

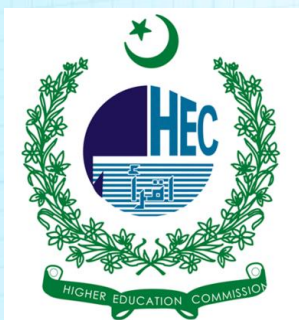
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**NAVIGATING MULTILINGUALISM, COLONIAL POWER DYNAMICS,
AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION: A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS OF THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF DISTRICT VEhari,
PAKISTAN**



¹Komal Fatima

²Dr. Asma Kashif Shahzad

¹Scholar of MS in English Linguistics, Humanities Department. COMSAT University Islamabad, Veharhi Campus.

²Associate Professor, Humanities Department. COMSAT University Islamabad, Veharhi Campus. asmashahzad@cuiveharhi.edu.pk

Abstract

Despite the prevalence of English even on public signs, which reflects the backlash of colonialism, although this is evident in Pakistan itself. This is the true condition of Pakistan, where even in semi-urban areas like District Vehari, people consider others as invaders or outsiders, reinforcing notions of a superior and dominant civilisation. A significant gap in linguistic landscape research exists because little research has focused on such underexplored contexts; most studies concentrate on large cities. Filling this gap is crucial to understanding how visual and linguistic elements collaborate to shape cultural identity and sustain postcolonial hierarchies. Using Postcolonial Theory and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this research examines the balance between Urdu and English on shop signs, interpreting font, colours, and imagery as semiotic resources. Data was collected through purposive sampling and photographing around 12 signs in Vehari's main areas. Results suggest that colonial aesthetics persist, with coded prestige through the use of English and the imitation of Western design patterns, thereby reinforcing social and linguistic hierarchies. The paper advocates greater awareness of these power relations and recommends that future studies incorporate community voices and compare such processes in rural and urban areas to deepen understanding of multilingual practices in Pakistan's emerging modern spaces.

Key Terms: Linguistic Landscape, Multilingualism, Colonial Power Dynamics, Postcolonial Theory, Cultural Representation, Semiotics, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Urdu-English Bilingualism, Shop Signage, Visual Aesthetics, District Vehari, Orientalism, Hybridity and Mimicry, Public Space Communication.

Introduction

Multilingualism has become an important aspect of a globalised world since it is not only linguistic phenomenon but also a social practice where multilingualism becomes part of spaces, signs, and symbols that construct cultural identities and the social relations of power (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). The language landscape otherwise known as the visible language in places gained increased prominence as an important method of ascertaining how language, identity and power are negotiated in everyday life across societies (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Backhaus, 2007). The combination of multilingual signage and the legacies of colonialism associated with postcolonial societies provides an excellent context through which the case of linguistic

domination by English and the other indigenous languages of Pakistan can be explored (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Akram & Yasmin, 2021).

The district Vehari is a semi-urban locality in Punjab, Pakistan, which offers a promising but unexamined context in which to explore these relations. In spite of the urban centres of Lahore and Islamabad having been studied to reflect the dominance of English in the Environmental Linguistics of a country as a symbol of modernity and prestige (Hussain & Mahmood, 2022; Sultana & Dovchin, 2019), research on smaller cities tends to be less prominent. The last is very much the case and there is some significance to this gap, because semi-urban spaces have a tendency to address the questions of tradition and globalisation in more complex ways, their signage often includes its own mixtures of local identity, economic ambition, and elements of colonial legacy (Khattak & Hussain, 2020).

Basing the thesis Postcolonial Theory and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), this study addresses how the use of fonts, colours, imagery and language selection in the shop signs in Vehari reproduces or dissents with the colonial hierarchy (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The concept of Orientalism that has been introduced by Edward Said (1978) illustrates how representation can contribute to giving sustenance to symbolic power whereas the ideas of hybridity and mimicry as they have been presented by Homi Bhabha (1994) can help to unravel the ways in which local sign-makers embrace western visual idioms and English language devices. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic decolonialisation concepts developed by Ngungi wa Thiong (1986) highlight the fact that such linguistic subjection as the labeling of Urdu scripts in English might support colonialism.

Recently, the literature on multimodal aspects of font style, colour repertoire and design patterns has attracted attention to the fact that these multimodal features are not neutral but in a sense embedded in the cultural and historical contexts (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Rahman and Farooq (2023) note the prevalence of colonial aesthetics in Pakistan when imperial symbols and Western managerial brandings are used in cities. Such visual decisions convey the signal of desire to belong to a certain class and influence how the modernity, sense of belonging, and identity are viewed by others (Lou, 2016; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

This study addresses a gap in the available literature by promoting a more situated, multimodal, and theoretically informed approach to linguistic landscape studies (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009; Bagna & Barni, 2022). Not only does this research contribute to LL scholarship

within the semi-urban setting of Pakistan, but it also enhances our understanding of how signs in everyday life mediate a complex ecology of multilingualism, power networks of the postcolonial, and cultural representation.

Limitations and Delimitations

Although the study yields promising results regarding the symbolic use of multilingual signage in Vehari, since the targeted or purposive samples are from urban and semi-urban markets, there are limitations to applying these findings to other non-metropolitan areas. It is also restricted to publicly visible signs and excludes alternative forms of discourse in the public sphere, such as graffiti or political banners. Moreover, interviews with sign-makers, or not owners of businesses, are not analyzed, and they could add another dimension to the interpretation. These constraints are acknowledged; however, it is important to note that the paper will provide a foundation for future researchers to continue this study through ethnographic or district comparison approaches.

