

The Commodification of Arabic in the Commercial Linguistic Landscape of Leipzig

Kamal Yusuf^{1*}, Zuliati Rohmah² and Omar Ibrahim Alomoush³

¹*Department of Arabic, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya 60237 Indonesia*

²*Department of English, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya 60237 Indonesia*

³*Department of English Language and Literature, Tafila Technical University, Tafila, 66110 Jordan*

ABSTRACT

Previous studies on the Arabic linguistic landscape have identified the commodification of Arabic in heritage sites; however, the identification was not accompanied by a satisfactory account. The current article investigates the distribution of languages, with particular reference to the position of Arabic in the commercial linguistic landscape of Leipzig, highlighting the commodification of Arabic in the commercial linguistic landscape of Leipzig. The data were collected by taking pictures of shop signs on Leipzig's Strassenbahnstrasse and writing field notes during the participant observation. The quantitative and qualitative results show that bilingual patterns dominated by Arabic are commoner than other language patterns. One of the most interesting findings is the employment of the Arabic word 'halal' to arabicise some terms in Germany and manipulate the Arabic learning environment for selling products. Suggestions for future researchers are put forth at the end of the article.

Keywords: Arabic, language commodification, linguistic landscape, shop signs

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E-mail addresses:

kamalyusuf@uinsby.ac.id (Kamal Yusuf)

zettira@gmail.com (Zuliati Rohmah)

alomoushomar@ttu.edu.jo (Omar Ibrahim Alomoush)

*Corresponding author

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INTRODUCTION

Leipzig, one of Germany's most popular cities, is situated in the Saxony region, 200 KM near Berlin. Leipzig is the second-largest city in East Germany before the Reunification. The city has been a trading center since the Middle Ages because of its strategic location between the trade routes of Central and Eastern Europe. Apart from

being an economic center, Leipzig also has an important role in cultural and educational development. In this city lies the second oldest university in Germany, *Universität Leipzig*, founded in 1409 (Power & Herden, 2016). Leipzig is also one of Germany's multiethnic and multilingual cities. The city's residents come from all over the world, with a wide range of professions and occupations, ranging from students to immigrants.

With such socio-geographical conditions, Leipzig becomes an appealing destination for visitors from a variety of ethnic groups and languages, such as Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Eastern Europeans, and East Asians. Leipzig's *Eisenbahnstraße* neighborhood is one of the city's ethnically diverse and multilingual zones. *Eisenbahnstraße* is a district in Leipzig with a wide range of shops and groceries. In general, these establishments sell or provide Islamic-themed goods.

The Arab ethnic group is among the most numerous in Leipzig's *Eisenbahnstraße*. Many Arabic-themed shops with Arabic writings can be found along this street. This situation demonstrates a sufficient assumption of the Arabic language's dominance in this area. The Arabic language's dominance has undoubtedly resulted from its mingling with the original culture. The Arab people have assimilated into German society and culture (Shamsuddin & Katsaiti, 2020). They employ a variety of cultural integration strategies. Learning German, using German as a communication

language, and displaying a variety of German languages on commercial signs are all examples of cultural integration (Renner et al., 2020).

Despite their cultural, religious, and linguistic integration into German culture, the Arabs retain their cultural, religious, and linguistic identities (Shamsuddin & Katsaiti, 2020). One strategy for preserving identity is using the Arabic language in commerce, particularly in shop signs. Many shops on this street feature Arabic script alongside writing in other languages. This phenomenon needs further research to understand the interaction between the Arabic language and its position among other languages existing in Leipzig's *Eisenbahnstraße* public spaces using a linguistic landscape approach.

Linguistic Landscape (henceforth, LL) refers to a written configuration observable in public areas that include, among other things, road signs, advertising and commercial billboards, instructions, as well as shops' names and other public signs (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Shohamy (2006), as one of the pioneering scholars, asserts that LL can be interpreted as a domain within a language of the public space because it refers to certain languages and objects that mark the public sphere.

The use of language signs in public places can signal the linguistic situation of a community in a given area so that the language signs can be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. In this sense, Landry and Bourhis (1997) argue that

LL is a marker of the geographical territory occupied by distinctive language communities within multilingual states. This perspective depicts most, if not all, of the components of certain geographical areas of LL. As a result, the hub of LL research can be applied not only to the analysis of language use but also developed in a more extensive context from the perspectives of sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, semiotics, language policy, education, and multilingualism (Gorter & Cenoz, 2016) as well as ethnolinguistic vitality, language economy and power, and collective identity (Said & Rohmah, 2018).

