9 English Can Be Seen Everywhere

9.1 Introduction

English can most likely be found on display in any shopping street of any city around the globe. In all allegedly non-English-speaking countries, some form of the English language has obtained a larger or smaller presence in the visual scenery of the streets of urban centers, not only in the names of shops, brand names, advertising slogans and other commercial and private messages, but also in official information directed at tourists and visitors. Approximately 25 years ago, Crystal (1997) mentioned that one of the most noticeable global manifestations of the spread of English is its use on ‘outdoor media’. Over the last few decades, the presence of English has also increased in cities and regions where the language was not traditionally used, although a few exceptional places seem to have no visible English, such as some German-speaking Alpine villages in South Tyrol in Italy (Dal Negro, 2009).

It comes as no surprise that several linguistic landscape researchers have focused their attention on the public display of English. It can be argued that, overall, English is the language that has attracted most attention in linguistic landscape studies.

Often, it is the principal language at the center of a study; many times, English is investigated as the language that competes with one or more other languages, and only a few researchers have ignored English altogether. Studies have demonstrated that the analysis of linguistic landscapes can provide relevant insights into the variation in the extent of the display of English and the several reasons for its use in different places or for various purposes.

In this chapter, English is our focal point and we examine how it plays a role in almost any study. In Section 9.2, we develop our approach to discussing the various studies on the presence of English in linguistic landscapes. In Section 9.3, we discuss outcomes about English from studies in inner circle countries. The position of English in selected outer circle countries in Asia and Africa is examined in Section 9.4. Thereafter, in Section 9.5, we discuss English in public spaces in expanding circle
countries, distinguishing between the second position in the language hierarchy (Section 9.5.1) and third, first or none (Section 9.5.2). Section 9.6 ends the chapter with some conclusions.

9.2 Our Lens on English and Linguistic Landscape Studies

Nowadays, the pull of English is strong and English has become the most important language of wider communication. English is without a doubt the global language of our times and, as said, it has left its traces in public spaces and can really be seen everywhere.

In an earlier publication, we noted that ‘the omnipresence of English in linguistic landscapes is one of the most obvious markers of the process of globalization’ (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009: 57). The process of globalization can be seen as one of the major factors influencing how the English language is so widely dispersed. The effect of globalization reaches all corners of the world and influences the daily lives of people in the products they buy, the way they dress, the food they eat, the culture they take in, the news they watch and also the words they use and the languages they want to speak and read. The development of globalization has been explained in various ways. Even if its origins go way back in history, processes of globalization are usually located in the 20th century and described in economic terms of markets, production, consumption and advertising. Specific factors mentioned are, for example, the effects of free trade, standardized transportation containers, computer chips and the internet, and factors such as the movement of people through migration and mass travel. Those factors are not only economic, but also technological, political and demographic. The proliferation of English itself is a factor that is not only caused by, but also helps to strengthen globalization; among other reasons, because it has become the sole language of global air traffic control and it is the major language for international trade, diplomacy, academic publishing, press agencies, sports and tourism. Cultural and linguistic aspects can also be taken into consideration. In cultural terms, English dominates the industries of movies, music, games and bestsellers. Of particular importance for the linguistic landscape is the role of English in advertising campaigns, brand names and commercial communications. In linguistic terms, due to globalization, people continuously learn new names of places, persons, products and ideas, mainly through the mass media and the internet. Many new words are coined in English, which implies a shared vocabulary among people from around the world. With good reason, Blommaert (2009: 244) has called English ‘the language that defines globalization’.

Globalization has a dual nature because it contrasts with local concerns, which has been captured in the concept of ‘glocalization’ (Robertson, 1995). At its core, this concept refers to relationships between global orientations and the preservation of local values. People may fear a loss
of their identity because of globalization, or may feel that there is no space for their language and culture. As an alternative vision, Bello (2020) proposed ‘deglobalization’ as a concept that aims for an improved global society. Deglobalization gives priority to values above interests, cooperation above competition, and community above efficiency. It is said that the global COVID-19 pandemic will lead to a future with a different or a ‘new normal’. In a recent blog post, Bello (2020) concluded, ‘the pandemic gives us an opportunity to rethink our global economic system in favor of “deglobalization”’.

Numerous studies on the English language have been published which refer to its use as a global language or to the many varieties of English around the world. Those studies have developed into overlapping specializations as reflected in the titles of handbooks such as World Englishes (Kirkpatrick, 2020), International English: A Guide to Varieties of English Around the World (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017) and English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins et al., 2018). What these publications share is a focus on the English language in all its manifestations. Thus, researchers examine what English represents as a phenomenon and as a linguistic object, including contact varieties of English. Each of the handbooks mentioned may refer to linguistic landscape studies in passing, but so far, none of them has devoted a separate chapter to this topic.

Worldwide, English is today by far the language most learned as an additional language by speakers of other languages. People assume that English is the most valuable language in the labor market and educational systems prioritize the language in their programs. This has led to the blossoming of various specialized areas focusing on the teaching of English, which come with a variety of acronyms: EAL, EAP, EFL, ELT, ENL, ESL, ESP, ESOL, TEFL and TESOL (where E stands for English, L is for language and the other letters can be additional, academic, foreign, native, other, purposes, second, special, teaching and testing). Perhaps we should add the abbreviation ELL for English in the linguistic landscape, but it has not been used as far as we know. In turn, some of these specializations have contributed to a booming and profitable multimillion industry of courses, materials, testing and certificates. In these specialized subfields of language teaching and learning, the area of linguistic landscapes has thus far not garnered much attention, with some exceptions such as Solmaz and Przymus (2021) (see Chapter 10).

There are numerous publications on the historical, colonial, political and economic dimensions of English and on the importance of English in educational systems, in business, in popular culture and in the media. Studies of English have developed into their own specialized fields, and also occupy an important place in general linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and other academic fields. Critical approaches have focused on language practices in relation to the power
and prestige of English and the advantages some people obtain, while others are excluded.

Probably the best-known model of the worldwide diffusion of English is Kachru’s (1992) model of three concentric circles of countries: the inner, outer and expanding circles. The inner circle represents the historical bases of English, that is, the countries where English is the dominant language and the first language of most people (e.g. the United Kingdom and the United States). The outer circle of English came about through the colonial expansion of the British Empire, mainly in Africa and Asia, where English often serves as an official (or co-official) language of a multilingual country and as a means of wider communication between different groups (e.g. India). The expanding circle covers all other countries where English historically played no role and is not official, but where it is more or less widely taught and spoken. The three circles model is attractive because of its simplicity and assertiveness.

However, the model has some limitations and it has been criticized as an oversimplification based mainly on an idea of homogeneous nation-states as a whole. Further, the model supposedly considers Standard English but takes its varieties, also in the inner circle countries, too little into account and it disregards the proficiency levels of speakers while it prioritizes native speakers who are not necessarily experts on their first language. The model may also give more value to inner over outer varieties in suggesting the speakers use more authentic English. Finally, it is not always clear to which circle a country belongs. For example, Bruthiaux (2003) argues that the fuzziness and complexities of each sociolinguistic situation have to be considered. Pennycook (2007) criticizes the model because it is inadequate to understand how complex and diverse English is in today’s world. In contrast, Pakir (2019) argues that there is, thus far, no better paradigm for the analysis of World Englishes, since it is globally relevant and is rooted in local multilingual contexts. Aware of these criticisms, but following Pakir, we apply the model in the next sections. The basic idea of three circles, even if overlapping, can be useful to structure the discussion of how linguistic landscape studies have improved our understanding of the visibility of English and its hierarchical relations with other languages.

Phillipson (1992, 2009) introduced the construct of linguistic imperialism to account for the hierarchies among different languages and how English has become the dominant language, supported by political and economic structures and ideologies. He argues against neutral conceptions of English because English has been imposed as an instrument of the foreign policies of Anglophone countries at the cost of displacing other languages and threatening linguistic diversity. He argues how knowledge and use of English contribute to unequal access to power and how this legitimizes linguistic hierarchies. His critique has had an influence on
academic debate by raising awareness of English as the international language.

In his proposal for one global language system, De Swaan (2001) called English the hypercentral language. He conceives of the system as a language hierarchy of four levels. English has a special role and sits on top of the hierarchy. Specific hierarchical relations contribute to inequality among languages. On the level immediately below English are the supercentral languages: 13 widely spoken languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, French and Spanish. Then follow the central languages, which are official or national languages; there are about 100 such languages, spoken by some 95% of the world’s population. On the lowest level are the peripheral or minority languages, which constitute 98% of all languages, but are spoken by less than 10% of the world’s population. De Swaan relates the origins of the current hierarchy, for the most part, to military conquests of the past, thus colonialism, and, at the same time, he argues that the world system allows for further expansion of the stronger languages due to economic, political and power factors.

The ideas of Phillipson on linguistic imperialism and De Swaan on language hierarchy will be incorporated into our discussion of the manifold investigations of the public display of English. We structure our presentation of studies according to the Kachru model of the three circles because it is still somewhat widely accepted and used. We already saw in Chapter 2 on the development of the field how English played a role in the earliest studies as well as in all four classic studies. The role of English has continued to be of significance in a great number of linguistic landscape studies and English is the focus of attention in the following sections.

9.3 English in Traditional Inner Circle Countries

The dominant role of English in society, including on public displays, is largely taken for granted in the countries belonging to the inner circle, that is, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Other countries often considered belonging to the inner circle are Canada, Ireland and New Zealand, although those countries are officially bilingual or multilingual. Obviously, none of these countries is linguistically homogeneous, as can be demonstrated by census figures and by intense social debates about the role of English and other languages, notably in the United States through the English-Only movement and in Australia on the role of languages other than English (LOTEs) in education.

Historically, parts of the United Kingdom have their own languages, such as Wales with Welsh, and Scotland with Scottish Gaelic and Scots. Language diversity in the United Kingdom was well demonstrated in a survey when over 300 home languages were found among school children in London (Baker & Eversley, 2000). In the United States, English
is obviously the dominant language in society, even though hundreds of other languages are spoken by millions of its inhabitants, either as indigenous or as heritage languages. Spanish is by far the most spoken among those languages; according to US census data from 2021 an estimated 13% of the population speaks Spanish at home.

Similar to the United Kingdom and the United States, Australia has no official language, but it has a declining number of Aboriginal languages and various immigrant languages are spoken by substantial groups of people. Canada has two official federal languages, English and French, and provides some support for over 70 indigenous languages. Ireland recognizes Irish as its national and first official language, and New Zealand is officially a trilingual state where besides English, both Māori and New Zealand Sign Language are officially recognized. As we will demonstrate, numerous linguistic landscape studies in all of these alleged ‘English-speaking’ countries have contributed to our knowledge about English and other languages in public spaces.

9.3.1 United Kingdom and United States

The base of English that traditionally provides norms for standardized versions of the language is formed by the United Kingdom and the United States. British English and American English are the two dominant but competing standard varieties. The historical core of the inner circle is England, where the English language started its gradual spread from the Middle Ages onwards.

To characterize the position of English in the linguistic landscape, it may be best to start in its heartland: in a fairly ordinary English street in the inner city of Newcastle upon Tyne in the northeast of England. It is here that Cook (2013, 2015) made an elaborate inventory of the characteristics of the linguistic landscape. Cook categorizes all the signs he finds, which include house names and numbers, and typical British features like brass plates for business names. He also explains the difference between the element ‘street’ and ‘road’ in names and he considers the quality of the material of the signs and whether they are permanent or temporary. He ponders on the use of letters with capitals or lowercase, punctuation, serif and sans serif letters and fonts. For Cook, the written language in signage is a distinctive genre in grammar. The features he discusses are elements of importance in the display of language in public spaces, but not commonly included in linguistic landscape studies. Interestingly, sign regulations in England do not mention language because it is taken for granted or, as Cook (2013: 51) wittily observes, this is ‘presumably because legislators do not dream that any language other than English would be used on street signs’. Yet, in this typical English street, Cook also finds languages other than English. The function of those signs was to locate, attract and inform potential customers, and people were
not expected to understand the language. He calls this use *atmospheric multilingualism* as a contrasting concept to *community multilingualism*. The latter refers to the use of Chinese on signs for practical purposes in a second street he examined (see Cook [2022] for a book-length treatment) (Figure 9.1).

Cook focuses on the specific features of signs in a predominantly English environment which is different from the Multilingual Manchester project. In this project, data on multilingualism were collected through the LinguaSnapp smartphone application (see Chapter 4) which excludes monolingual English signs. The results have been published in several articles (Gaiser & Matras, 2020; Matras et al., 2018). Similarly, the investigations of Chinatown in Liverpool (Amos, 2016) or Banglatown in London (Rasinger, 2018) focus on multilingualism and pay relatively little attention to the dominance of English signage.

In the United States, it seems unavoidable that the dominating position of English is taken into account in studies that investigate the presence of Spanish, Chinese or other languages. Here, we discuss some studies on Spanish in relation to English; other studies on Chinese have been discussed in Chapter 7.

Perhaps it is telling that Troyer *et al.* (2015) refer to Spanish as an ‘unseen language’ in the linguistic landscape. Various studies in different places in the United States have either confirmed or contradicted such a marginal position of Spanish in public spaces, while at the same time all studies seem to confirm the dominance of English. Troyer *et al.*
(2015) reported on a study in a rural town in Oregon where 35% of the residents were Spanish speaking. In the linguistic landscape, they counted that 98% of all signs included English, 2% were in Spanish only and 9% were bilingual signs that included Spanish. Moreover, the use of Spanish on signs was limited to two small geographic areas and, in economic terms, to convenience stores and Mexican restaurants and businesses. The authors conclude that Spanish is not completely invisible, but it is largely ignored. They cite as reasons the socioeconomic inequality between Anglo-American and Hispanic population groups, as well as the presence of linguistic and cultural intolerance for the public display of Spanish by some Anglo-Americans. These outcomes seem to be in agreement with the findings of Mitchell (2010) in Pittsburg, who found 96.5% monolingual English signs (see Chapter 4). In another study, this time in San Antonio, Texas, Hult (2014) was able to confirm the dominance of English. He found that 92.8% of signs along the main highways were monolingual English, with only a small number of signs showing a limited presence of Spanish. Obviously, the linguistic landscape does not represent the linguistic composition of the city population which, according to census data, is 53% English speaking, 44% Spanish speaking and has a total of 28 different home languages. Hult explains how the ideological dominance of English that began in the 19th century and gradually became stronger in the 20th century, is reinforced by the current visual dominance of English. Hassa and Krajcik (2016) obtained similar results in Washington Heights in New York, a neighborhood with a high percentage of inhabitants of Dominican origin. They conclude that English was the dominant language after counting all the words on signs (73.9%), followed by Spanish (24.9%) and a few words in other languages (1.2%). The authors argue that the superior status of English reveals inequalities in the linguistic hierarchy. English is perceived as the language of prestige and socioeconomic success with which Spanish cannot compete. It seems that the Dominicans in this neighborhood have internalized English as the norm and simultaneously contest and reproduce an ideology of English monolingualism.