Statement of the Problem

While Pakistan is inherently a multilingual country in subtle terms, the prominence of English as a symbol persists strongly in the open landscape alongside Urdu, especially in publicly displayed signage. This is particularly significant in the postcolonial context, where language use and visual presentation continue to reproduce colonial hierarchies (Said, 1978; Ngungi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Although urban linguistic landscapes, such as Lahore and Islamabad, have been studied, semi-urban districts like Vehari remain largely unexplored. There is minimal scholarly research on how fonts, colours, and imagery surpass language to convey power, identity, and colonial influence within these spaces. Consequently, it is urgent to examine how the signs of daily shops in Vehari reflect traces of colonial aesthetics and influence cultural representation. By addressing this gap, a more nuanced understanding of multilingualism, visual semiotics, and the politics of power—particularly as the language situation in Pakistan develops—will emerge.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the colonial relationship between Urdu and English in public spaces by observing linguistic diversity and visual elements on the street signs of Vehari.
2. To engage with the cultural identity of those who use the different languages on the multilingual signage, interrogating colonial and power dynamics and other aspects of their identity within society.

3. To explore the semiotic resources like font, colour, and imagery used as an activity of constructing communicative and symbolic functions through the linguistic landscape in Vehari.

Research Questions

1. What is the colonial relationship between English and Urdu in public spaces, as observed through linguistic diversity and visual elements on street signs of Vehari?
2. How do those who use English and Urdu on multilingual signage engage their cultural and social identity, and how do these choices represent colonial and power dynamics of their identity within society?
3. What semiotic resources, such as font, colour, and imagery, are used to construct communicative and symbolic functions through the linguistic landscape in Vehari?

Significance of the Study

The result of the research adds to our comprehension of how the English language can affect some of the territories of the developing world that have a postcolonial experience. Pakistan is a former British colony that struggles with the history of English assertion in power that has been embedded in the country since colonial times as an official language of authority and prestige. This study concentrates on the existence of English with Urdu and other indigenous languages within the public sphere, with an attempt to add to the current debate on language policy in education and building national identity in postcolonial nations.

This study adopts linguistic landscape and multimodal analysis of discourse to develop an inclusive approach to investigating language use in the public space. A multidisciplinary documentation shows that the usage of language in the public sphere exceeds a textual aspect as it involves the analysis of linguistic, visual, and spatial components. Such a study enables learning the important potential implications. The comprehensive analysis of the linguistic aspects of Vehari provides novel understandings regarding the language policy formulation and maintenance that occur among the local agents. Scholars understand how communities react to the forces of globalisation in order to uphold their cultural identities and maintain their linguistic heritage. The results of this research can serve as guidance in making policy regarding language, education and town planning because by highlighting the need to embrace cultural and linguistic diversity in the Pakistani communities, the research can serve

as a guideline.

Research Methodology

The research employs a qualitative design based on Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Postcolonial Theory to examine how multilingual signage in District Vehari, Pakistan, reflects colonial power relations and cultural dynamics. It aligns with the aims of the study: to investigate the colonial relationship between Urdu and English in the street environment and to explore issues of cultural identity and authority, as well as analyse the semiotic methods used in public spaces. This approach recognises the importance of language and visual signs as socially constructed and historically situated, necessitating a critical examination of both text and context (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Research Framework

This theoretical framework combines the concepts from the theory of Orientalism (Said, 1978), hybridity and mimicry (Bhabha, 1994), and a theory of colonial language hierarchies (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986), brought together by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, respectively. The role that Said's work plays in supporting the argument that English has maintained a symbolic authority in post-colonial society regarding knowledge and representation highlights the importance of interrogating English's dominance in signage. Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry explain the stylistic adaptation of the local community to Bejari signage; Urdu and English are fused to negotiate power, identity, and attitudes towards modernity. Ngugi's notion that language supports colonial domination is central to the significance of the visibility and hierarchy of the English language over indigenous languages, which helps sustain the colonial system, at least in the public arena today. Combined, these theories provide a foundation for analysing the communication of layers of identity, power, and resistance in everyday contexts through signs.

The study employs Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of MDA to investigate how visual features such as font, colour, layout, and images in visual design interact with language to create meaning. This model recognises that meaning is constructed through the interaction of two or more modes, rather than solely through textual interpretation.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

The population for this study includes all public and commercial signage within District Vehari that features multilingual elements. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure the inclusion of various signage reflecting both Urdu and English usage across different urban areas (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selected sites include Vehari Bazaar, Club Road, Jinnah Road, Gol Sabzi Mandi, Tariq Bin Ziad Colony, Karkhana Bazaar, and Sahulat Bazaar. These locations were chosen for their commercial importance, high pedestrian flow, and observable variety of sign types, from shop names and banners to billboards and directional signs. About 10 signs were documented, creating a substantial data set to identify recurring visual and linguistic patterns associated with colonial power dynamics. Purposive sampling also allowed for the comparison of older and newly installed signs to trace changes in visual strategies and language practices over time.

Tool of Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Field data was collected through photographic recordings of signs in natural settings within the urban landscape. To prevent staging and manipulation, the photographs of each sign were taken clearly, both linguistically and visually. Additionally, field notes were recorded to capture contextual details such as the location of the sign, the immediate surroundings, the demographic context, and any observable features related to the design, placement, or attractiveness of the sign. This approach aimed to highlight nuances that are not easily visible in photographs alone (Silverman, 2021).

