primarily analyze public signs, advertisements, and other visible textual displays in public spaces. The study will involve data collection through observations and document analysis. However, it will not delve into an in-depth analysis of individual language variations or dialects within Port Harcourt, as the primary focus is on the broader linguistic landscape and its relationship with identity.

Literature Review

language and Identity

Language and identity are intertwined constructs that play a crucial role in shaping individuals' sense of self and their interactions with others. Language serves as a powerful tool for communication, expressing cultural and social belonging, and constructing personal and group identities. It influences the way people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. Language use reflects and reinforces social, cultural, and ethnic identities, as well as various aspects of personal identity, such as gender, age, and social status.

One's language choices, accents, dialects, and linguistic practices are often influenced by their social environment, cultural background, and personal experiences. These language choices can become markers of identity, highlighting group affiliations, and helping individuals establish a sense of belonging and inclusion. Conversely, language differences can lead to stigmatization, prejudice, and discrimination, emphasizing the complex interplay between language and identity.

Several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to understand the relationship between language and identity. Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) suggests that individuals derive their identity from group memberships, and language serves as a symbolic marker of group identity. Accommodation theory (Giles *et al*., 1991) emphasizes how language use is adjusted to accommodate or differentiate from the speech of others, shaping social judgments and intergroup relations. Communication accommodation theory (Giles, 1973) further explores how individuals adapt their language and communication styles to converge or diverge with others in order to express or negotiate their identity.

Recent research has delved into the dynamic nature of language and identity, exploring how identity is constructed and negotiated through language practices in various contexts. Studies have examined linguistic strategies employed by individuals in multicultural settings (Piller, 2016), language use among diaspora communities (Wei, 2018), language attitudes and ideologies (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004), and the impact of globalization and migration on language and identity.

Furthermore, the advent of digital communication platforms and social media has introduced new dimensions to the relationship between language and identity. Online interactions provide individuals with opportunities to express and experiment with their identities, as well as encounter diverse linguistic practices and hybrid forms of language use (Androutsopoulos and Stæhr, 2018).

Understanding the complex interplay between language and identity is crucial for promoting inclusivity, fostering intercultural understanding, and challenging linguistic prejudices. By investigating language and identity, researchers contribute to our understanding of how language shapes personal and collective experiences, social interactions, and the formation of diverse identities in contemporary societies.

Recent research has highlighted the dynamic nature of language and identity, emphasizing that identities are not fixed but rather constructed and negotiated through linguistic practices in various contexts. Individuals engage in language choices and code-switching to navigate social situations and express their affiliations and allegiances (Piller, 2016). For example, individuals may switch between languages or dialects depending on the context, emphasizing their membership in a particular social group or signaling their alignment with a specific cultural identity.

Language is not only a means of communication but also a symbolic marker of group membership and cultural identity. The use of particular linguistic varieties, such as accents, dialects, or specific lexical choices, can evoke associations with certain social, ethnic, or regional groups (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). Moreover, language practices are deeply intertwined with other aspects of identity, such as gender, age, and social status. Sociolinguistic research has shown how language use is shaped by and shapes these intersecting identities.

The theoretical framework of social identity theory posits that individuals derive their identity from their group memberships and seek to enhance their self-esteem and social status through language use (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Language serves as a powerful tool for expressing and negotiating social identities, reinforcing the boundaries between groups or fostering intergroup solidarity. Accommodation theory further explores how individuals adapt their language and communication styles to converge or diverge with others in order to express or negotiate their identity (Giles *et al*., 1991).

The exploration of language and identity extends beyond face-to-face interactions. The rise of digital communication platforms and social media has provided new avenues for individuals to construct and perform their identities through language practices. Online interactions allow for the creation of virtual communities, where individuals can experiment with language use, adopt new linguistic styles, and engage in identity play (Androutsopoulos and Stæhr, 2018). The fluidity of online spaces offers individuals opportunities to express their multiple identities, transcending geographical and social boundaries.

Understanding the complex relationship between language and identity has implications for promoting inclusivity and challenging linguistic prejudices. By studying how language practices shape personal and collective experiences, researchers contribute to the development of more inclusive language policies and practices. Furthermore, investigating language and identity provides insights into the ways in which language plays a role in social stratification, power dynamics, and the negotiation of social identities in diverse and multicultural societies.