It is less clear what the relative positions of English and Spanish are in the linguistic landscape in other contexts. Franco Rodriguez (2009) collected a substantial corpus of mainly commercial signs displaying non-standard forms of Spanish in Los Angeles and Miami-Dade counties, but he was only interested in the linguistic aspects of deviations of Standard Spanish, mainly at the lexical level. He acknowledges the strong influence of the contact with English, but his study does not provide information on the prominence of English (or Spanish) in the linguistic landscapes (Figure 9.2). Yanguas (2009) investigated two neighborhoods in Washington, which he referred to as Hispanic. The relative prominence of English and Spanish in this study remains unclear, even though he presents several examples of English only, Spanish only and bilingual signs.
He refers to the supremacy of English through a de facto language policy related to English-only movements, but at the same time he claims that the signs in Spanish provide evidence for the importance of that language. A recent study by Pastor (2021) in a densely populated Spanish-speaking area of Dallas only included bilingual English–Spanish and Spanish monolingual signs, but excluded all monolingual English signs, so he concluded that further studies are needed to know the proportion of English versus Spanish.

Along the same lines, Lyons and Rodriguez-Ordóñez (2017) carried out a careful quantification of the presence of English and Spanish in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood of Chicago undergoing a process of gentrification. Overall, they found that around 40% of signs were in English, 30% in Spanish and 30% bilingual signs, with some variation over the different tracts of the neighborhood. Those percentages are similar, but substantially lower for English and higher for Spanish than what we saw in the other contexts. The authors argue that a key insight into the gentrification process is not only the distribution of the languages, but rather how the presence of Spanish is framed, among other things as...
heritage and collective memory. In a similar quantitative case study on
four streets in the Mission district of San Francisco, Lyons (2020) again
found substantial differences in the percentages of the use of English
and Spanish on signs. She was able to statistically infer the differences
between the streets in terms of the likelihood of finding English or Span-
ish through the application of an inferential model (see Chapter
4 on her statistical approach).

Carr (2021) wanted to take this one step further and demonstrate
that linguistic landscapes do reflect the language of the inhabitants of
a neighborhood or a city. She studied three cities in the county of Los
Angeles which had different proportions of Spanish speakers, ranging
from 93.6% to 73.4%. In an elaborate quantitative analysis, she found
80.9% monolingual signs, of which 71.5% were in English, 28.2% in
Spanish and just 11 signs (0.3%) in other languages. These percent-
ages are similar to those of Hassa and Krajcik (2016) in the Dominican
neighborhood in New York. Carr found substantial variation between
the three cities: from 42.9% signs in Spanish, to 32.5% to 12.1%. Her
further analysis of the dominant language in the main and informative
parts of multilingual signs confirmed the overall pattern. In each city,
she found a strong correlation between the languages on the signage and
the percentage of Spanish speakers, which she sees as substantiating her
claim that the linguistic landscape does indeed reflect the composition of
the population, at least to some extent. Her study shows that although
English is clearly the most prominent language, Spanish has a more than
marginal position and can certainly not be characterized as ‘unseen’ in
these urban areas in Los Angeles.

Yochim (2020) investigated what is referred to as the ‘refugeescape’
of Erie, Pennsylvania. Refugees from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and
the Middle East were relocated to this small city. At the time of the
study, 11.7% of the population spoke a language other than English,
most frequently Nepali and Spanish. The study confirmed that English
was pervasive in the linguistic landscape because all official signs were
in English only. Just a few private signs were written in other languages
and less than half of those signs were bilingual, mostly English with Span-
ish or Arabic. ‘Cultural heritage signs’, which refer to past immigrant
groups such as Italians and Poles, were mainly written in English and this
demonstrates their linguistic assimilation. The author concludes that the
linguistic landscape reflects an ideology that gives the highest status in the
language hierarchy to English and weakens the ethnolinguistic vitality of
refugees.

In some specific neighborhoods, the dominance of English is chal-
lenged by Spanish because of the high proportion of Spanish speakers.
Perhaps the study of the Escondido World Market in San Diego by
Ramos Pellicia (2021) illustrates some of the underlying processes. Inside
this market, Spanish is the dominant language in the linguistic landscape
because the market is perceived as a safe space where Spanish is accepted and expected, whereas the outside world is often hostile toward the language. One could say that the market has become a small Spanish island in an English ocean.

From the studies in the United States it has become clear that English is without doubt the dominant language in public spaces. This can, in part, be explained by the pervasive language ideology that gives most social prestige to English.

9.3.2 Canada, Ireland and New Zealand

Canada has been considered the cradle of linguistic landscapes studies, not least because of the reflections by Landry and Bourhis (1997) (see Chapter 2). English is the dominant language in Canada, with the exception of the province of Quebec, where French has an important role in society. Across Canada live several dozen First Nations peoples, who speak over 70 languages, of which only Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktut are deemed strong enough to be able to survive, while almost all the others are considered severely endangered (Sarkar & Lavoie, 2014). In some of those communities, one can encounter signs in the local language (see Figure 9.3).

In Chapter 7, we briefly discuss a study on Inuit languages in the north of Canada as a minority language and we present the example of a study in the Chinatown of Vancouver. The linguistic landscape in Canada is again to the fore as an interesting case of language policy in Chapter 8.

Studies in Ireland usually focus on the position and public use of Irish (Kallen, 2009, 2010; Moriarty, 2012); however, despite Irish being widely visible on official bilingual signage promoted by the government

Figure 9.3 Sign with word in Halkomelem, a First Nation language (Vancouver Island)
as the first national language, there is a process of passive exclusion of Irish on private and commercial signage (Thistletwaite & Sebba, 2015). In Chapter 7, we discuss how Irish functions in daily life in a similar way to many other minority languages, and we categorize Irish as having a medium presence.

New Zealand is another country usually situated in the inner circle, although it has three official languages. Next to English, Te reo Māori has been official since 1987, a legal position it has shared since 2006 with New Zealand Sign Language. However, walking the streets of, for example, Auckland, one of the major cities, it is hard to find any other language than English, except in some French or Italian names of businesses, or a few words in Māori at the fan shop of the national rugby team or local government (Figure 9.4).

The studies we discuss in Chapter 7 show that, in practice, Māori as a minority language is almost invisible in public spaces and English monolingualism is the norm for linguistic landscapes (Macalister, 2010). Bilingual signs are hard to find (Johnson, 2017) and at the airport Māori is only used for touristic purposes which does not reflect the sociolinguistic reality (Cunningham & King, 2021). We rated the visibility of Māori in the category of minority languages that are minimally displayed (see Chapter 7).

These three countries belong originally to the inner circle of English, but as we remarked before, all three are officially bilingual or multilingual. All three also harbor minority languages and nowadays language diversity is a characteristic of their societies, as elsewhere.

In most contexts, including public spaces, the use of only English is by and large taken for granted. Even if there is a second or third official language, that designation is more symbolic than real and has few consequences for display in public spaces, as we saw not only in New Zealand,
but also in Ireland and in Canada outside the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick. In these countries, English is not used for prestige reasons, but other languages, such as French and Italian, are prestigious and are used in brand names, shop names and slogans (Bagna & Machetti, 2012; Ben-Rafael & Ben-Rafael, 2019; see Chapter 11). Only in specific communities and locations might other languages such as Spanish or Chinese compete with English to some extent and contest its supremacy.

9.4 English and Other Languages in Outer Circle Countries in Asia and Africa

All countries in the outer circle of English are multilingual, and in most of those countries English was imposed during colonial times, whereas today English is a co-official state language. We first consider a number of countries in Asia, beginning with India, then Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore and then we compare the cities of Hong Kong and Macao. Second, we examine some studies in Africa, in comparing the cases of Botswana, The Gambia, Uganda and Zambia, and finally the cases of South Africa and Tanzania to see what happens to English. We also include Rwanda and Ethiopia, two countries where English is widely used even though they were not former British colonies.

9.4.1 India

The federal union of India demonstrates a unique constellation of linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity and it is one of the most important multilingual states in the world. As a former British colony, English continues to play an important role in society, next to Hindi in the Devanagari script, which is India’s official language. There are 22 scheduled languages in 13 different scripts, which are official in 1 or more of the 28 states and 8 union territories of the federal union.

Given its multitude of languages and scripts, Indian scholars are obviously interested in the study of linguistic landscapes. Time and again, various studies have confirmed the overall dominance of English in the linguistic landscape, although Hindi also has a significant place. Three chapters in the collection by Itagi and Singh (2002) are of special relevance to linguistic landscape studies in the sense used here. In his chapter, Naik (2002) documented English as the dominant language in the public sphere in the industrial city of Rourkela in the state of Orissa, where government signs were bilingual in English and Oriya (the official language of the state). Dhongde (2002) analyzed roadside advertisements (hoardings) from four different cities (Aligarh, Banaras, Kolhapur and Pune). Languages were presented in different ways on those signs, with English used for international and national products, Hindi for local products in two towns and Marathi in two other towns. Ramamoorthy (2002) examined the exceptional case of the city of Pondicherry, a French stronghold in
colonial times. He still found many reminiscences of French, for example, in street names, although English also had an important general presence on signage, next to Tamil, the official state language.

Agnihotri and McCormick (2010) discussed the relation between English and Hindi in New Delhi, the capital. They compared in some detail, but also in a somewhat impressionistic way, the signage in four districts of New Delhi. In a prestigious shopping area, they found a strong dominance of English and, exceptionally, a few signs that also included Hindi because those signs were placed by the government or by banks. In the other three areas, English and Hindi were the two dominant languages, although in one area there were also various signs in foreign languages. Punjabi had some presence in the area of the old city and there was a mixture of English, Hindi and Urdu and their scripts in a predominantly Muslim area. The authors also analyzed a series of billboards with descriptions in English and Hindi, but all in Roman script. On other roadside hoardings, English and Hindi were mixed and so were the scripts. Overall, an important observation of their study was that linguistic boundaries between English and Hindi were permeable and fluid. This conclusion coincides with the remarks in an earlier publication by McCormick and Agnihotri (2009) in which they provided examples comparing the use of English on bilingual and multilingual signage in New Delhi and Cape Town, South Africa. They found that the ‘boundaries between languages and scripts are porous’ (McCormick & Agnihotri 2009: 15) based on the alternation of languages and the loanwords aimed at bilingual readers as well as positive associations with Englishness. In another study in New Delhi, Meganathan (2017) analyzed the frequencies of English used, alone or in combination with other languages. He shows that English was by far the most frequent language (used on 93% of all signs), followed by Hindi (47%). Only a few of the over 100 languages spoken in the city appeared on signs, among those Urdu and Punjabi, the two ‘second official languages’ in the state of Delhi. The four official languages co-occurred in four scripts on a few street signs, with Hindi on top, followed by English and then Urdu and Punjabi. Kathpalia and Wee Ong (2015) analyzed English-Hindi code-mixing or Hinglish, in one popular advertising campaign for Amul butter on billboards across India. They distinguish different strategies such as puns, allusions (e.g. to Bollywood movies or Hindi TV shows), contradictory associations through irony, paradox, metaphor or word creation. The authors see this as a ‘happy coexistence of Hindi and English’ (Kathpalia & Wee Ong, 2015: 574) that fulfills creative needs and is part of everyday sociolinguistic reality.

Rubdy (2015b) analyzed over 100 graffiti commemorating the Mumbai attacks in 2008. A large proportion of those signs were in English only and English also turned out to be the preferred code through placement. She argues that English is used for more than symbolic or emblematic
reasons because its use is related to the role English plays in the wider social context of Mumbai, where Marathi is the official state language. Many texts also contained Marathi or Hindi but the content was complementary rather than duplicating, suggesting that the targeted readers were English literate bilinguals. The linguistic landscape of South Mumbai was studied by Shukla and Singh (2018). In a quantitative inventory, they found that English dominated the linguistic landscape, followed by Hindi and about half of all government signs were trilingual with English, Hindi and Marathi.

In two small studies, Begum and Sinha (2018, 2021) examined signs in the city of Patna and the town of Bihta, both in the state of Bihar. In a main shopping street in Patna, they found that English was the most frequently visible language on 40% English-only and 29% bilingual English–Hindi signs ($n = 70$). There was less Hindi-only signage (27%) and very few were found in Urdu. In the study in Bihta, they found one-quarter of signs in English only, 20% bilingual Hindi–English and almost half in Hindi only. So, in this smaller town, English also had a strong presence, but was less dominant. Other languages spoken by the population, such as Angika, Bajjika, Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri, were almost invisible (the second case is discussed in Chapter 7 on minority languages). The trend for less English in smaller places was confirmed in another study in Bihar by Singh (2018) who compared the remote rural village of Malisandh to the more developed village of Shat in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The results showed that English had a presence in both villages, but to different degrees. In Malisandh, 5% of the signs ($n = 45$) had English only and 25% were bilingual English–Hindi, mostly in the school context; so a relatively limited presence. In contrast, in the second village, the position of English was stronger due to tourism and commercial reasons: 29% of the signs ($n = 58$) used English and 36% were mixed English–Hindi. Even though a majority of the population did not understand the language, the author concludes that English had penetrated strongly and was used to increase the prestige of goods and services. Singh (2018: 34) perceived ‘a direct correlation between growth and English’. The presence of English in all the villages studied was comparable.

Various studies were carried out in Northeast India confirming the dominance of English in public spaces. Bharadwaj and Shukla (2018) studied the market areas of Tezpur, a town in Assam where Assamese is the official language and the lingua franca of the various language communities. They found that bilingual signs in Assamese and English were the most common (61%), followed by 21% in English only and 14% in Assamese only ($n = 208$). English dominated commercial signs, whereas government signs were mostly trilingual, adding Hindi to the trilingual formula. Monolingual Assamese signs were mostly put up by cultural and historical institutes, reflecting a sense of identity. Dkhar and Singh
(2018) compared the linguistic landscapes of three districts in the state of Meghalaya, where Khasi and Garo have been recognized as associated official languages since 2005, alongside English as the official language and Hindi as the national language. In a quantitative study, they report the clear dominance of English-only signs (48%) or in combination with Hindi and to a lesser degree with Khasi and Garo (total 19%; \( n = 300 \)). The authors concluded that the presence of English is an obstacle to the promotion of the regional languages. It takes away from the autonomy of those languages when they are mixed with English on signs. The results of three further studies on multilingual communities in Northeast India are summarized by Singh et al. (2018). The studies took place in the city of Aizawl in the state of Mizoram, six localities in the area of Shillong in the state of Meghalaya and the small village of Thahekhu in the state of Nagaland. The results show again that in all three cases English dominated official, commercial and other types of public signage. Unlike other studies, there seemed to be no difference in the frequency of English between the small village and the larger city. English overshadowed the national language Hindi and the regional languages Mizo, Khasi and Sumi, which are spoken by a majority of the population. The authors consider the dominance of English as a symbol of its status, prestige and power, ideas that are similar to those reported in many earlier studies (Figure 9.5).