The LL of a territory can serve two basic functions: an informational function and a symbolic function (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The informative function is the function of language in public space, which includes information from the government (non-commercial) and private sector (both commercial and non-commercial ones). The symbolic function is the emergence of a feeling or attitude towards the use of certain language signs by a group of people. The symbolic function is also closely related to the representation of ethnic identity (Gorter & Cenoz, 2008).

According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), language choice on shop signs as private signs might be indexical or symbolic. Nikolaou (2017) gives a clear example of this by depicting a Hindi-language barbershop sign in an inner-city Athens neighborhood that may indicate the presence of an Indian-speaking immigrant

community. The presence of Hindi in the sign has no informational value—at least for the vast majority of non-Hindi speaking passers-by or potential guests—but creates a symbolic association between the restaurant and the culture it represents (Nikolaou, 2017). Scollon and Scollon (2003) refer to the first situation as an example of ‘geopolitical indexing,’ while the second is an example of ‘symbolization based on socio-cultural linkages.’

As a relatively new approach in linguistics, LL has become a focus of interest for several researchers. Geographic domain-based LL research has been conducted, for example, in Indonesia (da Silva, 2017; Yusuf & Putrie, 2022), Malaysia (Ariffin & Husin, 2013; Coluzzi & Kitade, 2015; David & Manan, 2016), Brunei (Coluzzi, 2016), Singapore (Hult & Kelly-Holmes, 2019), Israel (Kochav, 2018; Shohamy & Ghazaleh-Mahajneh, 2012); and Spain (Bellés-Calvera, 2019; Said & Rohmah, 2018). In addition, LL research studies have highlighted a range of languages, such as English (Adetunji, 2015; Backhaus, 2007; Lanza & Woldemariam, 2013), Thai (Huebner, 2006), Japanese (Rowland, 2016), and Chinese (Yao et al., 2020).

Alomoush (2021a, 2021c), Amer and Obeidat (2014), Shohamy and Ghazaleh-Mahajneh (2012), and Yusuf et al. (2022) conducted research on LL with an emphasis on Arabic. Shohamy and Ghazaleh-Mahajneh (2012) conducted a study in Israel, where Arabic was and is still the language of most people, although

the government has put it as a minority language. The research shows an interesting result where Arabic is highly used in the city of Ume El Pahem; 90% of the signs on the internal road, 82% on roads connecting to the main freeway, 87% in senior high schools and 100% in junior high schools albeit its being non-official language. Botterman (2011) and Koskinen (2012) also researched LL, where Arabic was mentioned as a minority language and appeared in the areas with minimum occurrences. Arabic is used in shops and restaurants selling goods specifically for Muslim minorities residing in the territory.

Moreover, Said and Rohmah's (2018) Arabic LL research collected data from Andalusia (Spain), where Arabic was spoken as a lingua franca for about seven hundred years during the Muslim reign and was finally banned after the Reconquesta. The study reports that Arabic as a minority language is found differently in three clusters of areas. In State Discourse Cluster, Arabic is hidden in toponyms since there are many names of places that originated from Arabic vocabulary. In Commercial Circle and Collective Identity Circle, the Arabic language can be found easily but used differently. While in the last circle, Arabic is used to build a collective identity as Muslims who need specific places to pray and to get halal food; the use of Arabic in the commercial circle is to generate income from the tourism sector. Thus, Arabic inscription is preserved for economic purposes. Said and Rohmah (2018) reported that Arabic

was commodified in the commercial and heritage sites; however, they did not explain how the commodification was conducted in detail. Therefore, the current research focuses on the commercial area in Leipzig to completely portray how the commodification of the Arabic language occurs in Leipzig LL.

Shohamy (2006) mentions three important factors that impact language choice and dominance in the LL: power relationships, community identities, self-presentation, consumer reactions and influence. Campbell (2004) noted that the "need" and "prestige" connected with languages, as well as the presence of consumers, had an impact on the language used on commercial signage. Shop names are commercial signs, and business motivations such as the desire to attract potential consumers, boost brand prestige and develop a cosmopolitan image play an important influence in the language used or language choice of such signs. Using attractive language is, therefore, the main focal point of the commercial language to attract potential buyers to buy their products.