Theoretical Perspectives on Linguistic Landscapes

Linguistic landscapes refer to the visible and tangible manifestation of language in the public space, such as signs, billboards, graffiti, and other forms of textual displays. The study of linguistic landscapes is an interdisciplinary field that draws on various theoretical perspectives to understand the sociolinguistic, cultural, and political dimensions of these public displays of language. Here are some theoretical perspectives commonly applied to the study of linguistic landscapes:

Sociolinguistic Perspective:

The sociolinguistic perspective explores how linguistic landscapes reflect and shape social identities, power relations, and language practices in a given society. Researchers analyze the presence, visibility, and distribution of languages in public spaces to understand social hierarchies and linguistic diversity. (Blommaert, 2018).

Multilingualism and Language Contact Perspective:

This perspective examines the coexistence and interaction of multiple languages within a linguistic landscape. It focuses on how languages come into contact, influence each other, and reflect the linguistic diversity of a particular community or region. (Backhaus, 2018).

Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective:

Critical discourse analysis explores the ideological dimensions of linguistic landscapes, investigating how signs and texts in public spaces reflect power relations, social inequalities, and political ideologies. This perspective examines the ways in which language is used to legitimize or challenge dominant ideologies (Hamid, 2016).

Visual Semiotics and Semiology Perspective:

Visual semiotics and semiotics examine the visual aspects of linguistic landscapes, focusing on how signs, symbols, and images convey meaning and contribute to the overall communication in a particular space. This perspective analyzes the visual representation of language and its significance in the public sphere (Shohamy *et al*., 2010).

Studying Linguistic Landscapes in Different Contexts

i. Urban Linguistic Landscape

Urban linguistic landscapes refer to the visible and tangible representation of language in urban environments. They encompass the various forms of written language, such as signs, billboards, advertisements, graffiti, shop names, and street art,that can be found in cities around the world. Linguistic landscapes are a reflection of the linguistic diversity and cultural dynamics present in urban spaces (Brown, 2019)

In urban areas, the linguistic landscape acts as a visual and textual tapestry that tells a story about the people who live there, their languages, cultures, and social interactions. It provides insights into the multilingual nature of cities, showcasing the coexistence of different languages and scripts.

One of the prominent aspects of linguistic landscapes is the presence of multiple languages. In cosmopolitan cities, it is common to encounter a plethora of languages, ranging from global languages like English, Spanish, or Mandarin to regional and minority languages. These languages are often displayed on signs, storefronts, and public spaces, reflecting the linguistic heritage and diversity of the local population (Gorter, 2013).

Linguistic landscapes also exhibit the power dynamics and sociopolitical contexts of urban areas. The prominence and visibility of certain languages in public spaces can indicate the influence of particular communities, historical factors, or political ideologies. For example, the dominant language or script used in government buildings, official signage, or advertisements may reflect the linguistic policies and power structures within a city or country.

Moreover, urban linguistic landscapes are not limited to official or formal language use. Informal and non-standard linguistic expressions, such as graffiti, street art, and slang, also contribute to the linguistic tapestry of cities. These forms of expression often reflect the voices and creativity of marginalized communities, youth subcultures, or social movements, adding an element of grassroots linguistic diversity to the urban environment.

Studying urban linguistic landscapes can offer valuable insights into language dynamics, urban identities, and intercultural communication. Linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, and urban planners often examine these landscapes to understand the complex interactions between language, culture, and society. They can help identify language revitalization efforts, community empowerment initiatives, or even inform policies regarding language use and preservation.

Additionally, the digital age has expanded the concept of linguistic landscapes beyond physical spaces.