Data Analysis

MDA was employed to analyse the collection of signs (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Signs were regarded as multimodal, meaning that alongside language, text could incorporate typography, colour, layout, and imagery, all contributing to meaning creation. The analysis focused on areas such as the hierarchy of languages (Urdu versus English) and their placement, the type and assumptions of symbolic meanings, the selection of colours and their cultural or colonial symbolism, as well as motifs that may evoke colonial aesthetics. Thematic coding was used to identify patterns and deviations. The interpretive framework provided by post-colonial discourse helped identify colonial overtones in these signs and enabled critical analysis of their role in

shaping local cultural discourses and identities (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978; Ngungi wa Thiong'o, 1986).

Ethical Considerations

The photos were also taken in areas where people freely gather without interfering in local business activities. No personal information was requested, and where business names are identifiable, they will be anonymised as far as possible. The research is culturally respectful and reflexive, with careful considerations by the researcher in interpreting the data. The use of field notes, photographic evidence, and reflexive journaling enhances trustworthiness, as these practices address the researcher's positionality and ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Literature Review

Linguistic landscape (LL) is proving to be a crucial tool in analysing the conjunctions of language, identity and power as well as space (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). Within the multilingual societies, the studies that pertain to LL emphasize the importance of the use of signage in multilingual societies and how the system of signage reflects and creates social hierarchies, cultural representation, and the power relationship (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). The discipline has also shifted to take other factors into consideration other than the existence of multiple languages such as multimodal and semiotic factors that add meaning-making (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010).

The studies of the multilingual signage in mixed contexts demonstrate that there are frequently subcurrent power relations between major and local languages in this type of signage (Backhaus, 2007; Gorter, 2013). In South Asia, research has made observations as to how, after the withdrawal of the British colonial rule, English still remains dominant in road signposts and city semiotics, as an aesthetic expression of modernity, status, and international recognition (Sultana & Dovchin, 2019; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). As an example, the study conducted by Akram and Yasmin (2021) on linguistic landscape research in Lahore revealed that English still has ritual capital, whereas Urdu and other local languages frequently fulfil subordinate functions.

Likewise, Hussain and Mahmood (2022) focussed on the fact that in the Pakistani urban centres, code-mixed signage is often associated with the issues of class-based aspirations and postcolonial identity construction. Khattak and Hussain

(2020) also illustrate that not only do the choices of language carried out through the medium of shop signs in Peshawar indicate the negotiation of local culture in globalised consumer practices, but they also do the same thing as the language.

These hierarchies can be analysed through the critical perspective offered by postcolonial theory. The concept of the Other, as used by Said (1978) to demonstrate how Orientalism is constructed through colonial discourse, highlights how European languages and aesthetics are deemed superior to those of the East. Bhahbas (1994) concept of hybridity and mimicry elucidates how colonised societies use and adapt the language and symbols of the coloniser to create hybrid forms, which oppose colonisation and challenge the colonial power structure. These concepts play a vital role in research on the linguistic landscape, as they help explain why the presence of local languages does not diminish the prominence of English as a marker of status (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

Ngoki wa Thiong (1986) argues that decolonisation should include reclaiming native languages that colonisation had displaced in favour of colonial languages. This aligns with what Lanza and Woldemariam (2014) found in Ethiopia, where they noted the dominance of English on signage despite official multilingual policies, as a result of postcolonial language hierarchies.

This inclusion of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) has expanded the study of LL beyond the solely textual aspect to incorporate visual and design elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Research indicates that fonts, colours, imagery, and spatial arrangements are not neutral; they embody cultural histories and ideologies (Levon & Blommaert, 2014). For instance, Bagna and Barni (2022) demonstrate that Western font typologies and graphics in European cityscapes signify modernity and globalisation.

Sultana and Gulzar (2020) propose applying colonial aesthetics to contemporary contexts by employing royal and imperial symbols, such as crowns and Western fonts on Pakistani shop signs in South Asia. Similarly, Rahman and Farooq (2023) observe how billboards in Lahore utilise British-inspired visual aesthetics strategically to attract middle-class consumers who seek modernity and prestige.

The works of the last years also draw attention to the role of signage in creating cultural and social identities (Lou, 2016; Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). The multilingual

signs do not reflect but engage in identity negotiation. In country-specific terms, according to Zia and Mahmood (2022), business surfaces do reflect the relationship between Urdu and English as tension between local and worldwide ideals.

As Hussain (2021) noted, sign-makers and shopkeepers prefer to use English words or even Western-themed decorations to appeal to better-than-average clients, which is an internalised sign of colonialism, assuming that English language is the symbol of progress, and Urdu is traditional. Ali and Ahmed (2023) cohere with this finding by showing that the practice of transliteration in urban Punjab creates a hybridized signs of ambiguity thus undermining and living into the logic of colonial hierarchies.

In the world, the studied trends are shifting towards more sophisticated positions placing such aspects as agency, resistance, or localised practices in the forefront (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2020; Blommaert, 2018). Pennycook and Otsuji (2021) propose that there is a need to study the mobility of signs and demonstrate the recontextualisation of global scripts appearing locally. In Pakistan, however, few studies still present the combination of a postcolonial theory and multimodal analysis in smaller cities, such as Vehari. The majority of the available literature is dedicated to the big cities (e.g., Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad) (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Khattak & Hussain, 2020).

This gap highlights the need of the study of the continuity of the colonial legacies applying to the visual and linguistic representation in semi-urban environments. In the context of this study, this article has a contribution in the sense that: the study addresses Vehari, a local context using the two concepts of MDA and postcolonial theory and identifying how the local shop signs circulate as space of meaning where multilingualism, colonial legacy and cultural representation coincide.

Data Analysis

1. Awam Dost Sale Counter عوام دوست سیل کاؤنٹر

Location: *Roadside stall near Vehari Bazar, Gol Sabzi Mandi*

Type: *Bottom-up signage with embedded top-down political power*



Figure 1: Fruits And Vegetables Stall Signboard Near Gol Sabzi Mandi, Vehari.

Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

- The sign uses an interesting combination of bold Nasta'liq form Urdu typography to write its primary phrase “عوام دوست سیل کاؤنٹر” (Awam Dost Sale Counter).
- The subtext is smaller, and the traditional Urdu script outlines the authorities to approach and the product to tackle: “سبزیوں و پھل” (vegetables and fruits), سیل کاؤنٹر (Sale Counter) is an example of borrowing into Urdu from the English language of the modern or more bureaucratic variant.

Colour Scheme

- Overrides most other colours, symbolic of agriculture, freshness/newness, governmental identity.
- The red main title font draws attention, as it is commonly used with urgency and promotion.
- Yellow marks for subtext have contrast and legibility, which underline official or administrative language.

Imagery

- On both sides are colourful pictures of vegetables and fruits, visually emphasising the purpose of the stall.
- Pictures of political personalities (Maryam Nawaz and Nawaz Sharif) dressed formally convey a political dimension, implying endorsement and visibility of political leadership.

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements

- The central point is on the title “عوام دوست سیل کاؤنٹر” with a large red font to get it immediately into attention.
- Below, more minor texts note which initiative or campaign this is.

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Organisational details are outlined under the title.

- Political figures are arranged on the right and left edges to frame the sign with human power and regard.

Spatial Functionality

- The signboard on the stall's top front functions as an identifier and a promotional banner.
- The backgrounding implies (official) support and accessibility for the commoner (similar to the “awam dost” (people-friendly) theme).

Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- Urdu script is used only to highlight national identity and state access to the public.
- The substitution of English words transliterated to Urdu lettering (“سیل کاؤنٹر”) announces modernity and conformity with bureaucratic procedures.

Power & Political or Religious or Cultural Symbolism

- The inclusion of political figures signifies a powerful symbolic presence of power and governance. State welfare (affordable produce) is branded politically through the sign, associating it with confident political leaders and parties.
- Beliefs in family and public service cultures are implied through the visual presentation of leaders.

Visual Communication

- The visuals are modes of immediate communication: Travel-related colourful produce is affordable and fresh, while political figures are trustworthy and authoritative.
- The union of text, colour, and image sends a message of state-supported economic relief laced with political affiliation.

This signboard exemplifies how the visual elements of imagery combine with language and political symbolism in Vehari's public signage. It announces the government's initiative to enhance food accessibility while simultaneously projecting a political presence. Through the use of colour, text, and iconography, the sign promotes both the product and an ideological message connected to governance and

identity

2. District Headquarters Hospital Vehari ڈسٹرکٹ ہیڈکوارٹر ہسپتال وہاڑی

Location: Jinnah Road

Type: Official Institute Board



Figure 2: District Headquarters Hospital Vehari

Language & Meaning

- The whole text is written in Urdu.
- It clearly states a government healthcare provision – in district headquarters hospital, Vehari, Punjab, Pakistan.

Design Features

- **Color:** Blue background with white lettering (standard scheme of government hospitals in Pakistan).
- **Font:** Simplified and easy to read Urdu letters and symbols for high visibility.
- **Format:** Horizontal board, above or next to the entrance to a hospital, most probably used for directional or identification function.

Cultural & Functional Context

- DHQ Hospitals are district centers of medical care with primary and major health services such as emergency care and specialist treatment as well as diagnostics.
- The name “Vehari” supports the fact; this is for the Vehari district; hence ruling its local jurisdiction.
- This board is an official and utility marker for a key public health institution.

3. TASTY HOUSE ٹیسٹی ہاؤس

Location: Jinnah Road

Type: Takeaway outlet signboard



Figure 3: TASTY HOUSE

Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

- "TASTY" highlights the 3D block letters in bold, large, bold yellow. It is bigger and catches attention.
- "HOUSE" is written in red 3D block letters, differentiated to ensure visual balance.
- English fonts are fun and modern; Urdu script is traditional and elegant.
- Words such as "FREE HOME DELIVERY" have been capitalised and boxed in red/white, speaking of a promoted message.

Colour Scheme

- A mix of vivid colours; Yellow, red, white, green and blue dominate.
- Background is a golden yellow mosaic providing excellent contrast of signs.
- The combination of warm and cool tones attracts attention and provides a lively atmosphere.

Imagery

- Visual icons (burger, pizza, chaat bowl, ice cream) convey the type of food served on the spot.
- A stylized logo of the house unites its brand identity.
- Small icons and symbols facilitate the use of the signage even in cases of illiterate or semi-literate viewers.

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements

- "TASTY HOUSE" is at the top and most prominent, and this is the brand name, and the first point of focus.

- Icons of food items surrounding the text enhance the type of services.
- Secondary information such as contact details and “FREE HOME DELIVERY” are written very small but are readable.
- The lower section utilizes Urdu words associated with food types which provide more information for local customers.

Spatial Functionality

- The layout reads from top to bottom and left to right (English) and right to left (Urdu); serving both literacies.
- Collection of images and text equally creates an informative sign from afar and in closeness.

Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- The bilingual signage (English and Urdu) indicates multi cultural and multi lingual identity; therefore it will attract a wide range of consumers.
- English propounds the modern, perhaps youthful, business appeal, and Urdu binds to tradition and local culture.
- Food imagery presents a universal semiotic resource enabling the shop to appeal to the varied audience, including the children and the illiterate.

4. Chaudhary Super Store چوہدری سپر سٹور

Location: Jinnah Road, Vehari.

Type: Grocery and general retail store.