Overall, the various studies in India confirm the predominance of English in the linguistic landscape. According to De Swaan (2001), English is the hypercentral language at the top of the hierarchy. Depending on the context, other official state languages, in particular Hindi as the

![Billboard with 'English the power' (India)](image)
national language, play a role, which is highly visible through the different scripts. However, the rich diversity of spoken languages in India is not at all reflected in the linguistic landscape. Still, a visitor to India would have no idea that they were visiting an inner circle country because the linguistic landscape is deeply multilingual.

9.4.2 Malaysia – Brunei – Singapore

Next, we discuss English in three countries also in Asia: Malaysia, the sultanate of Brunei and the city-state Singapore. These three independent states share a history of British colonialism and the imposition of English as the colonial language and, as such, are examples of the linguistic imperialism to which Phillipson (1992) refers. Today, English is an official language of Malaysia and Singapore, but not of Brunei, and English is widely used in business and higher education in the three countries. Standard Malay is an official language of all three, but it is only in Brunei that Jawi, the Arabic alphabet, is commonly used for writing in Malay. Additionally, Chinese and Tamil are official languages in Singapore.

9.4.2.1 Malaysia

Around 140 languages are spoken in multilingual Malaysia which has a population of approximately 32 million inhabitants. Besides the official languages English and Malay, other languages widely spoken are Chinese and Tamil. In Malaysia, a language policy is in place that prescribes the use of Malay in signage and advertisements. The law from 1972 stipulates that Malay has to appear prominently on all signage, and this was reaffirmed in 2007 (Coluzzi, 2020; David & Manan, 2015). This policy and its complex language situation make Malaysia an interesting place for linguistic landscape studies. We present the results of various studies to describe the position of English in public spaces in relation to Malay, and to Chinese, Tamil and other languages.

Overall, the most visible languages in the linguistic landscapes are English and Malay. As Coluzzi (2020) observed, a tourist visiting Malaysia would mainly see signs in English and Malay, and then perhaps some in Chinese and some in Tamil, especially in Little India. Similar to most urban landscapes around the world, traces of languages such as French and Italian can be discovered. Most of the studies were carried out in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. Manan et al. (2015) confirmed the prominent use of English in the linguistic landscape in four neighborhoods. In monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs, English was most frequent and it also stood out in text size and the space it occupied on each sign. Manan et al. (2015: 44) concluded that ‘English is deeply woven into Kuala Lumpur’s cityscape’.

This study of the capital is supplemented by various studies of ethnic neighborhoods, religious places, the highway to the airport and
the airport itself. Wang and Xu (2018) found that English had a strong presence in Chinatown, although Chinese remained the most dominant language and Malay came third. In percentages, they found that English was present on 57% of signs, Chinese on 71% and Malay on 45%. In Little India there was more English (on 86% of all signs) and more Malay (55%), whereas Tamil appeared on 44% of signs. In both neighborhoods, there was a preference for bilingual or multilingual signs, but the difference was that Chinese in combination with English or Malay appeared more often than the combination of Tamil together with English or Malay. One of the explanations the authors give for these patterns is the economic value of multilingual signage for the business owners. Coluzzi and Kitade (2015) studied places of worship in Kuala Lumpur. They found that depending on the ethnic or religious group attending the place, the dominant language on display was the ethnic language plus English, while Malay was little used. Anuarudin et al. (2013) examined language use on billboards on a stretch of the highway between Kuala Lumpur and the airport. They calculated that 87% of those billboards had English and 74% had Malay, including frequent bilingual signs. There was only a minor presence of other languages, such as Chinese, French and Japanese. They not only noted the difference between the official language policy that prescribes Malay and actual language practices, but they also detected a seeming tolerance of this discrepancy by the authorities. At the international airport, Woo and Riget (2020) observed a hierarchy of languages on wayfinding signs. Those signs had three parts arranged vertically. Malay was consistently placed on top, English was in the middle in a slightly smaller font and in italics, and three languages were in the lower part next to each other: Arabic, Chinese and Japanese, in a smaller font and with different scripts. The authors conclude that this arrangement is in agreement with government language policy which gives preference to Malay and, at the same time, it is directed at the target groups that pass through the airport.

David and Manan (2015) examined the linguistic landscape of Petaling Jaya, a city which is part of the greater Kuala Lumpur area. After presenting details of the official language policy, they observed that government signs \( (n = 50) \) were monolingual in Malay, with the few exceptions of bilingual Malay–English signs. Private signs, in contrast, were almost all bilingual or multilingual \( (n = 350) \) and, by and large, shop owners complied with the policy of giving prominence to Malay (in font size and language positioning). However, what was, in fact, happening was a simultaneous accommodation and evasion of the rules by also giving prominence to English on commercial signs, for example, through English brand names. Moving away from Kuala Lumpur, but including the city as one of their four cases, Ariffin and Husin (2013) compared shop signs in Kuala Lumpur, the city Bandar Raya Melaka and the towns Cheng and Bandar Jengka. They found that English was more frequent in
the two large cities, while in contrast, Malay had a larger presence in the two smaller cities, followed by bilingual signs and a few signs that also included Chinese. More recently, Ariffin et al. (2019) studied shop signs in Putrajaya, the administrative capital, south of Kuala Lumpur. They confirmed the pattern of the dominance of both Malay and English in the linguistic landscape, but in their case there was a greater prominence of English due to its placement and the size of the texts. The latter would be in conflict with the official language policy.

Far from Kuala Lumpur in the northern state of Penang, Ben Said and Ong (2019) carried out a study of the historical development of shop signs in George Town, the third largest city of Malaysia. They were able to trace the first shop signs, in traditional Chinese, back to the 18th century. English appeared during the colonial period in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. After independence in 1957, Malay became the only official language which led to many changes in signage. However, today, English is more prominent than other languages. In the south, McKiernan (2019) made an inventory of the linguistic landscape of four residential neighborhoods in Johor Bahru, a city on the border with Singapore. He found that English was used on 37% of signs, whereas Malay was used on 44% and Chinese appeared on 18%. Just over 1% of the remaining signs was distributed over incidental use of other languages, including Arabic, Italian, Latin and Spanish. Top-down signs were in compliance with government policy of using Malay. English was allowed to have a large presence on bottom-up signs which the author related to the official status of English in neighboring Singapore, and to the promotion of English by some local authorities, educational institutions and churches.

From the various studies in Malaysia, it becomes clear that English ranks high in terms of prestige and visibility, and that, depending on the location Malay may have a larger or smaller presence than English, even though this sometimes goes against the official language policy. Other languages have a more limited presence and are seen as less important. The respondents interviewed by Coluzzi and Kitade (2015) were, in general, satisfied with the status quo and they considered English as the international language that is useful for obtaining economic, cultural and educational advantages.

### 9.4.2.2 Brunei

The Jawi, a script based on Arabic, is probably what stands out most in the linguistic landscape of Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Brunei. A great deal of English can be seen, as well as Malay in Latin script. Brunei is a small country located on Borneo, the same island as Malaysia, with around 437,000 inhabitants. Since 1988, a law has prescribed the use of Jawi next to Roman script, but on top and twice as big. Coluzzi (2011,
2012, 2020) has studied the linguistic landscape of the capital of Brunei. His main finding was that English and Malay (in Jawi or Roman script or both) were more or less equally dominant, on 79.4% and 82.2% of signs, whereas he encountered Chinese on 18.6% of signs \( (n = 102) \) (Coluzzi, 2011: 227–228). The three reasons for the extensive use of English that Coluzzi (2012: 237) mentions are the history of Brunei, globalization in general and the opinion of the inhabitants that English is more useful and prestigious than Standard Malay. He observes covert official prestige for English when he noted, ‘It rarely comes first or is the most prominent language on the signs, but still it is everywhere’ (Coluzzi, 2012: 238) (Figure 9.6).

9.4.2.3 Singapore

The places that make the linguistic landscape of Singapore special to an international visitor are most likely the ethnic neighborhoods of Little India and Chinatown with their display of Tamil and Chinese signs. There are also a few remnants of colonial architecture with English-only signs and impressive new buildings along the harbor front where English is pervasive in the shopping malls, although accompanied by big commercial names, including occasional Italian, French, Spanish and Chinese signs. The linguistic landscape reflects a complex multilingual society, although the first impression is that English is dominant.

Singapore has four official languages that create a multilingual and highly diverse linguistic cityscape. English has the highest social prestige and official signs, such as road and street names and names of government buildings, are usually in English. The other three official languages
are seen less frequently, except in ethnic neighborhoods like Chinatown, Malay Village and Little India, where they appear together with English (Figure 9.7). The language policy in Singapore generally takes a laissez-faire approach to private signage (Shang & Guo, 2017). Singapore has attracted the interest of several local and international investigators of its linguistic landscape. For two studies of Singapore’s Chinatown, see Chapter 7 and for two studies of names in Singapore, see Chapter 11.

Tan (2014) analyzed the patterns of bilingual and multilingual signs in Singapore. The author noted that the signs at the entrance of all state schools use the four official languages, with Malay in Roman script on top, then Chinese in Chinese characters, followed by Tamil in Tamil script and English at the bottom. Although this pattern was the most common for signs with four languages, there were also many signs where English was placed on top. Monolingual signs in English were common, but the most frequent pattern was English–Chinese with English on top. In the mass rapid transport (MTR) stations, English was on top with only one other language below, depending on the neighborhood. Tan (2014: 459) suggests a division of labor between English and the other languages, pointing out the use of ‘English to get on in the world and the “mother tongue” to connect to traditional ethnic values. Or English for the head, the “mother tongue” for the heart’. The presence of Chinese in Chinatown and Tamil in Little India is related to commercial interests and tourism, which also explains the limited presence of Japanese.

Other studies have examined parts of Singapore in quantitative terms. Shang and Guo (2017) surveyed 10 neighborhood centers in the
western part of Singapore. Based on a sample of 1,097 shop names, they found a predominance of English and Chinese. Almost all monolingual signs were in English (94%), bilingual signs combined English with Chinese in 97% of cases and multilingual signs contained at least English and Chinese in 91% of signs. Malay and Tamil only had a small presence. For Shang and Guo (2017: 197), the obvious dominance of English is ‘associated with meritocracy, economic advantage, and upper class in social hierarchy’. Applying a similar quantitative approach, Tang (2020) surveyed the inside of 30 MTR stations and their immediate surroundings and collected 1,555 photographs of signs. The results were almost the same as those of Shang and Guo (2017) with English appearing on 95% of monolingual signs and 98% of bilingual signs; again a combination of English with Chinese was the most common while Tamil and Malay were much less common. Tang frames the pervasiveness of English as linguistic imperialism (as in Phillipson, 1992) and related the reasons for using English to the economy and interethnic communication. A general shift to English is underway in Singapore, while English is already on top in the linguistic hierarchy.

In a case study of a hawker center in Singapore, Leimgruber (2018) analyzed the signboards on top of the stalls and found that 63 out of the 70 stalls had English and 62 had Chinese, with much overlap. This finding confirms the predominance of bilingual signage found in other studies in other sites. Leimgruber (2018) deems the knowledge of both languages useful in order to understand the signs, since they often present different pieces of information. A much larger study of hawker centers in Singapore was presented by Lee (2022), who investigated 2,145 stalls in the 20 largest hawker centers (out of 114 in the city; it does not include the smaller center studied by Leimgruber). Her quantitative findings are evidently more detailed, but largely confirm the predominance of English. Of all signs, only about 10% were monolingual and of those half were in English. In bilingual and multilingual signs, English had a presence of 91.7%. In discussing individual cases, Lee can relate the language used to the time when the owner started the stall (depending on, for example, Chinese immigration waves or changes in language policies), as well as the relation of the name of the place to the type of food sold. Further, some unexpected combinations were found of traditional and simplified Chinese with Pinyin and/or English and romanized spellings of non-Mandarin dialects. The author concludes that ‘beneath the seemingly English-dominant surface on official signs, there is another level of vibrant multilingual ecology in Singapore’s hawker center stall signs’ (Lee, 2022: 29).

Another angle is taken in the study by Hult and Kelly-Holmes (2019) who investigate the story behind the Norwegian signs of a tailor shop in Singapore. In a quantitative study, the few signs in Norwegian would only be an exception among the majority of English–Chinese signs. By
bringing out the story, the researchers were able to demonstrate how globalization has led the owner to a specific language choice which he uses for creative marketing purposes. The authors consider that the story is worth telling because it offers insights into the process of shaping linguistic landscapes.

In all three countries, we see that English is widely used in the linguistic landscape due to historical reasons and under the influence of globalizing forces, which Phillipson (1992) calls linguistic imperialism. English can be considered as the language highest in the hierarchy, even hypercentral in De Swaan’s (2001) terminology, although it competes for visibility with Malay in Malaysia and Brunei. In specific environments, such as the airport in Kuala Lumpur or Chinatown in Singapore, the dominance of English is less clear and Malay or Chinese may contest its supremacy.

9.4.3 Hong Kong and Macao

The first thing that strikes a visitor about the cityscape of Hong Kong is the extraordinary number of signs in the shopping streets. Signs seem to come in all shapes and sizes; huge billboards side by side with small printed or handwritten signs and anything in between. The signs come in bright neon colors, some are faded and most are at eye level, but due to lack of space, many are also placed high on the façade of a building. The density of signs is just overwhelming and because Hong Kong is a vertical city with many high rise buildings, signs commonly advertise for shops, restaurants and services on higher floors (adding, for example, 2/F or 3/F to the name). This important characteristic of the high density of commercial signage and information in superimposed layers is mentioned in the reflections on language, texts and the city by Hutton (2011), who states that the greater the density the more Chinese characters dominate (Figure 9.8).