Online platforms, social media, and virtual communities also contribute to the urban linguistic landscape by shaping language use, discourse, and interactions in urban environments. The blending of physical and digital landscapes creates a rich tapestry of languages, both in the material and virtual realms (Papen, 2012).

ii. Multilingual Linguistic Landscapes

The concept of multilingual linguistic landscapes refers to the presence and interaction of multiple languages in public spaces, such as signs, advertisements, and street names. It reflects the linguistic diversity and multiculturalism of a particular region or community. Here are a few references and citations related to multilingual linguistic landscapes (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

This influential study by Landry and Bourhis explores the relationship between the linguistic landscape and the vitality of different language groups in Montreal, Canada. It examines how the presence of different languages in the public environment reflects intergroup relations and the maintenance of linguistic identities (Landry and Bourhis, 1997)

Backhaus provides a comprehensive analysis of linguistic landscapes in Tokyo, Japan. Through the examination of various public spaces, such as shops, street signs, and advertisements, the book explores the complex dynamics of multilingualism in an urban context and its impact on language use and identity (Backhaus, 2006; Kess, 2007).

Marten *et al*. (20112), examined the presence and representation of minority languages in the linguistic landscape of different regions and cities worldwide. Their book covered topics such as language policy, language revitalization, and the role of linguistic landscapes in promoting linguistic diversity (Marten *et al*., 2012).

Shohamy, Ben-Rafael, and Barni presented a collection of case studies exploring linguistic landscapes in various urban settings. The book discussed the sociolinguistic implications of multilingual signs, scripts, and symbols in cities and how they contribute to the negotiation of social, cultural, and political identities (Shohamy *et al*., 2010).

Wei, L. (2018). Multilingualism and translanguaging in the linguistic landscape. In N. H. Hornberger and S. L. McKay (Eds.), Sociolinguistics and language education (pp. 347-363). Multilingual Matters.

Wei discusses the concepts of multilingualism and translanguaging in relation to the linguistic landscape. The chapter explores how individuals and communities navigate and negotiate linguistic diversity in their daily interactions, emphasizing the dynamic and fluid nature of language use (Wei, 2018; D'warte, 2021).

How Language and Identity Influence Each Other

i. Language and Identity: Gender

The relationship between language and gender identity is closely intertwined. Various societies exhibit gender-based variations in speech. In contemporary times, women and men utilize different linguistic forms to communicate. These disparities in speech patterns primarily stem from the social disparities and power dynamics between genders, often resulting in differences in speech.

In most societies, women are expected to employ more polite language compared to men. The use of profanity or obscenity is often discouraged for women. Such societies tend to assign women subordinate roles with limited social freedom in comparison to men. Consequently, women may experience greater insecurity, uncertainty, and lack of confidence. Hence, language can serve as an indicator of the social freedom within a society (Edwards and La Ferle, 2009).

ii. Language and Identity: Race

A strong correlation exists between language and racial or ethnic identity. Individual language preferences are often influenced by their personal histories. Consequently, individuals with similar racial

backgrounds tend to employ similar languages for communication. The acquisition of a mother tongue is a crucial aspect of racial identity acquired at birth, which fosters a sense of belonging.

In most households, a specific language is used for communication among family members. This language becomes associated, consciously or unconsciously, with affection and familiarity. It often differs distinctly from the public language. For instance, Hispanic individuals living in America may associate Spanish with their racial identity. While they may communicate in English in public, they address close friends and family members in Spanish. Spanish allows them to express their emotions in ways that are challenging in English. Speaking a particular language cultivates a sense of belonging among those who share it, leading to an "us and them" dynamic between language users and non-users.

In some cases, the use of a specific language within a social minority can result in social isolation. Individuals may struggle to establish strong relationships with those who do not speak their native language. Furthermore, they may find it challenging to express their feelings effectively using the language commonly used by the general public. Even in societies where a single language is spoken, people often use a distinct language when communicating with friends or close family members to articulate their emotions clearly (Hashim *et al*., 2011).

iii. Language and Identity: Social Status

The speech patterns of individuals often reveal their social status. Education level plays a significant role in shaping one's language. Those belonging to higher social classes tend to receive better education, enabling them to communicate using proper language. Different social backgrounds are associated with distinct dialects, and grammatical and phonetic differences can indicate social status. Therefore, individuals from various social classes may exhibit different accents.

During the 19th century, slavery was widespread in America, where slaves occupied the lowest social class. Slaveholders aimed to maintain the existing social order and actively prevented slaves from learning to read and write. Acquiring literacy would have enhanced the intellectual abilities of slaves, potentially disrupting the perpetuation of slavery. Language became a social barrier between slaves and their masters.