The commodification of language, a term that refers to perceiving a language as a product for economic functions, entails the perception that a language has an economic value. The commodification of language has recently gained attention from several language researchers (Graham & Hearn, 2001; Guo et al., 2020; Heller, 2003, 2010; Kogar, 2014; Leeman & Modan, 2009). Heller (2003) refers to this as the process of "language being rendered accessible to

reinterpretation as a quantifiable skill” and, as a result, “the comprehension of language becomes a marketable commodity on its own” (p. 474). Heller (2003, 2010) raised the issue of language commodification, where a language needs to be seen not only as a process of meaning-making, social identities or stratification, and social relations but also as political and economic situations that may affect the process of making meaning and social relations.

Using signs from Washington DC’s Chinatown, Leeman and Modan (2010) investigated how extra-linguistic factors such as political and economic concerns impact the tangible manifestations of language in big areas. Furthermore, relying on the symbolic usage of Chinese in the LL of Washington DC’s Chinatown, Leeman and Modan investigate how minority languages, along with other multimodal design components in the physical surroundings, are commodified and utilized to market the city.

Following Heller (2010), who exemplified marketing as one area where the commodification of language often presents tension, and Leeman and Modan (2010), who investigated minority languages in Washington DC’s Chinatown, the present study is aimed to describe the sign pattern in Leipzig LL, the position of Arabic in Leipzig’s commercial area, and how the commodification of the Arabic language in Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße occurs.

METHODS

The early phase of LL studies was mostly conducted using a quantitative approach where all signs in a certain area were photographed and quantified to determine the distributions and patterns of the public signs. More recent LL studies, however, tend to apply qualitative approaches to analyze public signs. For example, Lanza and Woldemariam (2013) used an ethnographic approach focusing more on critical examples illustrating theoretical issues conducted by Moriarty (2014) and Said and Rohmah (2018). Aiming to understand the sign patterns and the position of Arabic in the commercial LL of Leipzig from the perspective of linguistic commodification, the current research applied a quantitative and qualitative approach to analyzing the data.

Fieldnotes and observations were conducted along the Eisenbahnstraße to give an ethnographic context for the LL items to answer the research questions (Alomoush, 2021a). The data for this study were collected by observing and photographing the shop signs along Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße area. People from various ethnic backgrounds populate this multicultural neighborhood (Dütthorn, 2017, p. 28). The research location is depicted on the map in Figure 1.

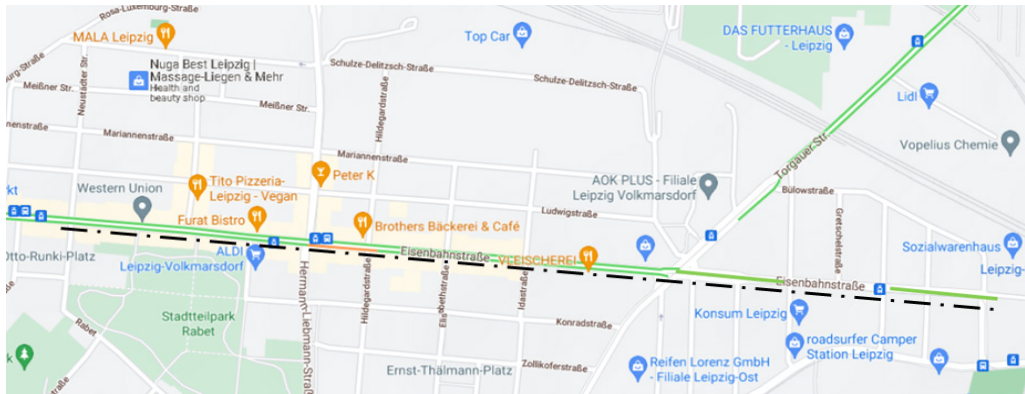


Figure 1. Map of Eisenbahnstraße, Leipzig (Source: Google Map)

There are several types of shops along the surveyed street consisting of service business shops and non-service business shops. Service shops dominating the business in the area provide daily services, such as salons, restaurants (more than 39%),

and groceries (more than 34%). Meanwhile, non-service stores offer secondary products, such as jewelry and communications. Table 1 describes the types of business shops in Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße.