Figure 4: Chaudhary Super Store, Vehari.

Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

- The main text, “چوبدری سپر سٹور” is in bold stylized Urdu, a red font, white outline so it is visible and based on hierarchy.
- scribed texts in dark blue and black fonts provide other details, i.e.,
- “گروسری کا مکمل سامان دستیاب ہے” (Complete grocery available)
- A banner on the top right. Since 1970 – 54 سال (54 years of service).

Color Scheme

- Yellow most strongly characterizes the sign background color whose meaning is affordability and visibility in retail.
- Choice of red/blue colours helps to distinguish between primary/secondary messages.
- Product visuals on the left include stereotypical grocery items (that most likely will be cooking oil, spices, or lentils) borrowing customers’ confidence in the store’s offerings.

Imagery

- The Left side has consumer goods images perhaps showing the cooking essentials –used for direct product association.
- The branding of the product is in tune with the nature of the store’s theme: accessible and familiar.

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements:

- The largest and most central position is enjoyed by the store name.
- Service claim (“54 years of service”) is placed at the top within in the blue banner – symbolizing trust and legacy.
- Slogan and list of products appear below, indicating what type of merchandise.

Spatial Functionality

- The sign is mounted directly above store frontage and is angled just enough for maximum viewing on a passing stream of cars.
- The size and coverage show a mid size retail shop targeting foot-traffic from local market or busy street.

Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- The use of Urdu appeals to the locals, an indigenous identity.
- The word “Chaudhary”; is a title of respect, of authority, and of ownership; and has in Punjab added to it social credibility.
- The terms such as “خدمت کے 54 سال” organises the business as trustable and long standing and this is a typical and persuasive story in local trade.

5. Laboratory Collection Unit لیبارٹری کلیکشن یونٹ

Location: Jinnah Road, Vehari.

Type: Healthcare Service (Laboratory Collection / Diagnostic Facility)



Figure 5: Laboratory Collection Unit Board

Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

- Bilingual sign: English and Urdu both used.
- English text with clean sans-serif font; professionalism and readability.
- Urdu script is formal, elegant as well as well spaced, which suggests a formal healthcare setting.

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- The logo (a red, stylized triangle crescent design) is well known as Aga Khan University's crest

Color Scheme

- Red and white color palette:
- Red too stands for urgency, healthiness, and medical aid.
- White suggests cleanliness and trust.

It is the separation of the background colour (white on top, red below) that makes for very clear visual distinction between branding and function.

Imagery

- The Agah Khan emblem figures prominently at the top of the design – a famous identifiable logo.
- No further pictures – as professional medical signage would be (no imagery).

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements

- Top section (white): Has logo and complete institutional name in Urdu and English.
- Bottom section (red): Specializes in the service offered – “Laboratory Collection Unit”.

Spatial Functionality

- Vertical, rectangular board; for easy view from the street or the sidewalk.
- Efficient use of space: Text is centrally arranged and perfectly readable from a distance

Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- The bilingual text has a dual role.
- Urdu for the locals to access.
- Possibility to reach educated urban users and continuity of institutional branding.
- Credentials, affiliation to an institution, and professional health services are indicated with the hospital name and logo.

Cultural Codes and Trust

- “Aga Khan” is a strong name in the healthcare scenery of Pakistan – meaning quality, trustworthiness and dependability.

The sign board for the Aga Khan University Hospital – Laboratory Collection Unit is minimalist, professional and trust-focused. Its clean, bilingual, institutional logo and successful color separation qualify it as credible medical service point, sharply contrasting it from more commercially oriented signs or decorative ones, seen around local markets.

6. Mehmood Ahmed Arms & Ammunition Dealers **محمود احمد آرمز اینڈ ایمونیشن ڈیلرز**

Location: Vehari Bazar

Type: Shop board



Figure 6: Mehmood Ahmed Arms & Ammunition Dealers

Visual Elements

Visualizations of firearms, shown at the bottom part

- Pistols
- Revolvers
- Rifles
- Bullets and accessories

These graphics lends instant clarity that the shop deals in weapons and ammunitions, a feature most important considering visual marketing for such business.

Design Style

Color Scheme

The background is green with white and red text. In Pakistani culture, green is typically laden with warmth of safety or Islamic identity, which is interestingly at

loggerheads with the content (arms).

Typography

The Urdu font is bold and distinguishable, and the numbers are highly legible. The contact numbers are boxed in black, with red as a contrasting color; they should draw attention for rapid reference.

Layout

Top section has the name of the shop and details; bottom section works nearly as a catalog display.

Cultural and Semiotic Notes

- In Pakistan, arms shops tend to show firearm open in signages to indicate legitimacy and stock range.
- Combination of both Urdu and visuals appeals to wide set of audience; literate or not to make it more accessible.
- The availability of a number of numbers for contact is a viable feature widely applied by businesses that operate in places with fluctuating phone service, or a high customer outreach.

Mehmood Ahmed Arms & Ammunition Dealers employs straight, daring and practical style in order to create its image as a provider of weapons. Visualization, as well as powerful contrast text, is aimed at rapid identification, clarity of services, and customer trust.

7. Data Parda Sofa Cloth House داتا پردہ صوفہ کلاتھ ہاؤس

Location: *Unspecified urban/local marketplace (based on architecture and urban setup)*

Type: *Local textile/interior furnishing shop*



Figure 7: Data Parda Sofa Cloth House

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Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

Language

- Bilingual (Urdu and English)

Font Use

- Urdu typography is calligraphic and bold; tradition and cultural alignment.
- English text is less in size, in a simple sans-serif font, which tells utility instead of prominence.
- The Urdu phrase – “داتا پردہ صوفہ کلاتھ ہاؤس” dominates which translates to local prioritizing of languages.