Contemporary societies exhibit social stratification, reflecting hierarchical social classes. The degree of social distance between two groups influences the impact of language within these social groups. Language changes within higher social classes generally have minimal effect on the language of lower social groups, and in some cases, may not affect them at all. Social groups with closer social proximity often use nearly identical languages (Aquino and Douglas, 2003)

Languages Commonly Spoken in Port Harcourt

In Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, several languages are spoken due to the diverse ethnic groups residing in the area. The major languages spoken in Port Harcourt and its surrounding areas include:

- English: English is the official language of Nigeria and serves as the lingua franca for communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Pidgin English: Pidgin English, often referred to as simply pidgin, is a creole language that emerged as a means of communication between different ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is a simplified form of English mixed with different local Nigerian languages.
- Ikwerre: Ikwerre is the native language of the Ikwerre people, who are the largest ethnic group in Rivers State. It is widely spoken in Port Harcourt and its environs.
- Igbo: Igbo is one of the major languages in Nigeria and is spoken by the Igbo ethnic group. Many Igbo people have settled in Port Harcourt and contribute to the linguistic diversity of the city.
- Kalabari: Kalabari is the language of the Kalabari people, an Ijaw ethnic group that primarily resides in the western part of Rivers State. It is spoken by a significant number of people in Port Harcourt.

- Okrika: Okrika is the language of the Okrika people, another Ijaw ethnic group found in Rivers State. It is spoken by a sizable population in Port Harcourt and its neighboring areas.
- Ogoni group of languages: languages such as Gokana, Kana, Tee and Eleme are the languages of the Ogoni people, who inhabit the eastern part of Rivers State. Though primarily spoken in their native region, there are Ogoni communities in Port Harcourt where the languages are spoken.

Other Nigerian languages: Due to migration and interethnic marriages, you may also hear other Nigerian languages spoken in Port Harcourt, such as Hausa, Yoruba, Tiv, Efik, Ibibio, and others.

It's important to note that English remains the primary language for official and business purposes in Port Harcourt, while the indigenous languages are used in local interactions and cultural contexts. (Ezi-Nlerum, and Ken-Maduako, 2023; Ihemere, 2006; Osondu *et al*., 2019).

Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods approach in which textual, visual and qualitative analysis provide complementary information. (Tashakkori and Creswell 2007). In order to provide a deeper understanding of the complex and multi-layered phenomena of language use, visibility and power, the different data sets from photo analyses and geographical information were integrated (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

i. Sampling Area

Port Harcourt city Metropolis, with coordinates 4.824167, 7.033611 (latitude and longitude respectively), is the capital of Rivers State, Nigeria. The city is situated in the southernmost part of the country, in the delta of the Niger River. Port Harcourt was relatively established only about 100 years ago. It is a metropolitan city famous as a hub for industry and transport, with a handful of oil and oil-based companies sited there. It is also a cultural center with plenty of parks, theaters, libraries, vivid nightlife and large number of markets and shopping facilities.

ii. Population of Study

The population of the city has been estimated to be about 3.4 million persons (Worldpopulation.com, 2023), with the community being multinational, multicultural and multireligious, hence, there is a constant stream of culture and activities in the city.

iii. Research Instruments

Mobile device (iPhone XR) with GPS-functionality was used to map the data. The mobile device was also used in taking pictures of the sign posts. In addition to the documentation of the signs, observations provide us with information about soundscapes, foodscapes and the use of public spaces. Collected fieldnotes, written on a thick cover notebook, together with the other data collected, provided us with valuable contextual information about the various places. Through ethnographic data, there was a capture of the broader and deeper explanations of people's reasons and rationale for selecting a particular Linguistic Languages in public spaces (Shohamy, 2019).

iv. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sampling technique employed is the Census Purposive Sampling Technique. Textual data was collected through ethnographic fieldwork in selected rural and urban environments with photo documentation of signs with orthographic language (official signs, private signs, commercial signs, billboards, street art etc). We have limited the documentation to specific neighborhoods selected according to their status as residential, commercial/industrial (city centre), local government areas (city hall, administration, libraries, schools, hospitals, universities etc.). A total of 13 samples were taken for analysis.

v. Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were observed and analyzed from a sociolinguistic perspective; in order to understand

how language and environment contribute to the social and cultural milieu of Port Harcourt city. The signs were of written and pictorial media, that is, they consist of words that show the description, direction or information of products or places. Attention was paid to the linguistic features of the signs, which reveal either relevant indexical or symbolic sign-consumer-oriented meaning. A sign is counted as one if it belongs to one carrier, that is, the object to which a sign is attached, which could be a door, a shop window, a building, and so on (Backhaus, 2007) while some signs may be a variant of the other but done on a carrier. Also, a sign is counted as belonging to one language either as occupying the whole carrier or as sharing the carrier with another language or other languages and are classified as either top down or bottom up. In analyzing the data, frequency counts were used and the results of the findings were based on the alternatives, which attracted the highest percentage of the variables.

Results and Discussions

Since sociolinguistic landscape focuses on signs as text and visual graphics created to display information to a particular audience, this is manifested in the form of finding information in places such as streets or outside buildings, walls, boards, street signs; they vary in form and size depending on location, intent and category. The sign must have a carrier where it is placed, this could be stationary or mobile, single or dual surfaced. In this study, the signs are stationary because the readers in the community walk round to where the signs are emplaced.

While some signs are used to make public announcements, some are used as warning or as regulation for people living in the city. Also, some of the signs are used for symbolization purpose; others are used to perform both informational and symbolic functions. Identification of sign-producers with their signs sometimes add value to the sign's meaning component in the production of top-down signs but most of these signs have been observed to lack definite author which, makes it difficult for their readers to pin-point, identify or classify those signs to where they belong.

Table 1. Distribution and Sorting of Signs

CATEGORY	TYPE OF SIGN	SUB TYPE	PERCENTAGE
Bottom-up	Non Commercial	Organizations, Religious bodies, Private ownerships.	Direction, Warning, Location, Events, Occupation, Project, Politics.
	Commercial	Shops, Halls, Bill boards.	Advertisement, Name of product and services.

Table 2. Categorization of Top-down Signs.

CATEGORY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Top-down	6	46.2%
Bottom-up	7	53.8%
Total	13	100%

Table 3. Categorization of Bottom-up Signs.

CATEGORY	TYPE OF SIGN	SUB TYPE	PERCENTAGE
Top-down	Non Commercial	Institutions Organizations Parastatals	Admonition, Direction Warning, Education, Tourism, Safety and regulatory.
	Commercial		Advertisement,

4.2 Top-down Signs

The top-down signs belong to the government or official (and its agencies) signs. The flow is usually upward to the masses. Kallen (2009) opines that "different situations determine the distribution depending on the speakers' intention". In this study, the top-down signs perform the informational function where they are used to name a building or institution as belonging to government or as being under government management. It is observed from the data that most top-down signs only state the name and location giving basic information. This can be observed for Plates (1,2,4,5 and 6).

Also, some of the signs are used for symbolization purpose as in the case of Plate (3); others are used to perform both informational and symbolic functions.

It is observed that most of these signs lack any form of self-identification, that is, the producers of many of the signs could not be ascertained but the specific locations where the signs are emplaced such as the entrance of a clinic, in front of an office building, inside a facility, make it easy for readers to intuitively retrieve and locate their (the producers') identities. It was also observed that all the signs were monolinguistic as only English was used on the signs except for Plate (5), which shows a sign depicting a location/direction. The sign was written in Ikwerre language.

PLATE 1. Top-down Indicative Sign

PLATE 2. Top-down Indicative Sign

PLATE 3. Top-down Dual Purpose Sign.

PLATE 4. Top-down Indicative Sign

PLATE 5. Top-down Directive Sign

PLATE 6. Top-down Directive Sign

4.3 Bottom-up Signs

Bottom-up signs are signs produced by private organizations. Individuals are classified according to the domain in which they are produced and may contain more information than the top-down signs because their producers may have the need to state more information than in the top-down signs. The commercial sign is placed with the primary intention of seeking some form of economic advantage or the availability of a product or service which can only be got by the sign-consumer who is willing to part with some means of exchange while the non-commercial sign is meant to serve other functions such as directing, informing, describing and so on. The sign then bears the name of the business, its type and location, the products or services available or rendered or both as the case may be and are emplaced close to the location for the sake of identification.