Table 1
Type of business shops in Eisenbahnstraße

Shop	Number	%
Restaurant	30	39.4
Groceries	26	34.2
Jewelry	8	10.5
Communication	2	2.6
Travel agencies	8	10.5
Salon	2	2.6
n	76	100

Regular observations were carried out to take pictures of the shop signs and to view the communication and social interactions among sellers and clients in the commercial areas. The data collection was administered in August 2019. A total of 76 different shop

signs were gathered and analyzed. Similar to Edelman’s (2010) study, this research only considered signs displayed in store windows or outside of the store building that is visible from the front part of the shops as data to be analyzed; thus, signs found inside

shops, behind the shop windows or in the interior are ignored (Cenz & Gorter, 2006; Darquennes, 2013; Gorter & Cenz, 2008). More specifically, the researchers include three types of store signs as follows:

1. Signs situated above the shop's door/window. These signs are typically used to display the store's name (Figure 2a).
2. Signs extend and appear above the head and perpendicular to the front of the store so that people walking on the sidewalk can clearly see them (Figure 2b).
3. Signs that appear and are pasted on the door/window (Figure 2c).

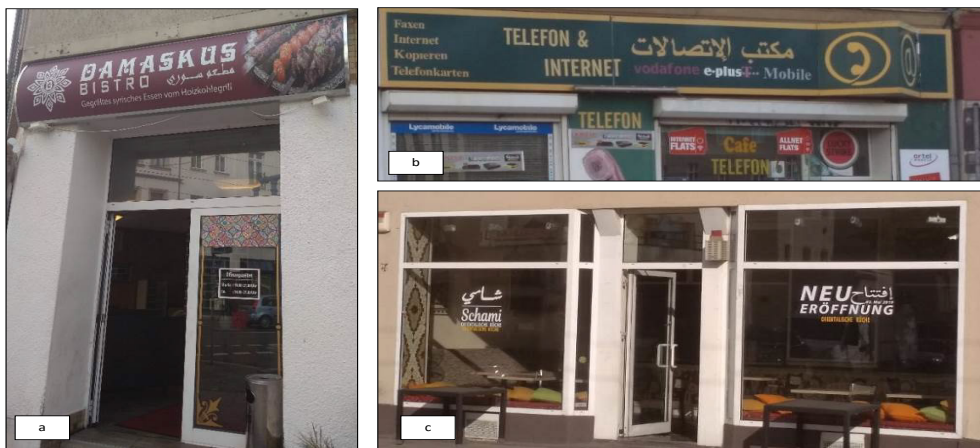


Figure 2. Three types of shop signs

In addition to taking pictures of the shop signs, one of the researchers also recorded communicative events and social exchanges in the LL area using field notes. As a participant observer, he was involved in the day-to-day commercial activities as a client. For example, when eating in a restaurant, he stayed there longer than expected to allow himself to observe the interaction between the sellers and the customers. After each observation, he spent enough time rewriting his field note and adding his reflection to it. The observation results were then discussed with the other researchers to understand the phenomenon more clearly.

One step to guarantee the soundness of the research method in LL studies is determining the unit of analysis, which is not easy. In accordance with Backhaus (2007), a sign was considered to be “any piece of the written text within a spatially definable frame [...] including anything from handwritten stickers to huge commercial billboards” (p. 55). Therefore, Backhaus (2007) mentions two alternative ways of deciding a unit of analysis in LL studies. The first is using each sign as one item with semantic entities like information units, messages, or cases. The second one is based on physical entities. The second one is seemingly more preferred by

linguistic landscapers (Alomoush, 2015); however, dilemmas might still confront the LL researchers, such as whether the front and the backside of a sign should be considered as one or two items or how to deal with impaired signs and different shapes of ‘discarded inscriptions.’ In this study, we adhered to Cenoz and Gorter’s (2006) argument of treating each data capture as a single unit of analysis. In this study, each storefront is photographed once, resulting in one unit of analysis consisting of words, phrases, clauses – sentences, symbols and/or pictures. After that, all images are placed in a special folder for further analysis.

RESULTS

In this section, sign patterns, the position of the Arabic language, the commodification of Arabic in the commercial site and the

impact of the commodification of Arabic on Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße are reported.

Sign Patterns of Arabic LL

The Arabic language used in Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße and its distribution among the type of shops are presented in Table 2. The use of Arabic apparent on the shop signs is in three patterns, i.e., monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. As seen in Table 2, bilingual forms are the most frequently found pattern, with almost 95% occurrences, followed by the monolingual and multilingual patterns comprising only around 2% each. The biggest number of bilingual signs appear in restaurants covering more than 36%, followed by groceries with almost 32%. The monolingual and multilingual signs are only apparent in restaurants and grocery stores.