Color Scheme

- Primary Colors: Blue, White, Red
- Blue: Implies calmness and trust – this is the type of logo that would do well on home decor and companies whose major sales involve fabric.
- White: Background color suggests that they are clean, clear and professional.
- Red Accents: Allows focusing on certain specific elements, such as names, or numbers and emphasizes necessity and importance.

Imagery

- Loads that are used as literal and symbolic images, they indicate the major merchandise (curtain); (curtain fabrics).
- The use of draped curtain images is present both of product and aesthetic value.
- Visual repetition of the curtain motifs on both sides brings the brand into assonance with interior decor.

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements

Top Left Corner

- The brand logo “Ddata Curtains” Comes into this spot – this is high-priced placement according to Kress & van Leeuwen’s “ideal-real” axis.
- Center:
- Centrally located in bold Urdu script in big huge letters is the name of the shop which is prominent – signifying local identity, commercial intent.

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- Side Elements:
- Owner/Contact Names (in Urdu): Over the brand name – personal branding in local businesses.
- Phone numbers and trivial English titles can be found below or beside the primary name – lower in the hierarchy.

Spatial Functionality

- Signboard installation and configuration – horizontal with eye level, viz. from pedestrian's perspective; and, proofed most visible on the street.
- Urdu consumes more spatial real estate, it strengthens cultural significance.
- Symmetrically placed curtain imagery acts as visual framing bringing the eye closer to the name of the shop.

Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- Urdu Dominance: Suggests that there is a local target orientation and cultural embeddedness.
- English Additions: “DATA Curtains” is a business-brand attempt at the combination of traditional and modern values – to conjure up a tone of trust or reach to higher end markets.
- Names in Urdu (فیض فریاد and احمر اعجاز) build social trust – personal service and reputation are used as semiotic weapons for the locals' businesses.

The Data Parda Sofa Cloth House sign provides an illustration of how visual communication in the local commercial scene combines language, culture and arrangement to represent business identity. The widespread prevalence of Urdu, the old form of calligraphy, and fabric imagery combine to create an appeal to a locally ingrained demographic. The design follows the information value, the salience, and the framing rules of Kress and van Leeuwen's theory according to which the layout and lethal choices are not random but play specific communicative roles.

8. Meezan Bank

Location: Karkhana Bazar

Type: Islamic Commercial Bank



Figure 8: Meezan Bank

Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

- The name Meezan Bank is given in English (left) and Urdu(right) in large, neat serif fonts.
- The tagline “The Premier Islamic Bank” is seen under both versions, with “Premier” highlighted in yellow.
- Typography is formal and corporate; it corresponds to a professional banking environment.

Color Scheme

- Dominant Purple Background: Symbolizes wealth, prestige, and trust.
- Text Colors: White to make clear; yellow highlights draw focus to important descriptors.
- Logo Colors: Green and purple- green- Islamic identity and wealth.

Imagery

- A logo, which is a circle containing a trigon in green, which is a mark – a branding icon with Meezan Bank, itself evocative of maintaining balance and Islamic codes of integrity.

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements

- Primary: The name and logo of Meezan Bank at the centre.
- Secondary: The tagline in both languages is below.
- Tertiary: Branch location name – (ویہاری) - Vehari at the top right corner.

Spatial Functionality

- Clean horizontal structure fully aligned in the center.
- Text is well distributed such that it is visible from a distance.
- It is instantly recognizable with as little clutter.

- Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- Bilingual Signage: Resounds inclusivity and range among the educated and vernacular clients.
- “Islamic Bank” sends a loud message about the bank’s compliance to Shariah principles; appealing to an Islamic populace.

Cultural/Religious Connotation

- Green and Islamic terminologies add credibilities and religious affiliation.
- Formal design, bilingual availability implies on the national level presence and professionalism.

The Meezan Bank signboard is a good example how the formal typography, smart color choice, and clear double language messaging incorporate a forceful, reliable Islamic Banking identity. Its minimal but statement design complements it as a prestigious faith aligned financial institution.

9. ZEEPARLOR زی پارلر

Location: Tariq Bin Ziad Colony, Vehari.

Type: Women’s beauty salon.



Figure 9: ZEE PARLOR زی پارلر

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Visual Analysis

Text & Typography

- The strong, elegant English name of “ZEE PARLOR” is boldly in serif capital letters.
- Zi parlør, the equivalent in an up-to-date, user-friendly Urdu font, is which makes it legible and culturally relevant.
- The phone number is easily seen, indicating a focus towards accessibility and communication.
- The entire elements are centre aligned, which develops symmetry and visual balance.

Colour Scheme

- The sign features a black background and light (likely white or light gold) text, a classic combination that provides visibility and sophistication.
- This monochromatic approach conveys professionalism and aligns with the image of the salon's target audience.
- The soft, golden glow section portrays a particular hint of luxury.

Imagery

- A fade image of a woman with flowing hair, shows people what the business is about – beauty, hair care, femininity.
- The illustration is uncomplicated, yet conveying, consistent with modern intimacies of beauty branding.

Spatial Analysis

Hierarchy of Visual Elements

- In large font, is ZEE PARLOR(in English) at the top-center—probably aimed at younger or more aspirational clients who would know English.
- A woman’s graphic image has been seen (as shown in Figure 4.7) at the top and act as a visual anchor.
- "زی پارلر" in Urdu is below the English name, as still high profile, but a little subservient in space.
- The phone number takes the bottom, closing the communication loop.

Spatial Functionality

- Vertical alignment fits the shape of the signboard and maximises space and

viewing eye from the image to the English name to the Urdu name to the contact number.