Figure 9.8 Extraordinary number of signs in Hong Kong
The English language has a clear presence on signs, in particular standing out in names, many of them international brands and other lesser known brands, although the first impression is that one sees Chinese more frequently, both in traditional and simplified script. Upon closer inspection, one notices that official street names have English on top (usually) and Chinese below. Bilingual signage is common, not only with English but also with Chinese on top, or with English on the left and Chinese on the right. Other languages are harder to encounter, although there are, of course, big commercial names that can be read as French, Italian or Spanish, similar to Kuala Lumpur, and if one looks carefully some of those languages along with others can be spotted.

The linguistic landscape of Macao is a different experience. Although at first sight it may seem similar to Hong Kong because you also see many signs with Chinese and English, the most striking aspect is the presence of Portuguese. This is, of course, related to its colonial history. Various researchers have systematically investigated the linguistic landscapes of Hong Kong and Macao from different angles and we present some of the outcomes of their work.

The cities of Hong Kong and Macao are located on the coast of the South China Sea and are connected by a bridge-tunnel that is 55 kilometers in length. Over 7 million people live in Hong Kong and less than 1 million people live in Macao, and in China both have the status of Special Administrative Region. Both cities are former colonies: Hong Kong was British from 1841 to 1997 and Macao was Portuguese from 1557 to 1999. Strictly speaking, Macao does not belong to the outer circle of English. In both cities, Chinese is an official language; English is the second official language in Hong Kong, and Portuguese is an official language of Macao. Legal regulations stipulate that one of the three official languages of Macao should be included on signs, although occasionally English-only signs are approved (Zhang & Chan, 2017: 28).

Wong and Chan (2018) traced the historical development of the linguistic landscape in Hong Kong in the period from 1957 to 2014. They observed a gradual transition from a monolingual Chinese linguistic landscape to a bilingual Chinese–English landscape, in particular from 1980 onwards. After the UK’s handover to China in 1997, bilingualism continued, but with Chinese as the more prominent language, confirming the impressions given above. Wong and Chan (2018) further pointed out significant differences between economic sectors; for example, the use of English-only signs in luxury shopping areas. The variation in the prevalence of Chinese and English was substantiated by Lam and Graddol (2017) who examined the linguistic landscape of the International Finance Center (IFC), an iconic building complex in Hong Kong. This multistorey building is conceived of as a vertical landscape. Their findings showed more Chinese signage on the basement and lower-level
floors, with the podium and tower levels displaying more English. Lam and Graddol linked this language stratification to social groups. For example, the lower levels were frequented more by Filipino and Indonesian domestic helpers and the higher levels more by affluent mainland Chinese visitors, demonstrating a connection to the socioeconomic inequalities in society (Figure 9.9).

The directory of company names in the two office towers displayed all names in English but only about half of the names were also in Chinese. On bilingual signs, English was consistently on top and Chinese below.

English is not only a part of the colonial heritage because, as Lai (2013) argued, of its high status, but also it symbolically positions Hong Kong as ‘Asia’s World City’ (see Chapter 4 for a summary of Lai [2013]). The neighboring city of Shenzhen, just across the border in mainland China, also aspires to become a world city just like Hong Kong. The linguistic landscape in Shenzhen is quite different, more similar to other major cities in China, where using English has been ordained on bilingual signs in a position below simplified Chinese. In their comparison of

**Figure 9.9** International Finance Center, Hong Kong
Hong Kong and Shenzhen, Danielewicz-Betz and Graddol (2014) focused on varieties of English spelling and words such as elevator or lift. Obviously, they found more British English forms in Hong Kong, and more American English in Shenzhen. They presented various examples of a local Chinese-English variety, reflecting Chinese linguistic features or errors, among others in the use of numbers, prepositions, articles and the past tense. On both sides of the border, they saw many examples of mixing and an ongoing shift from British to American English or to a local variety. Slowly, the use of English seems to be decreasing in Hong Kong whereas it is increasing in Shenzhen and the rest of the mainland.

Another rather different take on Hong Kong was presented by Lou (2017) who compared the signage, spatial arrangements and interactions in three markets located in the New Territories, Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. Her data are based on interviews and visits to the markets with informants, which enabled her to present short ethnographic descriptions of each place from a geosemiotic perspective. In each case, she emphasized the relationships between written and oral languages, space and place. The wet market of fish and meat products had only minimal signage, implying that English was virtually absent. In contrast, the supermarket had various large English-only displays and smaller bilingual Chinese-English signs. The third market, a Nepali shop, only had an English name and almost no signs because texts were only available on the products’ packaging and had to be read from there. In another publication, Lou (2016c) recounts the story of a huge landmark neon sign of a restaurant in Hong Kong with a prominent English name and a smaller Chinese name. Originally, when the sign was first placed, it was seen as an emblem of entrepreneurship; later, when it was threatened with removal due to government regulations, it became part of a discourse of nostalgia, and finally it became a sort of monument that is preserved in a museum in a new context. The importance of this ethnographic study of one sign demonstrates ‘the complex processes in which signage is designed, created, and perceived… highlight[ing] the power of audience… in shaping the meaning of a sign’ (Lou, 2016c: 219).

Also in Hong Kong, Bolton et al. (2020) analyzed the Lennon Walls that appeared all over the city as part of the Umbrella protests in 2019. These walls contained hundreds of Post-it notes with texts related to the protests. Based on a sample of 338 photos of the walls, the authors selectively analyzed the most prominent features of the communication displayed on the Lennon Walls. By far, most texts were written in Chinese, in particular using traditional characters, with Hong Kong special features and some Cantonese characters. The protests also encouraged the use of the romanized script of Cantonese, making it harder for non-Cantonese speakers to understand. Some messages contained English slogans like ‘Be with us’ or ‘Together we stand’. The authors argue that the linguistic landscape of the Lennon Walls can ‘illustrate how the language
used on these walls reflects and indexes the broader sociolinguistic reali-
ties and conflicts of the wider society’ (Bolton et al., 2020: 295).

These studies on Hong Kong are good examples of how diverse the
linguistic landscape can be in one city and how the frequency and preva-
ience of English can differ to an extraordinary degree.

9.4.3.1 Macao

As said, what is noticeably different about the signage in Macao is
that some of it is written in Portuguese. The case of Macao is particu-
larly interesting because Portuguese, which is the language of less than
1% of the population, has a relatively strong presence in a trilingual
landscape. The local language policy wants to maintain the distinct
Chinese (Cantonese)–Portuguese identity of Macao compared to the
mainland because it helps to reinforce its autonomy (Figure 9.10)
(Neves, 2016).

Figure 9.10 Trilingual sign in Macao
Various studies have taken a quantitative approach to figure out how much Portuguese is used in comparison with Chinese and English. Neves (2016) investigated three pedestrian areas with different histories related to Portuguese colonization. In the three areas (business, traditional and recreational), she collected almost 500 photographs. She observed substantial differences between the presence of English and Portuguese in the areas, with English the least frequent in the traditional area. In top-down and bottom-up signs, English had a similar presence, while Portuguese was more frequently displayed on top-down signs due to the language policy. Chinese (Cantonese) was the most prominent language in all areas, similar to Hong Kong, whereas English and Portuguese were competing for visibility. Neves argues that Portuguese is not directly affected by the presence of English due to the top-down support it receives (Figure 9.10).

In another quantitative study, Chenhui and Ruilin (2020) collected 307 signs across different parts of Macao. They found that 13% of the signs were in Chinese only, 37% were bilingual Chinese–English, 25% Chinese–Portuguese and 25% trilingual. In almost all signs (97%), Chinese came first, on top or as most prominent. Their results are more detailed, but by and large are in agreement with the results of Neves (2016). According to Coluzzi’s (2020) small-scale research in the main central square of Macao, most of the 56 signs were trilingual with Chinese, Portuguese and English and only one with Italian, so he observed slightly more Portuguese than English. Radwańska-Williams (2018) investigated signs in the main street of the historical center of Macao. Her detailed qualitative description of the street included features of the architecture, urban design and cultural artifacts. She observed that after excluding international brand names like Omega and Gucci, few signs were in English only and equally few were in Portuguese only or Chinese only. The majority of signs were bilingual, either Chinese–English or Chinese–Portuguese, but there were no bilingual English–Portuguese signs and only a few signs in the three languages. Based on her knowledge of the local situation, she concluded that since the handover in 1999, there has been an increase in English and Mandarin, but no less Cantonese and only a slight decrease in Portuguese.

Zhang and Chan (2017) focused on tradition and modernity in multilingual shop names in a local residential area and the casino area. An interesting observation was that sometimes the external name of a casino was in English, the sign at the door was bilingual Chinese–English and on the inside in Chinese only. The authors interpret this as an arrangement from a globalized façade via a glocalized inner layer to the Chinese core of Macao. Also looking at casinos, but this time their brochures, Yan (2019) compared them to the language on signposts for tourism. The brochures are either in Chinese only (both simplified and traditional) or bilingual Chinese–English. Another finding is that the tourism signposts ($n = 55$), which were placed by an official agency in 2010, were in
four languages: Chinese (on top), followed by Portuguese, English and Japanese, the latter because of the importance of Japanese tourists as a target group. Yan (2019) confirmed that Portuguese evoked authenticity and was used for reasons of heritage tourism. The signs could be rather varied, some were older and had Portuguese on top followed by Chinese, while others had Chinese, Portuguese and English. Zhang (2016) collected 150 multilingual posters, both from the internet and by taking photos. He found that almost all commercial posters were bilingual Chinese–English (88%), similar to civic posters (66%), although some were trilingual (16%). Government posters were mainly trilingual (58%) or bilingual Chinese–Portuguese or Chinese–English. In general, the results indicate an increase in the status of Chinese (simplified) and English and a decrease in Portuguese.

A different approach was taken by Yan and Lee (2014) who studied how tourists perceive the street names in Macao by asking questions about bilingual Chinese–Portuguese and trilingual street signs. Among their sample of tourists ($n = 397$) they found no clear difference between the perceptions of bilingual and trilingual signs, although the tourists who did not have Chinese or Portuguese were somewhat more concerned about bilingual signs without English. Chenhui and Ruilin (2020: 79) also think that a relatively small proportion of English ‘has a negative impact on the image of the city’.

Overall, comparing the linguistic landscapes in Hong Kong and Macao, the studies suggest that both cities have a multilingual linguistic landscape in which bilingual Chinese–English signage is dominant, with a stronger presence of Chinese, and in the case of Macao, also a substantial presence of Portuguese. Hong Kong may be unique as a city where the display of English seems to be decreasing, whereas it is increasing in Macao and in cities in China in general. Portuguese is gradually decreasing, and Zhang and Chan (2017) observed English substituting Portuguese on signage as part of a trend toward modernization and Western ideologies. English is only exceptionally on top of the language hierarchy in Hong Kong and Macao, and in both cities Chinese and English seem to compete for prominence.

After discussing and comparing various contexts in Asia, we now turn to Africa to examine the position of English in public spaces in various outer circle countries.

9.4.4 Africa

In Africa, 27 out of 54 countries have English as an official or second language, in most cases related to their past colonial relationship with the British Empire. This legacy across the continent can be interpreted as an example of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). A place for English at the top of the language hierarchy, or its function as a hypercentral
English Can Be Seen Everywhere

language (De Swaan, 2001) is typical for most of the countries. For example, based on a study in the capital of Botswana, Akindele (2011: 10) concluded that ‘English dominates the landscape as it is in the case of other Anglo African countries today’. As we will see below, various linguistic landscape studies have confirmed and further nuanced the overall position of English in societies in Africa.

There are no studies from all African countries as yet; the Zotero online bibliography (Troyer, 2022) lists publications of studies in 22 countries and among those are 11 countries with only one or two publications. In this section, we discuss a limited number of studies all reporting that the linguistic landscapes are dominated by English to different degrees in South Africa, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia and Botswana. A special case is Tanzania where there has been an effort to push back the role of English in favor of Swahili. The countries of Ethiopia and Rwanda where English has an important place will also be discussed. Finally, we mention some special characteristics of the African countryside in relation to signage (or absence thereof).

As said, researchers have found different degrees of English dominance in the linguistic landscapes of all of these countries, most of which are highly multilingual.

South Africa has been considered an inner circle country due to the position of English in society (Lee & Jun, 2016), although this has also been nuanced as a mixture of inner and outer circles by local scholars such as Coetzee-Van Rooy (2008). Officially, the South African constitution recognizes 11 languages, and there are at least another 25 indigenous languages. It is thus an intriguingly multilingual country, where only an estimated 10% of the population speaks English as their first language. In the continent of Africa, it is the country where by far most linguistic landscapes studies have been carried out. The Zotero online bibliography locates no less than 38 studies in South Africa on a wide variety of topics; however, we discuss only a few here, focusing mainly on the role of English.

In a study of a township near Johannesburg, Dowling (2014) found that 56% of signs were in English only, 40% were bilingual English plus an African language and only 3.6% were in an African language only. In another publication, Dowling (2012) pointed to the dominance of English on signs in South Africa, giving the example of a tourist arriving in the city of Cape Town who would have the impression of visiting a monolingual English country. Only on second glance did the signs give ‘you fragments of the Xhosa language as if it were an interesting fossil or a quaint ethnic artefact’ (Dowling, 2012: 245). Stroud and Mpendukana (2009: 363) mentioned a ‘wholesale shift to English’ related to the social transformation of the country after 1994. They offered a qualitative analysis of languages and their varieties on billboards in the Western Cape township of Khayelitsha. Their analysis showed, on the one hand, that in ‘sites of luxury’ English had prestige, was highly edited and was written
according to standard norms. In some, English was mixed with some pan-African words that are common in many African languages. On the other hand, in ‘sites of necessity’, there were local Englishes, which were unedited and written using non-standard spelling, including blending and hybrids adapted to isiXhosa, the local language. In further multimodal analysis of the signage in the same township, Stroud and Mpendukana (2010) pointed to the wide range of functions of English, mentioning aesthetic, ludic, playful, humor, interpersonal, transactional, interactional and informational functions. Hybrid linguistic structures arose from a mixture of English and isiXhosa. In the township of Soshanguve, near Pretoria, Álvarez-Mosquera and Coetzee (2018) analyzed the signage in a market. There, they found that only 2 of 150 signs collected had no English on them, although one-third of the signs were multilingual. This ‘overwhelming use of English in the signs’ again showed ‘a mismatch between the language used on the signs and what is spoken in the area’ (Álvarez-Mosquera & Coetzee, 2018: 7–8). In fact, the language of interaction in the market was not English, but African languages or Sepitori, a local African mixed language. The qualitative findings by Williams and Lanza (2016) on Amharic and Somali, used on a few signs only, corroborate the visual dominance of English in ‘Little Mogadishu’ in the business district of Belville, a town near Cape Town. In another study, Loth (2019) observed a majority of English-only signs in the Kopanong Local Municipality, near Bloemfontein, an area where English is not widely spoken. When English is combined with African languages, as in the townships, it demonstrates a covert value and it expresses identity. Or, it can be analyzed as a form of commodification of the local African languages, as Banda and Mokwena (2019) demonstrated. They examined various examples of signs in which the local languages and localized English were juxtaposed. Those signs presented different strategies which lead to the Africanization of economic practices, making signs exotic as a marketing tool or trying to attract local clients.