Table 2

The Arabic language patterns distribution in shop signs

n/%	Sign pattern			Total
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Multilingual	
Restaurant	2 (2.6%)	28 (36.8%)		30
Groceries		24 (31.5%)	2 (2.6%)	26
Jewelry		8 (10.5%)		8
Communication		2 (2.6%)		2
Travel agencies		8 (10.5%)		8
Salon		2 (2.6%)		2
	2 (2.6%)	72 (94.7%)	2 (2.6%)	76

The current research data demonstrate that the least amount of Arabic is found in restaurants and grocery stores (2.6% each). The sign in Figure 3 shows a monolingual

Arabic text inscribed on a restaurant window in a big font size of Kufic Arabic. Figure 4 portrays multilingual signs noticeable in a grocery shop that provides daily needs. There

are several languages written on the window of the store, such as Arabic (مواد غذائية), Russian (пищевые продукты), English (Halal-Land), Germany (Lebensmittel, Fleishwaren, Obst & Gemüse), French (Nourriture), Turkish (Gıda ürünleri), and Persian (مواد غذایی). The Arabic and English are printed in big-sized red fonts,

probably to catch the attention of customers and passersby. The German is also printed in red fonts but with smaller font sizes. At the same time, the other fonts of other languages are written in yellow, surrounding the red one. Smaller Arabic alphabets were also written in yellow color.



Figure 3. Monolingual Arabic



Figure 4. Arabic in multilingual signs

Regarding bilingual signs, Arabic appears in all shop businesses in Leipzig. Based on Table 2, Arabic is found in restaurants (36.8%), followed by groceries. Approximately 10% appear in jewelry

stores and travel agencies, salons and communication (around 2%). Figure 5 exemplifies a bilingual sign denoting German-Arabic signage attached above the restaurant's entrance.



Figure 5. Bilingual sign of Arabic in a restaurant

Three types of the placement of bilingual signs can be seen in Figure 2. In Figure 2a, the name of the shop is written in Latin letters (DAMASKUS BISTRO) accompanied by the description or is its

translation in Arabic (مطعم سوري). The Latin script is written bigger than the Arabic and is placed above the Arabic script. The name of the shop is placed right above the

shop entrance of a Middle Eastern-themed restaurant.

In Figure 2b, information signs are presented on the wall beneath the windows and door of the communication or telecom shop. The language signs are written along the shop front in bilingual (Arabic and German) and two types of writing (Arabic and Latin). Both Latin and Arabic scripts are written in proportional-sized so that viewers can have a feeling of seeing a combination of balanced information on the shop.

In Figure 2c, a mixture of two languages: German (NEU ERÖFFNUNG) and Arabic (إفتتاح), pasted on a transparent windowpane, provides information to passersby about a cafe or restaurant. The attachment of German and Arabic words can be found on the left and right sides of the restaurants' windows. While on the side of the door, there are no language signs.

The Arrangement of Arabic in the Commercial Area

Arabic is found side by side with other languages. In addition, Arabic is combined with other languages, namely Arabic with

German, Arabic with English, and German with Arabic. Among all combinations, the use of Arabic dominates and becomes the language that stands out. The prominence of Arabic can be known in three forms of its arrangement: its position or placement of writing, font size, and use of color.

Furthermore, to show dominance, Arabic script is written or placed above the writings of other languages. On the other hand, Arabic may be placed under the writings of other languages. In addition, conceivably, Arabic is written parallel to other languages in big-size fonts. However, based on the data, it was discovered that Arabic is the most dominant language, with a percentage of nearly 58%. While Arabic and German account for more than 55% of the total, Arabic-English bilingual pattern appears on 2.6% of all signs (Table 3).

Table 3

The percentages of Arabic concurrences with other languages

Arabic + German	German + Arabic	Arabic + English
42 (55.2%)	28 (36.8%)	2 (2.6%)

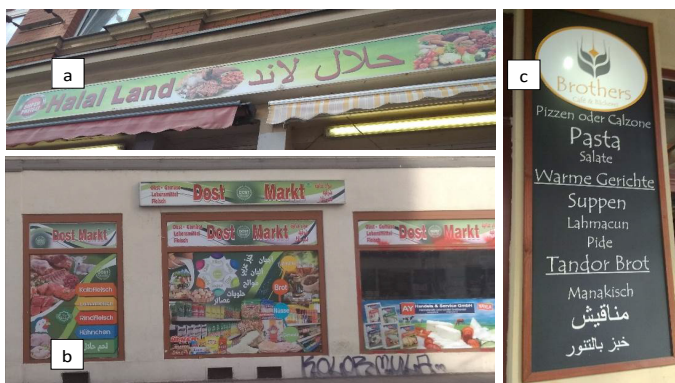


Figure 6. The combination of Arabic with other languages

In Figure 6a, Arabic is on the right, and English is on the left in this arrangement. Both Arabic and English are parallel. The use of Arabic shows its transcription of the English part (Land = لاند) instead of its translation. The word "land" in Arabic should be translated with "أرض." It could be interpreted as a message reflecting the balanced dominance between the targeted "inside" Arab customers and the "outside" Arab customers.