- The bilingual format meets the needs of educated/middle-class urban consumers as well as traditionally Urdu-speaking local clients.

Semiotic Analysis

Language Choice & Identity

- Bilingual representation reflects a glocalised identity (English signifies modernity, aspiration, and professionalism, while Urdu maintains cultural familiarity and inclusiveness).
- The practice of using “ZEE” (phonetically to represent the Urdu “زی”) is a form of localisation; an attempt to harmonise English letters with South Asian names.
- “Parlor” is a borrowed term in English widely used for beauty salons in South Asian contexts—retained in both scripts, with semantic localization.
- There is cultural validity in the Urdu script whereas the English part confers a feeling of going up the social scale and cosmopolitan lustre.

This signage effectively combines visual aesthetics with bilingual language strategies to convey gendered, modern, and cultural meanings. It integrates Urdu, English, typography, and imagery to create a compelling and aspirational multimodal representation. According to Kress and van Leeuwen’s theory, language is not merely a form of text, but rather a means of social positioning and cultural negotiation, particularly in relation to female-oriented commercial spaces in Pakistan.

10. Chaye Lodge چائے لاج

Location: Burewala Road, Vehari

Type: Wall Sign Display



Figure 10 :Chaye Lodge/ چائے لاج

VisualLinguistic Composition

- This sign combines visual and verbal language to form a hybrid identity. The dominant features are:
- The English word “LODGE” in thick, serif font draws meaning of a place of rest or a café-styled rest house. The term is both hospitable and informal.
- English name transliterated in an enchanting, modern calligraphy script directly translates the Urdu word “لاج”. Its accessibility and cultural relevance are guaranteed for local, Urdu-speaking audiences through it.
- Over the text is an illustration of a steaming cup, an image which weighs on the theme of warmth, rest and perhaps a service of coffee or tea. This image is pre-textual and the architecting one, putting the linguistic text as the brand's central sign.

Language Dynamics and Sociolinguistic Code-Switching

The biculturalism of the sign illustrates divided language lingo used in urban parts of Pakistan – here, English is associated with modernity, prestige, or worldliness. At the same time, Urdu connotes tradition, familiarity, and local dedication. By combining both, the sign not only broadens its readership but compiles a layered cultural identity:

- English attracts viewers who move up, are cosmopolitan— travelers, students, young professionals.
- Urdu claims linguistic and cultural origins, making the business legible, accessible to the broader market.

This co-use of languages is an example of code-mixing for commercial inclusivity, where no audience is excluded because of language barrier.

Visual Grammar and Meaning

Schematically, the given–new order of distribution that is characteristic of a sign (outlined in the visual discourse theory) is followed in the layout of the sign:

- The coffee cup icon, located above, functions as a “Given”—a common familiar image of rest or café culture.
- The linguistic elements below serve as the “New”, presenting the concrete brand identity (“LODGE”) and its bilingual version.

Such a vertical placement facilitates the movement of the viewer from the recognition (icon) to understanding (text).

Cultural and Symbolic Layering

The glow of the letters, the stylized icon, and the bilingual display all function in a branding sense positioning the business as:

- Modern, welcoming, and somewhat upscale
- Introspective through the Urdu script.
- Involvement in global café culture but keeping the local linguistic characteristics.

It subtly indicates that the space is not a simple functional one (a lodge) – it is aesthetically located and holds atmosphere, so that language part of a larger lifestyle-story.

Discussion

The case analysis of the chosen signboards of District Vehari reveals multiple functions of everyday multilingual sign posts in ways that negotiate language ranks, visual attractiveness as well as cultural representation. In regards to the first objective, which was to analyze the colonial relationship between English and Urdu in the sphere of the public, the result obtained in terms of data has given us a consistent picture of the symbolic prestige of English and Urdu. As such, signs bearing names such as TASTY HOUSE, ZEE PARLOR, Meezan Bank, gain English the visual dominance due to the use of large letters and fonts popular or modern design, and prominent displaying that might be interpreted as desire to be modern, upwardly mobile, and one that belongs to the world (Said, 1978; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). In the meantime, Urdu scripts can also be observed but most of the time they are secondary or made to look stylized in order to make it local.

The latter, which can be understood in terms of connecting with the cultural identity of the users of these languages and challenging the colonial and power relations, is evident in the bilingual co-existence on majority of the signs. As an example, we have the word Chaye Lodge which uses the Urdu word چائے Europeutse form noting: different scripts to attract both audiences based on their language, here is how business owners incorporate both scripts to reach out to the specific groups of people. This is an indication of local actors as they take a proactive stance in mediating between the modern (regulated by an English mediator) consumer culture and the local values (represented by a local Urdu-speaking identity). Likewise, the

Awam Dost Sale Counter notice provides an interesting insight into how welfare promotion language adopts the appropriate language of the people, Urdu, to accommodate the masses, at a time when even governmental welfare notices adopt the English sounding term (Sale Counter). Such dichotomy corresponds to the concept of metrolingualism by Pennycook and Otsuji (2015), in the framework of which the usage of language is shifting and conditioned by a situation.