In three rural settings (Philippolis, Springfontein and Trompsburg), Kotze and Du Plessis (2010) found that English was visible on 73% of signs, including 20% bilingual Afrikaans–English signs, thus less English than Dowling found in Cape Town. Only 18% of signs were in one of three African languages, Sesotho, isiXhosa and Setswana, spoken by the majority of the local population. The names of some government signs were displayed in Afrikaans, English and Sesotho, but the rest of the information was in English. The authors argued that the pervasive public display of English reflects its position in society as the language of prestige, upward mobility and its usefulness for wider communication. Du Plessis (2011) investigated changes in the linguistic landscapes of the same three towns in relation to formal regulations by different layers of government. He presented the following results: 30.6% English only; 15.3% Afrikaans only; 35% bilingual Afrikaans/English; 4.6% bilingual
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English/African language; and 10.7% trilingual Afrikaans/English/African language. Only three signs had an African language or were bilingual with two African languages \(n = 366\). This outcome again showed the dominance of English (included on 84.7% of the signs by public bodies) and the lack of visibility for African languages. New signs issued by governments tended to be English only. In another study, Du Plessis (2010) was able to trace language display with the help of old photographs of Bloemfontein/Mangaung. Between 1846 and 1994, he observed periods of monolingual English alternating with periods of bilingual English–Dutch or English–Afrikaans. After 1994, the strictly defined bilingualism from before turned into a less clear bilingual or multilingual situation. Du Plessis discusses examples of new signs that introduce English monolingualism, despite an official policy of trilingualism. In a qualitative study based on focus groups with post-graduate students, Bock and Stroud (2019: 13) apply a broad conception of semiotic landscaping ‘to interrogate how, it can be that apartheid remains a structuring motif [for] young South Africans’. The students were asked what they know about apartheid, how they feel about it and how it affects them. Their narratives made clear that apartheid endures as an imagined landscape from the past, and it is still present in their daily lives in certain places. Those constellations do not go away but keep ‘haunting’ the students and thus the authors refer to zombie landscapes, which are ‘reconstructed and imagined landscapes, pieced together through traces of memory and the visceralities of affect these memories call forth’ (Bock & Stroud, 2019: 15). Obviously, apartheid remains an enduring aspect of the South African context.

In a somewhat different study, Sebba (2013) described the historical development of language hierarchy in South Africa on stamps, coins and banknotes, which he includes as part of the linguistic landscape (see Sebba, 2010). Until 1994, Afrikaans and English were treated strictly equally; afterwards, stamps became monolingual in English only and for the different denominations of coins and banknotes a rotation system for the 11 official languages was designed, although English was used more often. Similar results for the dominance of English in signage were found at various South African universities by Abongdia and Foncha (2014), Adekunle et al. (2019) and Kadenge (2015), with the latter asking almost desperately: ‘Where art thou Sesotho?’ (see Chapter 10 for a discussion of these studies). Also, Kretzer and Kaschula’s (2021) examination of language policy documents and school mottoes found that English dominated. From different angles, all these studies confirm the dominance of English in public spaces in South Africa.

The linguistic landscape of The Gambia was studied by Juffermans (2012). He wanted to find African languages on signs, yet it was difficult to find any. He narrates how he became desperate when he collected a large amount of photographs of signs that were only in English, although some were in the local variety of Gambian-English or some had a local
proper name. He then describes the linguistic landscape with the words ‘awkwardly monolingual’. Juffermans (2014) lists three main characteristics of the linguistic landscape in The Gambia, which could also be applied to other African countries. First, he mentions the dominance and creative use of English; second, the limited use of local languages, only for emblematic purposes; and third, the abundant use of images. Juffermans further observes a fluid and flexible use of English that is not evaluated against standard norms which he called ‘Englishing’.

In Uganda, Legère and Rosendal (2019) examined the role of English as the dominant written language in society, including the linguistic landscape. They carried out an inventory of signs in eight towns across Uganda (n = 2,026 in 43 streets) and found similar patterns in the signage, with over 90% having English. An exception was in the city of Gulu, where they found 24% of signs, mainly billboards, having a combination of English and Acholi, the language of the region. In Kampala, the capital, almost all signs were monolingual English, even though Kampala is linguistically highly diverse and only a small percentage of the population can speak English. However, Swahili was almost invisible despite being an official language of the country. The local language, Ganda, had some limited visibility in the outskirts of the capital and in the surrounding region.

In Zambia, Banda and Jimaima (2017) found a similar general dominance of English. In a study of the urban centers of Lusaka, the capital, and the city of Livingstone, they discovered on average around half of signs had English only and another 40% combined English with one or more local languages. The use of local African languages seemed to be more widespread in Zambia than, for example, in The Gambia or Uganda. The hegemony of English has some consequences that are highlighted by Jimaima and Banda (2020) in their analysis of signage and other artifacts in the tourist sites of the Livingstone Museum and Victoria Falls. It is telling that the English names of colonial times have been kept for the museum and the falls, where the authors found English on, respectively, 90% and 77% of signs. They concluded that ‘the remembrance is largely shaped by what colonial hegemony stipulated and handed down to postcolonial government’ (Jimaima & Banda, 2020: 108). They also point to the erasure of the language diversity of Zambia since only four local languages could be found on just a few signs. For them, using only those four languages obscures ‘the multilingual nature of the landscape upon which the museum is built’ (Jimaima & Banda, 2020: 101). The exclusive use of those four local languages in turn erases the existence of multiple other local languages. In contrast, Costley et al. (2022) emphasized a significant increase in the use of the African languages Bemba and Nyanja in recent years. They closely examined advertising on 15 roadside billboards in Ndola, the third largest city of Zambia. They started from a translanguaging perspective in which the fluid boundaries between
languages, common in spoken languages, were singled out as important. They observed a change in the urban linguistic landscape with the introduction of large advertising billboards along the roads. In the early 2010s, African languages were sometimes used in advertisements as fragments (words or phrases) in an English base text. Ten years later, there has been a shift to more frequent use of African languages which have obtained greater visibility, in particular in advertisements of banks and telephone companies. The texts today are examples of complementary multilingual writing (Reh, 2004) with a complex and dynamic use of languages in which English and Bemba or Nyanja are combined in ways that reflect the translanguaging practices of speakers. In the area of health, they presented examples of this shift to multilingualism on billboards in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Costley et al. (2022: 4), the changes have to be placed in the context of ‘wider, continent-wide phenomena, which can be seen as part of an “African language renaissance”.

In Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, Akindele (2011) studied the linguistic landscape of some shopping malls and the bus station. The results showed 63% English-only signs \((n = 270)\) and another 16% were bilingual, either English–Chinese (7%) or English–Setswana (9%), the latter being an official language of the country next to English. There were no signs in other local languages. Obviously, English dominates, although Setswana-only and Chinese-only signs also have a presence each of 9%.

Tanzania is another fascinating country for linguistic landscape studies because of the competition between English and Kiswahili (Swahili) on display in public spaces. Since its independence in 1964, Kiswahili has been an official language of Tanzania. The Tanzanian government has supported strengthening the position of Kiswahili in society to reinforce the cohesion of the country and to make it equal to English, the legacy of colonial times. Of special importance was the language policy implemented in 1974, giving preference to Kiswahili and replacing English, which, among other things, caused substantial changes in the linguistic landscape. Today, Kiswahili is widely used in Tanzanian society and it is also highly visible in the linguistic landscape. For example, in Dar es Salaam the former capital, all government-related institutions have bilingual Kiswahili and English names, in agreement with the language policy.

Bwenge (2009) studied 52 billboards along the main road leading into the city of Dar es Salaam. He found a dominance of Swahili on two-thirds of the signs and one-third was in English. Bwenge (2012) summarized the history of English in Tanzanian society in general and the changes in policy. The Swahilization of the public domain was part of the 
\textit{ujamaa} movement for independence which made Swahili the most important language in most public domains in the 1970s. However, English has since returned largely to its former position. As Bwenge (2012: 177) observed, ‘Dar es Salaam’s street signs clearly demonstrate
the navigations and negotiations between the two languages pertaining to the public space’. Legère and Rosendal (2019) also noted the recent trend toward the increased use of English, for example at the university campus. Mdukula (2017) investigated the linguistic landscape of a large hospital in Dar es Salaam. There, almost all signs were top-down and most were monolingual (60%). The number of signs in English only (36%) and Swahili only (35%) were similar, whereas 26% of the signs were bilingual and a small number also included Chinese (3%). Mdukula (2017) concluded that there were no clear policies and the linguistic landscape at the time excluded access to information for many hospital patients who spoke Swahili. In a follow-up study that included two other hospitals, Mdukula (2021: 92) presented the same statistics and claimed in the conclusion that ‘English, not Kiswahili was predominantly represented on linguistic landscape signs in the researched public hospitals’.

Lusekelo and Mdukula (2021) studied signage in Dodoma, the administrative capital of Tanzania. Their main question centered on which language, English or Kiswahili, dominated the linguistic landscape and in trying to figure out the answer, they considered an interesting set of criteria. Superficially, when findings were based on criteria such as frequency, English-only signs or the first line on a sign, it was obvious that English dominated. Taking other criteria into account, such as font size and color, there was no clear difference. However, when counting the total number of words used on all signs, English still predominated, but in bilingual signs they found that Kiswahili was dominant, with only a few scattered English words. English also prevailed in acronyms, but they followed Kiswahili grammar. In the end, they concluded that both English and Kiswahili were important in public display in Tanzania. Lusekelo and Alphonce (2018) explicitly challenged the idea that the use of English in Tanzania is limited in comparison to Swahili. They investigated billboards and shop signs in five regions in Tanzania where their results showed that English was dominant and took the highest place in the language hierarchy. Only in bilingual signs did Kiswahili have a higher total number of words than English. The findings of Lusekelo and Alphonce (2018) were confirmed by Lusekelo (2019) who examined signage in Orkesumet, a town in the north of Tanzania. He found monolingual signs either in English or in Kiswahili and bilingual signage where both languages were given equal weight or one language overrode the other. However, in contrast to other studies in Dar es Salaam, he did not find any hybridity of English and Kiswahili, nor any use of the Maasai local language. In another study, Gallina (2016) considered the presence of Italian in the linguistic landscape of Dar es Salaam. Her selective sample of 32 photos showed that Italian was mainly related to food or fashion on product labels, shop signs and menus. Interestingly, Italian only appeared on its own or in combination with English, not together with Kiswahili (except for one sign). She found a distribution of Italian
similar to that found in other parts of the world and she argued that Italian was used for economic reasons and because it was seen as attractive.

Muaka (2018) was interested to see how youth language is used in the linguistic landscapes of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Nairobi and Mombasa in Kenya. In both countries, Kiswahili is an official language, but is more often used in Tanzania than in Kenya. However, English is seen as having higher prestige. Muaka collected some 300 photos of billboards along main city streets and roads to the airport to look into language creativity. He analyzed various examples of billboards of, among others, telephone companies and banks (as Juffermans did in The Gambia), considering that mobile phones and digital banking have become essential, especially for younger generations. Youth language is gaining a presence on some billboards as a reflection of those changes in society. However, compared to Swahili and English, the use of youth language remained marginal.

In Rwanda, the languages Kinyarwanda (Rwanda), French, English and Swahili are official, of which Kinyarwanda is spoken by almost all citizens (99.4%), implying that Rwanda, a former Belgian colony, has a homogeneous population. Rosendal (2009) wanted to find out how, after the civil war (1990–1994), the change in language policy from Kinyarwanda–French bilingualism to Kinyarwanda–French–English trilingualism had influenced the linguistic landscape. In a study of shop signs \( (n = 914) \) and billboards \( (n = 221) \) in the capital Kigali and the city of Butare, she found on average more French than English on shop signs, whereas English had a similar presence on billboards. The order in which the languages were officially used was not uniform, but there was a trend toward introducing more English on new signs while French and Kinyarwanda were declining. One-third of the signs were multilingual, written mostly in two of the three official languages, although the meaning of the messages in the different languages only partially overlapped (Legère & Rosendal, 2019). The official language policy obviously influences top-down signs, but it also has an effect on other domains, for example, commercial signage. In Rwanda, English or French are often mixed with Kinyarwanda. In general, larger companies use African languages as a strategy for advertising and to reach a larger pool of customers. According to Legère and Rosendal (2019: 166), ‘the use of African languages rather than English indexes a modern identity’ and at the same time billboards in English (or French) equally want to impress potential buyers. In a follow-up study, Rosendal and Amini Ngabonziza (2022) compared the linguistic landscapes of the same streets in the same locations between 2008 and 2018. They found that the linguistic landscape had changed dramatically due to a sharp increase in the use of English, which had more than doubled in Kigali from 23% to 58%, whereas French had declined sharply. The reasons can be attributed to important changes in the language policy, which made English the sole language of instruction in education and a
language of administration in 2008. In 2011–2012, streets and towns were renamed, taking away French names. English is perceived as powerful and necessary for economic development, technology and science, which is accompanied by ideologies of its positive qualities, whereas French is degraded and the national language Kinyarwanda is ignored. The authors refer to the fact that ‘multilingualism in the four official languages is something of a utopian idea’ (Rosendal & Amini Ngabonziza, 2022: 14). The language policy de facto promotes English and this is reflected in the signage.