In Figure 6b, the use of colorful fonts combined with different sizes of inscriptions decorates windows. Latin and Arabic scripts are presented on the sign on the windows and upfront store. The shop's name is mainly written in German (Dost Markt) using dominant big red fonts. The detailed information on the products sold is given in German and Arabic in the same way, order and parallel. However, the Arabic writings in the middle window seem to be more predominant as a whole for the white colors used.

In Figure 6c, the order of languages is telling, with English first, i.e., the name of the restaurant (Brothers Café & Bakery), German next and Arabic is put at the bottom. The fonts used to share something in common, namely using white color, as well as the font types of the Latin writing. This order of Arabic reveals the assumptions about the status of language users in this setting.

The data indicate the dominance of Arabic over other languages, including German, as the country's official language. In this case, Arabic shapes the public

perception of language use in the Leipzig area. Arabic in this area shows two meanings at once, namely indexical and symbolic. Indexically, Arabic is the majority and dominant language in the zone. The use of Arabic along the way has significant meaning as a sign that a large Arab community lives in the area. Thus, the choice of Arabic became a medium to bring closer ethnic relations among them. From a symbolic point of view, Arabic has been the language of Islam since the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic; thus, there is a strong bond between Islam and Arabic (Alomoush, 2015). For this reason, non-Arab Muslims are possibly also attached to the Arabic language.

The use of Arabic signs in shops can provide evidence to the public or prospective buyers of the status of the shop owner, that is, to inform that the owner of the shop containing Arabic writing is potentially a Muslim. Thus, Arabic is often associated with Islam. For example, the word "halal," inscribed in Arabic or Latin, is often found in several food shops. It informs the clients that the stores provide food suitable for Muslim consumption. Muslims in the area thus do not have to worry about the quality of the food or its derivative products. It, of course, may result in ease for the public.

The Commodification of the Arabic Language

Based on the data analysis, the Arabic language is commodified in Leipzig's Eissenbahnstrasse by using *halal* as a commodified branding, attempting the Arabization of German, and creating the

social prestige of the Arabic language learning in the area.

“Halal” Branding: The Impact of the Commodification of Arabic

Some shops in Leipzig’s Eissenbahnstrasse display a unique sign in their shops using the word **حلال** “halal.” The word “halal” (written in Arabic or Latin) commonly co-occurs with German expressions. The accompanying German expressions are in the form of a description or information about the product or goods being sold that are considered “halal” (see Figure 7). In addition to using German, shops place the word “halal” alongside other English words (for example, halal land).

“Halal” labeled items are generally not available in mainstream supermarkets in Germany. Only a few stores are displaying this expression in common street areas. The word “halal” in Arabic denotes a food label allowed to consume in an Islamic

way. In common parlance, “halal” refers to meat slain in accordance with Islamic dietary standards, which can be traced back to the verses in the Quran. In non-Muslim countries, “halal” appears to symbolize a religious brand indicating that a product fulfills the dietary needs of a specific group of followers, i.e., Muslims.

In the context of the European food production sector, however, “halal” as it is employed does not correspond to the religious meaning of the word, nor does it translate well (Salim & Stenske, 2020). Islamic legal experts also state it in their explanation of the term. Therefore, “[L]abeling products as *halal* is not exclusively a religious act- it is also a commercial activity pursued by religious organizations as well as by secular companies, for-profit” (Raza, 2018, p. 3). In Germany, the “halal” label’s dual use might create issues of religious authority, legitimacy, and trust among the parties involved (Raza, 2018).