PLATE 7. **Bottom-up Dual Purpose Sign**

PLATE 8. **Bottom-up Dual Purpose Sign**

PLATE 9. **Bottom-up Dual Purpose Sign**

PLATE 10. **Bottom-up Dual Purpose Sign**

PLATE 11. Bottom-up Multi-Purpose Sign

Plate 12. Bottom-up indicative Sign

PLATE 13. Bottom-up Multi-Purpose Sign

Plate (7) depicts a commercial building complex with signs of the businesses situated their hanging in front of each stall. The signs are monophonic containing only one language and the texts, except for the brand or business names. The signs comprised of informative speech acts, about the types of goods sold or services rendered by the business. They are emplaced with the intention of activating the intended population. They can be said to have a directive function too since the signs are emplaced in front of the stalls hence serving as a means of identifying the stalls.

Plates (8) and (9) are samples of private signs emplaced in front separated business stalls. They give information about product and services offered. They are monographic signs that perform the identification function of language used. Plate (8) contains both written and visual forms to communicate to their readers.

Plates (10) and (12) show whole building belonging to private businesses. The sign in Plate (10) gives more information on the types of products and services offered by the business as compared to the sign in Plate (12) which just shows the business name. It should be noted however that both signs were placed on the body of the business building. This is usually characteristic of big business brands. Plate (11) shows a sign in front of a filling station. The sign basically has three functions. It is informative as it displays the brand name, the products and services offered, the prices of the products offered and some accepted methods of payment. The sign is also directive as it tells that the filling station is located there especially

at night. It also adds beauty to the aesthetics of the business. Plate (13) depicts a religious sign giving information on the different programs offered by the religious body. Their different times included. It also gives information on the location of the religious establishment. It should be noted that all the signs were monophonic and they were all written in English language.

Discussion of Findings

In analyzing the data, the signs are divided into top-down (commercial and non-commercial) and bottom-up (commercial and non-commercial). For top-down non-commercial, the act sequence is dominantly, simple text having a formal tone, that is, the key and written mediums are deployed. The implication being that the consumers are largely literates who have certain behavior expected from them by the community. These features also characterize the signage with specified producer and those that have anonymous producers. However, certain sub-groups seem to have been created through the sociolinguistic landscape. These are the group of the motorists and pedestrians; observing the anonymous signage that are likely to be created for the motorists, one would realize that they are created for safety precautions and deal more with signs and less text. This is because the visuals will easily catch the attention of the reader (presumably driving or walking) and they don't need to read long sentences because they are directive signs. The images can easily communicate to them.

For bottom-up, the signs have a complex act for both formal and informal. There are certain bottom-up commercial signs that are expected to be complex since all bottom-up signs have complex acts but are not; these are signs meant for the motorists. The assumption is that the cab drivers need lesser concentration on a sign before understanding the message being passed across. In essence, the group created with this is that of the motorists which is similar in both categorization of signs.

Sociolinguistic Implication of the Signs

The data are presented as act sequence above while the analysis and typology are given after which other ethnographic features of speaking follow. The preceding data analysis shows the physical setting or actual places where the signs are emplaced which is actually outside and considered as a deliberate act. The implication is that for effective sociolinguistic landscaping, the signs must be accessible publicly. Helot and Barni, (2014) opined, "abundance of signs in urban environments as 'visual pollution' and the display of languages on the signs as demonstrating the interconnectedness of different societal levels"

The signs are labeled as top-down (commercial and non-commercial) and bottom-up (commercial and non-commercial). All the photographs were taken in Port Harcourt city. For participants, they are categorized as occurring among the sign initiator, sign-owners, sign maker, the reader and government, (Spolsky, 2009).

The participants include the authors that create them who are most likely to be the owner of the business being advertised or not in the case of a public organization. They can then either be private (bottom-up), government (top-down), NGO's (could be top-down or bottom-up).