In Ethiopia, over 80 languages are spoken and the largest linguistic communities are Amharic and Oromo, which together comprise over 60% of the population, followed by the communities of speakers of Tigrinya and Somali. These four languages plus Afar are now the official working languages of the government. English, however, is de facto the official second language in Ethiopia (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2014a: 59). Several studies of the Ethiopian linguistic landscape have been carried out, and we can discuss the results of some that are relevant for the public display of English. In their study of Mekele, the capital of the Tigray region, Lanza and Woldemariam (2009) found that Tigrinya, the official language of the region, had a substantial presence on monolingual and bilingual signs, next to Amharic and English. Of all signs, 35% were bilingual English–Amharic, 31% Tigrinya–English, 10% were in English only and 1% were trilingual. Thus, English had a strong presence as it was included on 77% of all signs (n = 376). Signs that were regionally relevant had more Tigrinya and nationally oriented signs displayed more Amharic. Lanza and Woldemariam (2009) found that English has a strong presence as it is included on 77% of all signs (see Chapter 7 for a summary of the study). In a follow-up study (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2014a; Woldemariam & Lanza, 2014), the authors compared Mekele to the city of Adama in Oromia, the largest region of the country. In Adama, they observed that most signs were bilingual, containing Amharic in combination with either Oromo or English, but were not in Amharic only. In both cities, the authors observed English being used in hybrid forms and mostly as an emblem of modernity with symbolic functions. In general, they noticed a blurring of the boundaries between languages. In another study in the Oromia region, Fekede and Gemechu (2016) analyzed the linguistic landscapes of the towns of Adama, Sabata and Jimma. They applied ethnolinguistic vitality scores to the presence of Amharic, English and Oromo (Afan Oromo) in signs and found that English dominated the linguistic landscapes of the towns. English was used more for symbolic functions, whereas Amharic had the highest ethnolinguistic vitality score and was used for communicative functions. The language spoken by the majority of the population, Oromo, was not used on monolingual signs, even though it is the official language of the regional government. Obviously, also in this case the linguistic landscape did not reflect the
languages spoken by the different communities. Without carrying out any systematic counts of languages on signs, Wolff et al. (2013) made the observation that Oromo and Amharic had similar visibility in public spaces, where Amharic on bilingual signs usually appeared in second position. English also appeared frequently on signs, usually in third place, and it was used mainly for symbolic reasons. In contrast, the university campus was completely bilingual Amharic–English and Oromo had no visibility. In a study located in the capital of Addis Ababa, Woldemariam and Lanza (2012) examined a sample of religious messages displayed in the linguistic landscape on banners, posters, stickers on vehicles, shops, offices, clothing and the university campus. The texts were monolingual and Amharic was used most frequently. In a few cases, signs were in the classical Semitic language, Ge’ez, which is used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. English would be used by protestant groups that are related to churches abroad. Woldemariam and Lanza’s analysis showed how the linguistic landscape can display the tensions between different religious groups and how language choice is a part of it.

In another publication, Lanza and Woldemariam (2014b) used the concept ‘sites of luxury’ based on Stroud and Mpendukana (2009), to examine English and brand names in Addis Ababa. English was highly visible in the linguistic landscape of the capital, including several advertisements for English schools and imitations of international brands. Smaller shops also used English on their signs, a language which the owners did not speak well, but just enough for their business. The authors concluded that the use of English is associated with prestige, modernity and economic development and, at the same time, it indexes an identity of distinction and luxury. Mendisu et al. (2016) focused on the visibility of the minority languages Gedeo and Koorete in Southern Ethiopia (see Chapter 7). They included numbers on the presence of English. In Dilla, the first town, English was present on 66% of all signs \( (n = 121) \), mostly in combination with Amharic. In Amarro-Keele, the second town, the dominance of Amharic was even stronger, appearing on 99% of signs \( (n = 69) \) and English was present on 32%, but only on bilingual signs, except one. There were substantial differences between the towns, but these figures demonstrate again that English has deeply penetrated the linguistic landscape of cities, towns and villages around the world.

A general aspect of linguistic landscapes in Africa is that outside the main urban centers many shops do not have any signs at all, as Legère and Rosendal (2019) remind us. For example, only half of the shops in the regional towns in Uganda which they studied had a sign. The lack of written language on signs obviously has consequences for linguistic landscape studies. This absence was the main topic in studies by Juffermans and Coppoolse (2014) who investigated literacy strategies, and by Banda and Jimaima (2015) who focused on oral narratives.
Juffermans (2014) emphasized the importance of the use of images on signage in The Gambia because of the relatively high rate of illiteracy. To understand how literacy works in relation to signage, Juffermans and Coppoolse (2012) carried out a small ethnographic experiment in a village in the southwest of The Gambia. Oral multilingualism is the rule among the 248 villagers, and only a small number of people can read. First, the researchers fully documented the linguistic landscape, which had only 23 signs on the 6 kilometers of the village road. Those signs were mainly in English, although a few signs had some Mandinka, Arabic and Chinese. They then presented photographs of some signs to a group of 20 informants, who were categorized as literate, low-literate or non-literate. They found that people used different interpretation strategies to understand the signs. Between the perfect readers and the people who could not make much sense of the signs, it was the in-between group of low-literate readers in particular who used various visual cues, e.g. flags, to interpret and read the signs. This experiment demonstrated that in such contexts it is not so much about reading English (or not), but more about the strategies for interpreting signs, where multimodal aspects play an important role.

In the south of Zambia, in another study in a rural area, Banda and Jimaima (2015) based their analysis on the observation that many signs were faded or did not exist and the few signs that did exist were most often in English. They discuss several examples of signs that have been repurposed from existing materials, such as a sign in English using cheap materials intentionally to index cheap products. In another example, they found a sign in three languages (a local language, English and Chinese) to index low-priced lodgings (on the use of Chinese signage in Zambia, see Banda et al., 2019). In these rural communities, African languages flourish in oral communication, similar to The Gambia and other African countries, and thus the authors conceive of signs in these rural contexts in a rather broad sense, including objects such as trees, rivers, mounds and buildings, and they emphasize the narrations of place. They argue that the local people use oral linguascping, which they apply, for example, for finding their way in a landscape without any other signage.

In concluding this section on studies in countries in Africa, we can refer to Legère and Rosendal (2019) who explained that the extensive use of English is related to global influences, among which they mention high prestige, international reputation, commercial interests and a suggestion of better quality products. Similar factors have been mentioned in other contexts. English has become a part of the language ecology of African countries and, in that sense, English has become a local language, especially in the larger urban areas. Whether there is indeed a shift toward the increased use of African languages as observed by Costley et al. (2022) has to be confirmed by future investigations.
9.5 The Display of English in the Expanding Circle

In the current globalized era, English has diffused widely to just about all of what have been called ‘non-English-speaking countries’, which Kachru (1992) referred to as the expanding circle in his three circle model. In those countries, the presence of English is not related to a local population that commonly speaks English. On signage, English usually appears next to other languages, and the ubiquity of English often implies multilingualism, albeit to different degrees and in complex patterns. In countries of the expanding circle, a great deal of interesting work has been done on the role of English in public spaces. We discuss examples according to the place of English in the language hierarchy. We distinguish between English in second place, which is the most common pattern, and English in first or third place, as well as the near absence of English.

Before considering some specific case studies, we first look into prestige as a concept of the reputation or esteem that is frequently associated with the use of English on signage, or in society at large. We link this to the position of English in the hierarchy of languages and we also observe some differences in the presence of English across contexts including strata of shopping streets. Finally, we consider some linguistic aspects of the use of English discussed in various studies. We aim to paint a nuanced and complex picture and focus on the exceptions because, as we have argued, languages inherently have unequal places in linguistic landscapes (see the multilingual inequality in public spaces [MIPS] model in Chapter 3).

As we mentioned in Section 9.1, many different reasons are given for using English in linguistic landscapes. For example, English can be perceived as being more prestigious than local languages, a factor we mentioned in our discussion of the role of English on signs in our early comparison of Donostia-San Sebastián with Ljouwert-Leeuwarden (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006: 79). There, we also pointed to Piller’s (2001) work on multilingual advertisements in which she argued that the use of English activates connotational values such as international and future orientation, success, sophistication and fun. Along the same lines, writing on bilingualism in the media, Androuutschopoulos (2007: 221) employs terms overlapping with Piller, and he adds associations of English with novelty, modernity, technological excellence and hedonism. Blackwood and Tufi (2015: 187) preferred cosmopolitanism as a concept, although they mentioned prestige, modernity, creativity, humor and wealth as characteristics attributed to English in the linguistic landscape literature. Several other terms are associated with the use of English: snob appeal (Rosenbaum et al., 1977), cool or sexy (Griffin, 2001), snobbism (Kasanga, 2019), fashionable (Martinez, 2015; McArthur, 2000), status (Bruyël-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009; Legère & Rosendal, 2019), profit
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(Vandenbroucke, 2016) and economic advantage (Mežek, 2009; Shang & Guo, 2017). We came across several of those terms in studies in the outer circle countries in Asia and in Africa. The list of similar terms could even be extended further. However, most terms seem to point in the same direction and they are related to the symbolic function of English and its reputation as a global language. We prefer the overarching term ‘prestige’ to best summarize and explain the position of English in linguistic landscapes. In sociological terms, prestige can be broadly defined as a general concept that refers to the reputation or esteem associated with one’s position in society. In sociolinguistics, the prestige of a language has been described as ‘the level of regard normally accorded a specific language or dialect within a speech community, relative to other languages or dialects’ (Patterson & West, 2018: 243). It is thus a term that indicates the relative position of languages vis-à-vis each other, not an absolute measurement. We will use prestige here as an umbrella term that can provide reasons for the display of English in public spaces around the world compared to other languages.

We know that English is usually taken for granted in inner circle countries and therefore its prestige does not play a significant role. However, we saw in the outer circle countries, in particular the former British colonies in Africa and Asia, that the strong position of English today is not only a matter of colonial heritage or official status. Authors frequently mention that the dominant position of English is strengthened due to its prestige in society (or using a similar term). For all other countries in the expanding circle, as we will see below, the reasons for using English are also mainly explained in terms of prestige, which can be related to social, political, psychological or economic factors.

A distinction for using English on signs can be made between, on the one hand, a prestige factor which is symbolic and related to social values, and, on the other hand, a practical factor which is related to providing information. A distinction between these two factors has been commonly made in many studies. It is evident that the presence of English not only has that informational function, but that there is also an important symbolic function for a non-English-speaking local population. In such cases, using English gives social prestige to the product or the sign maker. The high prestige of English is usually associated with its position as a global language and its perception as economically powerful, commercially desirable, psychologically attractive or politically correct.

9.5.1 English in second place in the language hierarchy

In Section 9.2, we mentioned that De Swaan (2001) positions English as a hypercentral language at the top of the hierarchy of languages in his world language system. In the foregoing, we saw that the presence of English on public signage in inner and outer circle countries in Africa
and Asia, such as The Gambia and India, is indeed completely dominant. However, as we will see below, English does not sit at the highest position of the language hierarchy in many other contexts. Obviously, in expanding circle countries, English does not have the same historical or colonial reasons for its current position in society, but due to globalization processes its prestige has grown. Linguistic landscape research helps to clarify the relative position of English in a specific country, city or context, and indicates how English ranks in comparison to other languages.

A recurrent finding of many studies on expanding circle countries is that English takes ‘second place’ in the language hierarchy, after the official state language. To determine the rank of English, investigators use different indicators such as frequency, dominance and visibility. Similar patterns of English ranking in second position, compared to the state language (and sometimes other languages), have been reported for several European countries and cities, located in the expanding circle.

We already saw the pattern of English taking second place in the four classic studies published in 2006 (Backhaus; Ben-Rafael et al.; Cenoz & Gorter; Huebner) of various cities in Israel, Tokyo, Bangkok and the capital of Friesland. The exception was in Donostia-San Sebastián, where English ranked third after Basque and Spanish. The reasons given for the placement of English in society in those studies were not primarily communicative or informational, but mostly related to status or social prestige.

Around the same time, Hult (2003) reached a similar conclusion about English in second position in Sweden (see Section 2.3 for a summary). In Germany, English also takes second place in the language hierarchy as was reported in one of the largest studies on linguistic landscapes ever (see Box 6.3 in Section 6.3 for a summary). In the four cities studied, English had an average presence of 19.6% of all signs, after German with 66.1%, and the outcome was similar for official and commercial signs; below we will point out an exception (Ziegler et al., 2019). Somewhat similar percentages were found in a study in the German capital Berlin by Budarina (2017), who reported on two neighborhoods (Potsdamer Platz and Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf), respectively, 21% and 16.5% monolingual English signs. On average, 35% of all signs had English in combination with German or other languages. Not surprisingly, Budarina concluded that English is an integral part of Berlin’s linguistic landscape where it can be seen a great deal. In contrast, many other languages have only a limited visual representation and almost always in combination with German, even though those languages may be spoken by substantial numbers of inhabitants. Papen (2012) presents another interesting example from Berlin in discussing the importance of the role of English. One example she mentions is how a shop owner chose a name in English (no socks, no panties) to mark the shop as unique and different from others. Not all clients understand the meaning of the name in English and, as Papen (2012: 66) comments, ‘the denotative content
of the name is not necessarily understood. But the language does not only have a communicative function, it also carries symbolic value’. For Papen, the English shop name reflects the process of gentrification that has changed the population of the Prenzlauer Berg neighborhood and its character. The social prestige of English plays a role in that process and thus becomes reflected in the linguistic landscape (Figure 9.11).

Androutsopoulos (2013) used the metaphor of ‘English on top’ as a framework for the analysis of the specific discourse functions of English in the context of German media and advertising, which is, of course, related to the linguistic landscape. He found that English was often used in addition to (or ‘on top of’) German as the main text. For this use, he distinguished three functions for English. First, in headings (headlines, titles, captions, slogans) accompanied by the main body of text in German. Second, bracketing, that is, opening and closing boundary markers in English that surround larger textual units in German. Third, the naming of media products and institutions where English names function as emblems separated from the surrounding text. English used in these ways does not challenge the predominance of German. Even though placement can be an important aspect for English on top as a framing device, it does not necessarily mean literally in the upper position. The ideas of Androutsopoulos could also be applied to analyze the second place of English in the linguistic landscape as an additional language.
As is well known, the French government has taken legal steps to try to halt the use of English in public spaces. The so-called Toubon law, introduced in 1994, insisted on the use of the French language in official government publications, advertisements and other public contexts as part of the language policy in France. In Chapter 8, we mentioned the large-scale study by Blackwood and Tufi (2015) of Mediterranean cities in France and Italy. In the study, they extensively examined the role of English and an interesting dissimilarity appears from their analysis. Overall, in the French cities of Ajaccio, Marseille and Nice, the principality of Monaco and in Northern Catalonia, in quantitative terms, English was the second most common language, although it had a rather minor presence. The authors reported that English held a more prominent position in the Italian cities of Cagliari, Genoa, Naples, Palermo and Trieste, but there it was also clearly in second place after Italian. However, English has an average presence in French linguistic landscapes of 4.3% while in Italy the figure is 16.7%, so a difference of around 12% (Blackwood & Tufi, 2015: 187, 195). The authors concluded that the factor of cosmopolitanism, which is central to their analysis, does not contribute so much to the visibility of English in France. In contrast, in Italy the display of English is related to cosmopolitan lifestyles and transnational identities. One explanation attracts attention because, according to Blackwood and Tufi, especially among the elite in France there is a certain Anglophobia, a dislike of English. In Italy, on the contrary, there exists a sense of Anglophilia, a love for English. The Toubon law, which restricts the use of English, obviously also has an influence. The findings of Blackwood and Tufi were confirmed by Amos (2017) in a study in Toulouse, France. He suggested that English on signs is not aimed so much at tourists or visitors but has more cultural connotations and is thus directed at predominantly monolingual French speakers. In this context, it is not surprising that Bogatto and Hélot (2010) have a separate section on the place of English in their study of the linguistic landscape of the city of Strasbourg. The authors mentioned that in quantitative terms English was found to be the second most frequent language on shop front signs, after French. They further mentioned that the situation in Strasbourg was similar to the city of Basel, located nearby across the border in Switzerland. For Basel, Lüdi (2007) had indeed concluded that English was the second language after German in public displays. Second place after French was again found in a study by Lipovsky (2019a) in a Chinatown (Belleville) of Paris. On shop and business signs, English took second place, but notably before Chinese. In quantitative terms, English was present about half as much as French, but twice as much as Chinese, among 17 languages in total (see Section 7.5 on Chinatowns).