Figure 7. Stores with “halal” label

Hence, “halal” is used to attract Muslim clientele and people who want ‘high’ quality products since “halal” items should fulfill certain criteria for the raw materials and the processing of the materials. Hence, by putting a “halal” label in the stores, the store’s owner has a more significant opportunity to get more customers from different ethnic, religious, and other social backgrounds. A large amount of use of “halal” in shops in Leipzig commercial areas means tremendous efforts to generate more income for the store owners, which also means more significant tax for the government. Hence, the use of “halal” originating from the Arabic language constitutes the commodification of the Arabic language through the “halal” label.

The “McDonaldization” Germany vs. Arabization Germany. Several LL studies on shop signs show the dominance of English and its use in public spaces in numerous countries (for example, Alomoush, 2021b; Nikolaou, 2017; Romero et al., 2019). English, in this case, becomes the lingua franca that bridges locality and globalization. As a result of globalization, “McDonaldization” is frequently connected with the English language by numerous academics in LL studies. For example, Gorter (2006) contends that the McDonaldization of the LL is reflected in the English language’s growing space. Orman (2009) continues by saying that English is purportedly ideal for communicating the values of industrial pollution, consumerism, global capitalism, and imperialism, or what some writers refer

to as McDonaldization. However, as seen in the data, this study discovered a shift in dynamics and the transition of what so-called “McDonaldized” environment into a commodified Arabic space.

Comparing Arabic with English, the use of English in public signs, especially commercial publicity, has been attributed to “modernity, internationalism, and technological progress,” as pointed out by Gorter (2013, p. 202). Because of these symbolic links, many researchers identify English as a commodified language at the expense of native languages. Using the commercial sector in Leipzig’s LL, this study demonstrates that Arabic may be commodified in specific ways. Arabic (see Table 2 and Table 3) is mostly used to attract the eyes of pedestrians and visitors who are mostly from the Middle East in the district. Arabic is portrayed as a language commodification in the LL of Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße of a multi-ethnic area.

Manipulating Arabic Learning Environment for Selling Products. It has been shown in previous studies that the dominance and commodification of language in an area may have detrimental consequences. One is local language contestation and negative attitudes toward the dominant language, including a few examples. Moreover, according to Guo et al. (2020), “The spread of powerful languages in new regions often leads to local opposition, creating social injustice and threatening individual language rights” (p. 11). The exact reverse occurred in

this research, and it is worth noting. The commodification of Arabic may have a considerable beneficial influence on the economy. The commodification of Arabic in commercial signage influences Arabic learners by providing them with an authentic linguistic context. Exposure to Arabic, ubiquitous in the form of LL along Eisenbahstrasse street, allows purchasers to communicate Arabic with merchants, increasing their purchasing power.

It was a personal experience from one of the buyers from Indonesia. Every time he went into a store that had Arabic signs on the shop, he assumed that the store owner was an Arab. He attempted to communicate with the vendor in Arabic instead of German in purchasing and selling transactions. The following points contribute to his decision to communicate in Arabic: (1) practicing Arabic with native speakers, (2) knowing that he has the same socio-religious identity connection, and (3) feeling more comfortable negotiating in Arabic. These are all critical factors in learning Arabic. Knowing that their customers are keen to practice Arabic when communicating with them during the transaction, the shop owners become more enthusiastic in responding to them using Arabic. They create special bonds between themselves through the use of the Arabic language.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Arabic does not always have a symbolic function, but it is also used in an indexical form. This finding is in line with what

has been discussed by Nikolaou (2017). According to Nikolaou's findings, there is a distinction between the use of indexical and symbolic language for store signage in his research. In some cases, a foreign language may indicate the owner's ethnicity, attracting people of the same ethnic group or speaking the same language. In this situation, the language is indexical. On the other hand, symbolic choice seeks to reflect something everyone associates with a language; this is frequently the case for restaurants that serve Italian cuisine or locations that use English because of its widespread link with modernity. Italian restaurants are often not owned by Italians; rather, the language is only used as a descriptor for the style of cuisine the establishment offers. Similarly, English is associated with modernity because of its historical significance.

Similarly, Arabic does not reflect the language of Islam, as this language is generally perceived. As mentioned by Alomoush (2015), Arabic, by the majority, is considered a religious language, a sacred language, and the language of Islam. Rather, the use of Arabic in most of these shops, as Nikolaou (2017) explains, represents the presence of an Arab ethnic or community in the area. By chance, the Arabs of this area are majority Muslims.