The interaction between authors and readers is a crucial issue for sociolinguistic landscaping because the intention of the producers must align with the interpretation of the readers. The other participants consist of the readers who are always referred to as the consumers. The bottom-up signs in the data have 53.8% while the top-down signs have 46.2% all of which are written in English language except for only one sign which is done in Ikwerre language for the purpose of its emplacement. The implication is that the Port Harcourt city community is considered an English community where everybody is expected to be able to speak and understand the English language.

The ends or goals of the business signs are twofold. One is to promote and sell products while the other is to provide the readers with information of the products and services. This may be through providing location of the business' contacts information. All signs have intended purpose for producing them, which is mainly to advertise, admonish, describe products and services, direct, inform, convey rules and regulations, indicate and so on. The main purpose of sign is to communicate and convey information

such that the receiver or reader may make cognitive decisions based on the information provided.

Act sequence on signs refers to the arrangement of texts, presence and absence of graphics and any other contextual information in order to obtain meaning from the sign. The letters on some of the signs are written in bright colours, which make them visible. In case of bottom-up commercial signs, the phone numbers are given less prominence as compared to the name of the business and description of the services.

The instrumentalities refer to choice of channel and forms of speech. The signs combine both written and visual mode in passing the messages across and use one code dominantly (the English language). While some signage make use of text dominantly, some combine both.

The norm in the speaking grid is the only feature that is subtle in the analysis of the signage as the general norms are shared by members of the city community. They are people that are believed to be able to read and write; and would understand the messages being passed across. The signs are appropriately used and interpreted in the context of use by the participants. This means that the participants are to some extent speakers and users of the English language even though the community is a second language community of the language. All the data belong to the genre of commercial and non-commercial messages.

Conclusion

Although Port Harcourt city is dominated by basically two local languages, Ikwerre and Igbo, the city community is made up of different people of varied backgrounds and ethnicity who speak different languages. English thus becomes the language of sociolinguistic landscaping of the community. English has become the world language and it plays a major role in sociolinguistic landscape as it helps in communicating messages to sign- readers in the community. By showcasing the predominant use of the English language, the study has displayed and reflected how attitudes towards language and how language itself can have a dominating effect on some people.

Signs are categorized based on the function they performed. They may be informative (conveying information about products and services and such facilities include maps, directories or instructional signs), directive (showing the location of where the services may be rendered), identifying (indicating services such as rest room signs, safety and regulatory signs) and warning (traffic signs, exit signs and so on.

The features of sociolinguistic landscape include basically the top-down and bottom-up which indicate different realities depending on their functions, languages contained, and code preferences. Top-down signs are used mainly for orientating the sign consumers as people needing specific information about places, events. On the other hand, bottom-up signs are used both for informing sign-consumers about particular activities, places, availability of a product or service. The English language then becomes the preferred language in both top-down and bottom-up signs, occurring on 12 out of the 13 signs studied. As both signs reflect the use of the English language, they confirm the official-language status of English in Port Harcourt City community.

Recommendations

1. Sign producers and owners should put in conscious efforts in order to use or include local languages in sign texts. Or at least, strive to make signs which are bilingual, containing local language texts and English texts.
2. Policy makers and urban planners should as a matter of fact make sure intensive sociolinguistic landscape researches are frequently carried out especially in ever busy metropolitan cities like Port Harcourt as this will help in understanding the identities and social distributions of the inhabitants.
3. Linguistic experts should be regularly consulted by the state authorities for advice and directions on urban city planning to ensure a holistic identity and cultural inclusion.