The same pattern was also found in three out of four neighborhoods studied in Rome (Gorter, 2009). There, Italian was clearly predominant, and English was positioned second, being used on about one-quarter of
all signs. In the report, it was reasoned that private initiative plays an important role in bringing English into the linguistic landscape and social prestige is a factor of importance. Below, we discuss the exception of the fourth neighborhood where English came in third place.

In other studies in Amsterdam, Brussels and Oslo, English came in second place after the state language (Dutch, French and Norwegian). However, the studies pointed to important local differences. Vandenbroucke (2016) compared the use of English in commercial linguistic landscapes in Amsterdam and Brussels, focusing on shopping streets which she distinguished according to three economic levels: upscale, midscale and downscale. In quantitative terms, she found English most often included on signs in the midscale streets, where all the international chains had their stores (Amsterdam 89% and Brussels 67%); less in the upscale streets, with more exclusive luxury brands (Amsterdam 59% and Brussels 51%); and least in the downscale streets, with mainly local shops (Amsterdam 38% and Brussels 33%). The pattern was similar in both cities, with a stronger presence of English in Amsterdam than in Brussels. She concluded that even though English is a marker of globalization, it does not represent a homogeneous process. Likewise, Stjernholm (2015) contrasted the language of shop names in the affluent neighborhood of Majorstua in Oslo with the more working-class areas of Grunerlokka. The first is dominated by chain stores with global signs, whereas the second has mainly independent, local shops. The quantitative results showed that in the wealthy area English and Norwegian were equally frequent (around 30%), whereas in the socioeconomically less affluent area English had a much smaller presence than Norwegian (19% versus 48%). She concluded that the majority of global signs in the upscale street gave a sense of being disembedded from the local context, whereas, in contrast, the signs in the working-class neighborhood were more embedded in their environment (Figure 9.12).

The outcomes for Amsterdam, Brussels and Oslo seem somewhat comparable, and it is noteworthy that in all three cases English is most commonly seen in the socioeconomic mid-range streets.

In all the foregoing cases, national languages dominate the linguistic landscapes in the cities investigated and the visibility of English remains somewhat limited, albeit with some interesting variations. Its presence is probably related to the degree of social prestige that English has in the different parts of these societies.

9.5.1.1 Post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia

A different, but still comparable situation can be found in the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the countries under the former sphere of influence of the Warsaw Pact. We discussed developments in terms of language policies in Chapter 8. As we
mentioned in that chapter, English obtained social prestige in the various countries and became the new lingua franca, occupying the role earlier played by Russian. The replacement of Russian by English is characterized by Pavlenko (2009: 258) as she states that ‘this change symbolized the transition from Soviet totalitarianism to western-style cosmopolitanism and global values’.

In a study in the three Baltic States, Marten et al. (2012) found in the six towns investigated, that English came in second place with an average of 15% on all signs. However, there were substantial differences between the towns, with English having the highest visibility in the Estonian tourist town of Pärnu, where it appeared on 61% of all signs (although Estonian was on 92%). Local informants perceived English as more neutral than Russian, although Russian still played an important role in their daily lives for international communication and contact with tourists. English was mainly used for the names of shops, restaurants, etc., and on signs for providing practical information to international visitors. The authors see the three Baltic States today as fully positioned in the expanding circle, unlike during the Soviet period, when English played only a minor role. Marten et al. (2012: 306) conclude that ‘English plays an important role today, but it has not “taken over” all functions formerly fulfilled by Russian’. In the context of the Baltic countries, in Chapter 8 we mentioned Pošeiko’s (2015) historical account of changes in the linguistic landscape of a town in Latvia. She observed that ‘English as
an international language of globalization appears in public information of the city only since the 21st century’ (Pošeiko, 2015: 335).

Muth (2008) made an inventory of the linguistic landscape of Vilnius in Lithuania. He found an average of 25% Lithuanian–English bilingual signs and 10% in English only, so 35% of the signs had English ($n = 878$). The details for the different neighborhoods show that percentages varied from 14% in one neighborhood to 46% English on signs in the old part. In Western-style shopping centers, English was the predominant language, appearing on 71% of signs with Lithuanian on 63% ($n = 43$). Muth noticed that English was mainly used for names or catchphrases such as ‘sale’ or ‘discount’ while Lithuanian was used for opening hours and explaining discounts. This differentiation between an emblematic function for English and more practical information in the local language has often been observed in linguistic landscape studies.

Overall, the display of English in public spaces in the Baltic States seems to be similar to, for instance, Germany and Italy, but not as pervasive as in the Netherlands. There are some exceptions, such as in a tourist town where English has a high prevalence, but other studies show a rather low presence or near absence at the universities Tallinn and Tartu in Estonia, Riga in Latvia and Vilnius in Lithuania (Saagpakk et al., 2021; Soler, 2019; see Chapter 10).

In Eastern European countries more generally, English has obtained a larger presence in the post-Soviet era. In Pristina in Kosovo, Demaj and Vandenbroucke (2016) observed a difference between top-down trilingual Albanian–Serbian–English signs (71%), semi-official signs, which were either trilingual (46%) or bilingual (38%), and bottom-up bilingual Albanian–English signs (45%) ($n = 248$). English is replacing Russian as the lingua franca and the authors draw a parallel with the developments in post-Soviet countries described by Pavlenko (2009). From the Baltic States in the north to Romania and Bulgaria in the south, English has replaced Russian as the foreign language of choice in education, and English has increased its presence in popular culture and in the public sphere. While English is not uncommon in commercial signs, billboards and tourist information signs in state capitals and tourist destinations, English can also be seen in smaller towns. See, for example, studies in Slovakia (Ferenčík, 2012, 2018), Croatia (Canakis, 2016; Gradečak-Erdeljić et al., 2014), Hungary (Galgoczi-Deutsch, 2011, 2012), Montenegro (Canakis, 2016) and Serbia (Canakis, 2018).

In some former Soviet states in Central Asia, similar patterns can be found (see Chapter 8). Moore (2014) considers that even though English is gaining a small presence in Astana, Kazakhstan, its function is largely symbolic. English does not have informational functions and is mainly used for brand names, logos and advertisements for foreign goods. In Chapter 8, we briefly mentioned the language policy in Uzbekistan. Hasanova (2022) compared the regional city of Bukhara to the capital
Tashkent. In Bukhara, she found that English was the most prominent language in the names of shops and services (45%), Russian came second (28%), with Uzbek third (26%; \(n = 53\)). In contrast, in Tashkent, Russian was used most frequently (49%) and English came second (26%), with Uzbek third (11%; \(n = 126\)). She explains the prevalence of Russian due to favorable attitudes among the population and its use for interethnic communication, while the strong presence of English in shopping centers and educational institutions is related to elitism, high quality products and modernism, including the benefits of knowing English.

In Russia, in the republic of Tatarstan, comparable processes are taking place. Sharafutdinov (2018) examined the role of English in the linguistic landscape of the city of Kazan, where Tatar and Russia are both official languages. His results show the domination of Russian, with Tatar only appearing on bilingual signs with Russian, or on trilingual signs with English. On official signs, English had a limited presence, but on commercial signs it was substantial. English was visible on 15% of monolingual signs and 30% of bi/multilingual signs (\(n = 419\)). On such signs, English was used more for names of establishments, and Tatar provided practical information, such as opening hours.

9.5.1.2 China and Indonesia

In a rather different context, in China, diverging outcomes were found for the role of English in linguistic landscapes. China is in some ways a special case regarding its policies and attitudes toward English. It probably has the largest English learning population of any country in the world, which has been referred to as the ‘craze for English’ (Yajun, 2003: 3). In a study of the linguistic landscape, Wang (2013) mentions the propagation of English as one of the main language policies of China, next to the standardization of Chinese and the development of minority languages.

In Beijing, Wang (2013) surveyed shop signs in Wangfujing Street, a famous shopping street (\(n = 89\)). The results show that English was used extensively as it appeared in 52% of the signs. A majority of the shops (72%) used simplified Chinese, and only a few had traditional Chinese characters. Only a few other foreign languages were observed, such as Japanese. Wang discusses the results against the wider background of globalization and language policies in China. In another study in Beijing, Xiao and Lee (2022) examined the presence of English in the Palace Museum (Forbidden City), a famous tourist destination. In their sample (\(n = 3,285\)), they found that Chinese–English bilingual signs constituted 73% of all signs, 26% were monolingual Chinese and less than 0.5% were monolingual English or had a combination of Chinese, English and another language. Given these numbers, the outcome of a survey among international tourists to the museum (\(n = 78\)) was not surprising:
83% perceived Chinese to be dominant, while English was rated at 15% (and other languages at only 2%). The estimates among workers of the museum were similar but slightly lower for Chinese and slightly higher for English. The two studies show that in places frequented by international visitors, a central shopping street and famous museum, English prevails as the second language after Chinese. This outcome is confirmed in other studies in other places in China (Figure 9.13).

For example, Han and Wu (2020) examined the linguistic landscape of the city of Guangzhou, in the south of China. They collected a sample of 734 signs (1 for each shop). About half were monolingual and the other half bilingual; only a handful were multilingual signs. Overall, Chinese was dominant, but English clearly came in second place with a presence on 47% of all signs, of which 10% were in English only. Chinese was the most salient language displayed on bilingual signs, with the largest font size on 62% of signs, while English was the most salient on 28%. For Han and Wu, the disregard for the language laws shown by English-only signage and signs where English is most salient is important (see Chapter 8). The authors further mention that this outcome is in agreement with the prominent role of English in the linguistic landscape of other Chinese cities. In the tourist destination of Hongcun village, Lu et al. (2020) found a much lower percentage for English in a sample of 1,978 signs. English came in second place, with a presence on 19% of all signs, mainly on bilingual or multilingual signs; the latter include Japanese and Korean (7%) for tourists. Standardized Chinese was clearly dominant, appearing on 90% of all signs, while traditional Chinese featured on 16%. Perhaps the lower frequency of English in comparison with Beijing or Guangzhou
is because visitors are predominantly domestic Chinese tourists. On the other hand, the outcome is similar to the percentage for English that Wang and Huang (2020) found in a remote community in the northwest of Yunnan Province. They focused on the status and functions of English among the local Derung people in Dulongjiang Township. In three streets in Kongdang, they found English on 23% of signs, all bilingual, but Chinese was clearly dominant (74% were Chinese-only signs; \( n = 608 \)). Just a few signs had the Derung script or Burmese, always in combination with Chinese. The authors reflected on English as the worldwide language of power and concluded that English is only used for symbolic reasons.

Indonesia is another large Asian country (in 2020 it had an estimated population of over 270 million) where there has been a massive upsurge of linguistic landscape studies. Several of those can be characterized as rather plain and we have selected only a few. Researchers have demonstrated in various cities and for diverse research sites that English is competing with Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), the official language and standardized version of Malay. In some sites, English clearly dominates, e.g. in the famous tourist site of Bali (Mulyawan, 2021), but in other sites, Indonesian is the first language.

In Jakarta, the capital, Da Silva (2014) studied the use of English and Indonesian on billboards (\( n = 114 \)). She found that English is prevalent, because 50% contained English and Indonesian, 33% were in English only and 17% were in Indonesian only. Excluding proper names, of all words used (\( n = 1,402 \)) 59% were in English and 41% were in Indonesian. She observed that Indonesian was more used for products for people of lower or middle classes and English more for luxury products, concluding that both languages have their own readership. In a study of hospitals and health clinics in Malang, a city of over 800,000 inhabitants in central Java, Sumarlam et al. (2020a) found that Indonesian dominates in the names, followed at a distance by English and a few institutions have added other languages to the name (\( n = 211 \)). The authors concluded, ‘language plays an important role in forming a positive image’ (Sumarlam et al., 2020a: 2624). In another study in the same city (Sumarlam et al., 2020b), a similar pattern was found for the use of languages on signs of halal food stalls and restaurants (\( n = 503 \)). Monolingualism in Indonesian predominates (52%), followed by English (31%) and Javanese (8%); other languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Dutch were found here and there. Only a small number of signs were bilingual (6%). In the city of Medan, Zahra et al. (2021) investigated 89 signboards of coffee shops. They found Indonesian and English to dominate the signage. English was the most frequently used language, followed by Indonesian, although Indonesian most often appeared as the first language. Another 10 languages had just a minor presence.
Yusra et al. (2022) studied shop names in Lombok Island, a tourist destination. Their data ($n = 2,053$) showed a predominance of English (57%) over Indonesian (42%), and a small number of names in Sasak, the local language, or in other languages (1%). English was strongest in tourism areas. Additionally, in urban areas, a majority of names were in English, but in suburban areas, Indonesian had a stronger position. A questionnaire demonstrated that over half of shop owners, staff and customers preferred English as the language of the names. In terms of the type of shop, it turned out that technology, automotive and fashion shops had more English, whereas health, finance, food and beverages, and household needs had more Indonesian. They also looked into linguistic English-like structures of names, that is, words from Indonesian or Sasak that are used in English-like noun phrases.

Mulyawan (2021) investigated the effect of a local policy measure to support the Balinese language from 2018. Compared to his earlier studies of the tourist city of Kuta on Bali, he found in 2020 that the complete domination of English had diminished and the presence of Balinese had increased. English was still dominant (49% monolingual and 21% bilingual signs of $n = 1,462$), followed by Indonesian (15% monolingual and 21% bilingual signs) and Balinese (2% monolingual and 10% bilingual signs). For Balinese, these figures represent a substantial increase from 43 signs in 2017 to 170 in 2020, most using Balinese script. Of those, 60 signs were bilingual Balinese–English, a combination that was not found in the earlier study. Mulyawan (2021) concluded that the language regulation has been effective in supporting Balinese.