The use of "halal" branding in this study, considered a commodification of the Arabic language, differs from the conclusion Said and Rohmah's (2018) study made. They did not see the use of "halal" in some restaurants in Sevilla as the commodification of the *halal* branding but rather as a symbolic

marker of collective identity as Muslims. Indeed, the previous researchers admitted that a commercial aspect was similar to that contained in the tourism places in the commercial sign cluster. However, the need to sell foods using Arabic outside tourist places, including the “halal” term, is not predominant. In Said and Rohmah’s (2018) study, the commodification of the Arabic language only exists in commercial sign clusters, including tourist places and their vicinities.

Despite the difference in seeing the word “halal” in restaurants or other food stores, the current study is in agreement with Said and Rohmah (2018) in that when Arabic inscriptions are greatly used it reaches the scale of industrialization; it is then commodified for the sake of money-making industry. The current researchers further elaborate on the notion of the commodification of Arabic in heritage sites previously discussed by Said and Rohmah’s research in Andalusia, Spain.

That Arabic coexists with other languages in Leipzig LL may result from the fact that the city of Leipzig, Germany, has become a multiethnic and multilingual due to the inflow of migrants and refugees from all over the world (Dütthorn, 2017; Power & Herden, 2016). Arabic, Berber, Turkish, Kurdish, Hindi, Punjabi, and Chinese are essential immigrant languages. Pertaining to this issue, Gorter (2009) stated that multilingualism could occur for various reasons. One reason is historical or political movements, such as imperialism or colonialism. In this situation, the spread

of particular languages, such as Spanish, throughout Latin America resulted in the coexistence of many languages. Economic movements, such as those associated with migration, also contribute to this. Due to the weakness of some regions and countries’ economies, population flows occur, creating multilingual and multicultural people in the receiving countries. In addition, the increased connectivity between regions of the world and the proliferation of universally accessible languages could affect multilingualism. It is true for the advancement of new technologies, as well as for science. English is the primary language of international communication, and millions of individuals also speak other languages. Another reason is a sense of social and cultural belonging, as well as a concern for preserving and revitalizing minority languages. This fascination emerges in settings where two or more languages coexist and are important for everyday communication. Furthermore, education also plays a pivotal role as almost every country’s curriculum includes second and foreign language teaching. Lastly, religious movements result in the diaspora of individuals.

With regard to the issues mentioned above, what has occurred to LL in Leipzig indicates that the economics and religious movements may be the two primary factors driving the domination and commodification of Arabic in Leipzig, in particular, and Germany as a whole, as demonstrated by the case of Arabic in the commercial LL of Leipzig. The dominance of one language

in the LL demonstrates the strength and position of a majority or strong minority group over other communities. For example, higher-status languages employed in official areas are more likely to be found on public signs than lower-status languages. According to Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), “LL analysis allows us to point out patterns representing various methods in which people, organizations, associations, institutions, and government agencies cope with the game of symbols within a complicated reality” (p. 27). Therefore, the LL denotes linguistic diversity in a specific area. A multilingual situation is indicated by the use of bilingual or multilingual signs.

Meanwhile, Leeman and Modan (2009) found out that the commodification of the Chinese language in Washington DC has resulted in the lesser use of Chinese as a means of communication and social interaction, and at the same time, put it as a symbolic element in the commodified landscape. Hence, the economic gain has negatively impacted social interaction among the speakers of the commodified language. Dissimilar to this, Guo et al. (2020) conclude that commodifying Chinese as a second language in Thailand has offered better educational opportunities for learners from underprivileged families. Thus, it presents a more positive impact on the commodified area. Informed of the two different directions of the impact of the commodification of language, research aimed to see how the commodification of Arabic affects Leipzig’s Eisenbahnstraße public area is needed. However, the

current research does not uncover this phenomenon. Therefore, it is suggested that the next research can portray how the commodification of Arabic affects the communication and social interaction of the speakers of Arabic in addition to the welfare of the inhabitants of the area.

CONCLUSION

According to Van Mensel et al. (2016), LL research may help us understand the linguistic characteristics that define post-modern civilization’s multidimensional, hyper-varied multilingual contexts, such as hybridity and multimodality. Furthermore, the LL may be regarded as a set of artifacts of human social action, providing us with an empirical indicator for mapping and understanding both short and long-term changes in language and society, as well as contestation occurrences. Using the LL pictures of Leipzig’ Eisenbahnstraße, this study has demonstrated the color of Arabic commodifying the LL in a unique area of language contestation. In addition, the results of this study imply that language commodification, rather than typically being associated with sacred language and religious status, can be a contributing factor in promoting multilingual availability and social sustainability in certain circumstances.

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