REFERENCES

1. Androutsopoulos, J., & Stæhr, A. (2018). Moving methods online: Researching digital language practices. In *The Routledge handbook of language and superdiversity* (pp. 118-132). Routledge.
2. Aquino, K., & Douglas, S. (2003). Identity threat and antisocial behavior in organizations: The moderating effects of individual differences, aggressive modeling, and hierarchical status. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 90(1), 195-208.
3. Backhaus, P. (2006). *Linguistic landscapes*. In Linguistic Landscapes. Multilingual Matters.
4. Backhaus, P. (2007). *Linguistic landscapes. A comparative study of urban multilingualism* In *Tokyo*. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters
5. Backhaus, P. (2018). *Linguistic Landscapes and Multilingualism: Theoretical Directions and Empirical Trends.* In The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity (pp. 355-371). Routledge.
6. Blommaert, J. (2018). Durkheim and the Internet: Sociolinguistics and the Sociological Imagination. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 12(1), 1-23.
7. Brown, J. R. (2019). Somali refugees and their urban and non-urban linguistic landscapes. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 7(3), 77-92.
8. Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, 1, 369-394.
9. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
10. Dagenais, D., Moore, D., Sabatier, C., Lamarre, P., & Armand, F. (2008). *Linguistic landscape and language awareness.* In *Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 293-309). Routledge.
11. Edwards, S. M., & La Ferle, C. (2009). Does gender impact the perception of negative information related to celebrity endorsers?. *Journal of promotion management*, 15(1-2), 22-35.
12. Ezi-Nlerum, B., & Ken-Maduako, I. (2023). Influence of English Language on Ikwerre Language in Port Harcourt Metroolis Of Rivers State. *International Journal of Arts, Languages, Linguistics and Literary Studies*, 12(4).
13. Giles, H. (1973). Accent mobility: A model and some data. *Anthropological linguistics*, 87-105.
14. Giles, H., Coupland, J., Coupland, N., & Oatley, K. (Eds.). (1991). *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics* (Vol. 10). Cambridge University Press.
15. Gorter, D. (2013). Linguistic landscapes in a multilingual world. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 190-212.
16. Gorter, D. (2018). Linguistic landscapes and trends in the study of schoolscapes. *Linguistics and Education*, 44, 80-85.
17. Hamid, M. O. (2016). *The politics of language in education in a global polity*. The handbook of global education policy, 259-274.
18. Hashim, R. S., Yusof, N. M., & Zalipour, A. (2011). The Road Not Taken: Shedding Xenophobia, Embracing the Other in Umm Zakiyyahâ€™ s If I Should Speak. *Asiatic: IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature*, 5(1), 43-53.
19. Helot, C and Barni, M. (2012). *Linguistic landscapes, multilingualism and social change*. Peterlang: International Verlag der Wissenschaften
20. Huebner, T. (2016). Linguistic landscape: history, trajectory and pedagogy. Manusya: *Journal of Humanities*, 19(3), 1-11.

21. Ihemere, K. U. (2006). *An integrated approach to the study of language attitudes and change in Nigeria: The case of the Ikwerre of Port Harcourt City.* In Selected proceedings of the 36th annual conference on African linguistics (pp. 194-207). Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
22. Kallen, J. L. (2011). Changing landscapes: Language, space and policy in the Dublin linguistic landscape. *Semioticlandscapes: Language, image, space.* A. Jaworski& C. Thurlow Eds. London/New York: Continuum. 41-58
23. Kess, J. F. (2007). Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo. *Pacific Affairs*, 80(3), 521-523.
24. Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1997). Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 16(1), 23-49.
25. Marten, H. F., Van Mensel, L., & Gorter, D. (2012). *Studying minority languages in the linguistic landscape* (pp. 1-15). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
26. Osondu, O. I., Alozie, N. M., & Etaruwak, M. J. (2019). Impact of Pidgin English on the Effective Learning of English Language among Junior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 9(6), 78-84.
27. Papen, U. (2012). Commercial discourses, gentrification and citizens' protest: The linguistic landscape of Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin 1. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 16(1), 56-80.
28. Piller, I. (2016). *Linguistic diversity and social justice: An introduction to applied sociolinguistics.* Oxford University Press.
29. Shohamy & D. Gorter (Eds). *Linguistic landscape: Expanding the scenery*. Routledge.
30. Shohamy, E. G., Rafael, E. B., & Barni, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Linguistic landscape in the city*. Multilingual Matters.
31. Spolsky, B. (2009). Prolegomena to a sociolinguistic theory of public signage. *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the scenery*. In E. Shohamyand D. Gorter. (Eds.) Routledge. 25-39
32. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). *The social identity theory of inter group behavior in S Worchel & WG Austin (Eds.) Psychology of intergroup relations*. Chicago: Nelson, 3.
33. Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. (2007). The new era of mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1).
34. Wei, L. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied linguistics*, 39(1), 9-30.