Taken together, the studies in China and Indonesia show that English has a presence on around half of the signs in larger cities and in China around 20% in smaller locations. English is used for similar reasons of social prestige as in other countries in the expanding circle. It is evident that English impacts linguistic landscapes in variable and complex ways related to socioeconomic factors and to differences in the targeted groups among which tourists play an important role.

9.5.2 Contexts where English comes in third place, first place or is absent

As we have noted time and again in the preceding paragraphs, English ranks in second position in the hierarchy of languages, below the official state language, but above all other languages. However, there are also cases where English may be competing for second place. It does not yet have that position and is not threatening the dominant local language, but there may be a process underway in which English is replacing another language in the role of lingua franca, as we already saw in the case of some of the post-Soviet countries in which Russian was pushed out.
For instance, in his classic study of Bangkok, Huebner (2006) noticed a process whereby English was replacing Chinese as the local lingua franca in the linguistic landscape. Even though Thai remained the most important language, English seemed to be moving up to second place at the cost of Chinese. Huebner’s observations were confirmed in a recent study by Savski (2021) who indeed found that Thai was the dominant language, but at the same time there was a strong presence of English in business names and at the university. Savski concluded that English was rapidly becoming the second language of Thai cities.

Similar observations were made by Ben Said (2019) about languages in Tunisia. He found that English is positioning itself between the two established languages: Arabic, the official state language and French, the former colonial language. His observations were based on a sample of signs of Tunis, the capital, and La Marsa, a suburb. In quantitative terms, he reported that Arabic had a presence of 42%, French 37% and English 15% \((n = 693)\). The rivalry between English and French in the language hierarchy was clear, further reinforced by the mixing of languages or hybrid forms resulting in what he calls ‘chameleonic’ (see below).

There are also some specific contexts where English comes out in ‘first place’ in the language hierarchy. For example, it occupies top position in some places which are heavily visited by tourists. Bruyéolmedo and Juan-Garau (2009, 2015) studied the linguistic landscape of the tourist island of Mallorca, Spain, and showed that English was the most frequently displayed language. Just four languages were used on signs, despite the fact that they found 21 mother tongues among 400 respondents. English was used on 72% of the signs \((n = 736)\), either on its own or in combination with one or more languages. Spanish was second (49%) followed by German (28%) and Catalan (15%). This implies that the quantity of English was higher than the two official local languages Catalan and Spanish taken together. The authors try to explain the outcomes by pointing out the different roles the languages have for tourists and for locals. The dominance of English was even stronger in the tourist city of Petra in Jordan. Alomoush and Al-Naimat (2018) found in two major streets that 72% of all signs collected \((n = 210)\) were monolingual, and almost all (98%) of those were in English and, notably, there was a low number of signs in Arabic, the official language. Not surprisingly, all the tourists and locals who were interviewed agreed that English was the most displayed language. The authors concluded that English dominates because of its role as the global language of tourism, commerce and modernity, which ‘seems to be positively valued and appreciated by foreign tourists and local residents’ (Alomoush & Al-Naimat, 2018: 11).

Laitinen (2015) explicitly locates Finland in the expanding circle in his analysis of a few examples of English signage in a tourist town in the north. In Finland, as in many other countries, the uses and functions of the public display of English are changing under the influence of
globalization and mobility. Laitinen quotes other Finnish research showing that on average 79% of the population reported encountering English on signs in the streets, although in rural areas the percentages were significantly lower. Laitinen emphasizes that in order to comprehend the spread of English, researchers have to go beyond the obvious functions of international orientation and modernity, and look into the specific local-historical context where the signs are located or produced. Comparing his data with Laitinen in Finland, Syrjälä (2022) found an unexpected limited visibility of English in the rural landscapes of two villages in the islands of the Stockholm archipelago.

In contrast, in other contexts, English takes ‘third place’ in the hierarchy. In our own classic study (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006), we found in Donostia-San Sebastián that English came in third place after Basque and Spanish, with a presence on its own or in combination with other languages of 28% in all signs. English has a similar position in terms of frequency and visibility in other regions of Spain where a regional minority language is in use, as we have seen in studies in Catalonia (Comajoan Colomé & Long, 2012) and Galicia (Dunlevy, 2012, 2020; see Chapter 7).

In another classic study, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) also found that English came in third place in mixed Israeli–Palestinian localities, which was one of the three locations they compared. In contrast, in Jewish localities, English was the second most prominent language after Hebrew and similar to East Jerusalem where Arabic predominated.

In the study in Rome, which we have already mentioned, an exception was found in Esquilino, the fourth neighborhood in the sample (Gorter, 2009). This neighborhood has a high proportion of migrant inhabitants who run various businesses. Again, Italian was by far the most prominent language, but there were also many signs with Chinese as well as languages such as Bengali and other languages from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. In this environment, English was mostly used in combination with Italian and came in third place. Unsurprisingly in the same neighborhood, Barni (2006) found similar results for English as the third most frequently visible language. It is, however, interesting to note that it was not the ample use of English, but of Chinese that became socially disputed. In a new official regulation, Chinese–Italian bilingual signage was prescribed (Barni & Bagna, 2010). The ruling did not affect English, and it has probably increased the relative position of English versus Chinese.

As we mentioned in Section 7.5 on Chinatowns, Wang and Van de Velde (2015) found that Chinese was the most predominant language in a comparison of six Chinatowns in the Netherlands. The authors specifically zoom in on the use of English and their results show that English was used on just under half of all signs, equal to Dutch, the official language (or French in Brussels). The percentages for English were even higher when focusing on the names of shops. For bilingual and trilingual signs there was
also a preference to include (at least) English. This is rather different from findings in shopping streets outside Chinatowns, as reported for Amsterdam by Edelman (2014) and for Brussels by Vandenbroucke (2016), where English was clearly in second place after the official language.

There was also an exception in one neighborhood in the large-scale study in Germany by Ziegler et al. (2019), which we mentioned above. In this case in Duisburg, Turkish was the second most frequently observed language after German.

The fact that these cases where English comes in third place are exceptions not only makes clear that across specific local contexts there can be substantial differences in the presence of English, but also that one can generalize that English is the language observed most frequently after the official language in almost all countries in the expanding circle.

Another exceptional pattern is the (near) ‘absence’ of English. In three German-speaking communities in South Tyrol, Dal Negro (2009) pointed to the total absence of English on signs, making those Alpine villages different from urban contexts in the region. In the study of Reershemius (2020) of 19 villages in the Low German-speaking areas in the north of Germany, she also found a very small presence of English (2.6%, \( n = 1,294 \)), which included one word signs with ‘welcome’ or ‘no’. Still, it is rare to find a context in today’s world where there is no English at all.

**BOX 9.1 LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH ON DISPLAY**

The omnipresence of English also raises questions about linguistic aspects. By referring to ‘English’, we are aware that this does not refer to one unified, standard version of English, but varieties of Englishes under the umbrella label of a named language. English is often used alongside other languages, in combination with visuals and icons, creating multilingual and multimodal signs, which can display soft boundaries between languages and between modes.

Most signs we see in public spaces contain a single word of English, a few words, a phrase or at most a full utterance. English in public spaces may be prominent, but linguistically its use is, for the most part, limited to names, catchphrases of a few words, slogans or a few longer chunks. Through corpus analysis, Ziegler et al. (2020) confirmed that monolingual English signs (7% of all) only contained proper names, abbreviations, German Anglicisms and short English texts.

The linguistic varieties of English were the focus of a study by Bruyéol-Olmedo and Juan Garau (2020). They analyzed a corpus of English texts on signs in Mallorca. They empirically confirmed that most texts are short (less than 20 tokens). Further, they highlighted some lexical features of American and British varieties of English and some literal
translations, such as ‘seafruits’ (from Italian ‘frutti di mare’), or spelling adaptations resulting in non-existent words.

We already saw in the classic study by Huebner (2006) in Bangkok that he discussed linguistic dimensions, such as the mixing of lexicon, syntax and script. Troyer (2012) expanded on Huebner’s (2006) study by including Thai online newspapers. His results revealed ‘that English continues to influence Thai orthography, lexical borrowing, and code-mixing’ (Troyer, 2012: 110). In a completely different context, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kasanga (2010) investigated code-mixing on signs between French, the local lingua franca, and English. Kasanga explicitly located the country in the expanding circle because of the status of English as a foreign language. He distinguished four functions of English in French advertising: (1) brand, i.e. English names of brands to preserve a global corporate image; (2) hybrid, i.e. adding French tags to English names; (3) clone, i.e. copying well-known brand names; and (4) imitation, i.e. using English labels in French rather than English brand names (Kasanga, 2010: 191–197). Another example was presented by James (2016), who examined the mixing of English with local languages from a linguistic point of view. He presented cases of tourist advertisements to demonstrate that visual English has a graphic impact. A clear example is a tourist slogan for Slovenia that emphasizes the embedded letters ‘LOVE’ in the name of the country. James concluded that English in contact with local languages creates local meanings and identities. The semiotic effects of English, together with local languages, are multimodal and multilingual. The linguistic aspects of signs were also part of the study by Lipovsky (2019a) in the Belleville Chinatown in Paris. She observed that some business names borrowed from English syntax and displayed French and English mixing. This was not a matter of just placing English and French next to each other, but of going creatively beyond the boundaries of the two codes.

English is frequently combined with local or other languages for mixing, blending, wordplay or other ways of linking languages. By creating hybrid forms, even the boundaries between seemingly distant languages such as Chinese and English can dissolve or become vague. Li (2015) discussed examples of the creative blending of Chinese and English, the transgressive use of romanization, bilingual puns and the complex compounding of Chinese and English elements, based on a sample of signs from the city of Suzhou in China.

Continuing along similar lines, Li and Hua (2019) described how a new translingual script is emerging in China, which they call tranßcripting, based on a translanguaging perspective. It refers to the creation of a script that combines elements from Chinese and English writing.
systems or mixes them with symbols and emojis. It disrupts the norms of the traditional writing system and goes against an ideology of the superiority of the Chinese script.

We mentioned Ben Said’s (2019) study in Tunisia, where English is positioned between Arabic and French, which leads to hybridization and mixing on signs. On some signs, English combines with Arabic to create a double meaning and to have a dual lexical form. Ben Said calls this a ‘chameleonic’ characteristic of English, because it is like a chameleon that blends in with its environment, and goes unnoticed through camouflaged use.

From the foregoing pages it has become clear that many linguistic landscape researchers are concerned with the pervasive display of English in cities around the world. English is usually in a competitive relationship with the dominant local language and other languages. When English is used on signs it is not so probable that English replaces another language completely, but it is more likely that some of the words, names or concepts will be borrowed by other languages and become part of the vocabulary (with or without adaptation of pronunciation or spelling). English as a contact language and its influence on the linguistic characteristics of other languages is an important research question.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

The use of English in public spaces has led to interesting findings through numerous studies of linguistic landscapes, as we have seen. Studies have shown different patterns for the display of English in public spaces, with significant variation over diverse contexts. The commonality across the studies mentioned above is that English has obtained a presence in most linguistic landscapes around the world either as the first language in inner and outer circle countries or as an important additional language in the expanding circle. Numerous other investigations in different cities and countries around the world, which we have not mentioned, confirm the results of the pervasiveness of English as presented here. The theme of the public display of English is probably one of the most frequently investigated in the linguistic landscape field. In other chapters of this book, we also come across studies that include the theme of English, among others the chapters on minority languages, language policy and multilingualism. Over and over again, researchers claim in their publications that the presence of English in linguistic landscapes is increasing, even though the vast majority of studies are synchronic taking place at one moment in time.

We have seen that English is taken for granted in inner circle countries and that other languages are usually largely ignored or ‘unseen’.
Generally speaking, in those countries the linguistic landscapes seem predominantly monolingual, except for international brand names and for some limited geographic areas, specific regions or ethnic neighborhoods where concentrations of other languages such as Spanish and Chinese can be found. On the whole, this seems to reinforce the idea that those countries are monolingual, while they patently are not when we consider the composition of their populations. In terms of its place in the language hierarchy, English takes an undisputed first place.

In nearly all cases in outer circle countries English is the most frequently observed language and it dominates the public sphere. This often comes at the cost of the official, state or national language(s), with which English may be competing for visibility. In most cases, the outcome is a linguistic landscape that is multilingual or at least bilingual. The reasons for using English can be related to colonial history, reinforced by social prestige in times of globalization.

Even though the boundaries between the circles of the Kachru model are overlapping or at least not clear-cut, the expanding circle concerns all other countries. The display of English in public spaces in those countries presents a more varied pattern. Many countries share the fact that English is the second most frequently visible language after the official state language. In some cases, English competes with another language which may be a former lingua franca or a minority language. English has not achieved a dominant place as the hypercentral language at the top of the language hierarchy in the countries in the expanding circle. English usually has high visibility through its emblematic use as a symbol for social prestige or similar reasons.

The widespread use of English on signage can also lead to further social inequality, such as in cases when groups are not able to access what is written on signs and can feel excluded. Studies have demonstrated that the use of English does not mean that its audience comprehends English texts (Gerritsen et al., 2010).

The question arises as to whether English is unstoppable, as De Swaan (2001) has suggested, or whether it can live side by side with other languages. Some may fear that English will replace other languages and authorities may increasingly want to regulate its use, as we have seen in some countries (most notoriously in France with the Toubon law). It is impossible to predict what will happen in the future, among other reasons, due to technological developments and innovations. Today, it is possible to walk through an urban environment and have all the signs automatically translated into a preferred language just by using the right app and pointing the camera of a mobile phone (see Chapter 12).

The strong pull of English is encouraging millions of people to learn the language. Globalization provides a push toward English and seems to offer economic incentives. Linguistic landscapes include English as one of the languages everywhere in the world. This happens not just in the
main shopping streets of capital cities, but also in small provincial towns and rural areas, although often to a lesser degree. English is commonly used along with at least one other language in bilingual signs and somewhat less frequently in multilingual signs. This contact of English with other languages leads to interesting and remarkable mixtures, blends and hybrids. Writing from the perspective of World Englishes, Bolton (2012: 33) saw spaces ‘where the use of English is juxtaposed with other international, national, regional, and local languages’ as one of the most exciting areas of research. Without doubt, the theme of English continues to attract a great deal of attention from linguistic landscape researchers and the display of English and its contact and competition with other languages will remain an important theme for the field.