The third goal to discover the semiotic tools such as font, colour, imagery indicates that the visual design is never neutral rather, it is ingrained in the history of its cultures and colonization. With its stark blue and white colors, simple and institutional fonts, the District Headquarters Hospital sign take on a commanding tone of official authority and credibility, the opposite end of the font and bright imagery spectrum as other signs such as TASTY HOUSE. Likewise, the formulation of “Data Parda Sofa Cloth House” and “Chaudhary Super Store” shows localised Urdu pending and traditional images of the products to enhance cultural embeddedness and confidence in regard to the local purchasers, displaying a more bottom-up, identity-based semiotic commercial approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

In the field of visual motives, western brand illusionary styles are experienced especially with colonial involvement. As an example, one can look at Mehmood Ahmed Arms & Ammunition Dealers, a combination of diluted green colour (a colour with a profusion of Islamic associations) with bold fonts and verisimilar representations of machineries of modernity a grating meeting of local credibility and modern authority. The use of black and white colours, the fine typography and a dreambreaking female body in the poster of ZEE PARLOR creates the feel of the modern and urban environment, yet, does not lack culture because of the Urdu script. The distribution of space also portrays domination structure: English most of the time takes the position at the top, the ideal position (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), whereas the Urdu serves as the support underneath, an undercurrent of authenticity of local culture under a face of modernity.

Spatial elements also demonstrate through which means signs negotiate visibility and audience. As an example, the religious symbolism (green, the Islamic trigon), combined with bilingual and formal typography, is employed by the name of the bank, Meezan Bank, to demonstrate the attributes of professionalism, trust, and

Shariah compliance, which span between international standards of banking domain and local cultural language. All of the rankings of text placement and colour blocking and even the position of the images are calculated semiotic decisions which shape a broad inclusive as well as stratified audience.

Considering them collectively, one can argue that the Vehari linguistic landscape is not entirely resistant or passively submissive to colonial remnants. Instead, it reflects a layered, hybridised performance where ordinary sign-makers select, adapt, and reshape colonial aesthetics to serve local economic, cultural, and political purposes. These activities echo passions about how colonial discourse persists in symbolic form, as expressed by Said (1978), and are also linked to perceptions proposed by Bhabha (1994), which view postcolonial communities as spaces of continual negotiation and mimicry. The paper shows how the rise of multilingual texts, visual grammar, and spatial organisation create a collective semiotic space that encompasses the colonial influence, local identity, and cultural aspirations—coexisting and co-evolving.

Findings

This paper aimed to explore the complex relationship between multilingualism and power dynamics within the colonial context of cultural representation on the linguistic landscape in the district of Vehari, Pakistan. Based on the analysis of various signboards, including those of Awam Dost Sale Counter, District Headquarters Hospital, TASTY HOUSE, Chaudhary Super Store, Laboratory Collection Unit, Mehmood Ahmed Arms and Ammunition Dealers, Data Parda Sofa Cloth House, Meezan Bank, ZEE PARLOR, and Chaye Lodge, three major findings have emerged.

To begin with, the nature of interrelationship between Urdu and English in street signs is without doubt a symbolic hierarchical salary. The visual sense has also been occupied by English in terms of the size, locations as well as futuristic typographs, which depicts a global consumer culture as status and contemporaries. Still, as a widely available language, Urdu is most often applied as an auxiliary one, as it serves with the purpose of local authority, familiarity, being close to the people and understanding. This can prove the point that the colonialism of language hierarchy still exists in the daily semiotics (Said, 1978; Ngungi wa Thiong o, 1986).

Second, the local businesses and institutions gain the cultural identity being hybrid and

negotiated. Such bilingual signs as Chaye Lodge or Awam Dost sale Counter shows how the owners use a combination of the local language and Western words in order to attract both traditional and modern consumer. This corroborates the concept of mimicry and hybridity provided by Bhabha (1994) through which the legacies of the colonial patterns are recontextualised and translated to the local arenas.

Third, the semiotic and spatial analysis made by the study reveals the importance of fonts, colours, images, and layout types in the creation of meaning and power interrelations. It was deliberately reflected in monarchal imagery, western typography and colour schemes such as black and gold (luxury), blue and white (institutional trust) and green (Islamic identity). In space, English is more frequently placed in superior locations of signboards such as the top, large, or more salient location as the argument made by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) that the spatial structure conveys power arrangements, by way of its ideological implications.

Conclusion

To conclude, the multilingual signs in Vehari are not mere utilitarian markers; they are text in its living form that visualises the exchange between the locally constituted cultural identity and the legacies of the colonial might. Each of the signs indicates the way small businesses, institutions and even state buildings re-adjust the colonial aesthetics and world scripts to keep in line to be economically competitive and relevant in the global culture and at social level. These ordinary semiotic decisions recreate as well as challenge colonial orders, thus the linguistic landscape is a fluid field of power and identities rub up against each other.

Recommendations

This paper suggests that more attention should be paid by sign-makers, local, and designers to the understanding on the impact of visual language choices on cultural representation and power. Local language revitalisation workshops and inclusive sign design workshops may popularise use of balanced Urdu and regional languages with English and develop a feeling of local ownership of the public space.

Moreover, the municipal authorities can come up with location-specific templates of the public signs that will promote local scripts and aesthetic styles without compromising current branding requirements. Training courses on designing signboards may be crafted in the future that would include the aspects of critical semiotics and cultural history to enable the local producers to be more conscious in their design decisions.

Gap in Research

Although this research has highlighted the major trends within the business environment in the semi-urban town of Vehari, it only analysed the visible shop signs within some of the studied business areas. It did not include rural areas or locations, interior signs owned by inaccessible individuals, vandalism, or the voices of sign-makers and audiences. The study could be further expanded in future by conducting ethnographic interviews with business owners, sign makers, and customers to gather their perceptions, aspirations, and motivations. Such comparative studies between (urban and rural) multiple districts would also enhance understanding of variations in colonial legacies and language practices across the diverse regions of Pakistan. Lastly, longitudinal studies could investigate how visual and linguistic trends change over time as local communities become more aware of their semiotic choices.

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