

The Englishization of Materiality in the Linguistic Landscape of a Southern Jordanian City

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Abstract

This article investigates the interrelationship between English used on signs and materiality in the linguistic landscape (LL) of a touristic Jordanian town, Petra. Its aim is to analyze how the materials that signs are made of reflect recurrent practices of identity formation and numerous socio-cultural norms in the Jordanian tourism context. The signs were first coded according to language, and then categorized within the framework of material practices enacted by sign designers. The results show that signs written on stone and metal surfaces often displaying English in uppercase letters and replicating governmental practices convey a sense of quality, continuity and permanence within economic and tourism-centered ideologies and policies; the visibility of English painted on wooden board signs is evidence of the creativity further manifested in block capitals to denote a sense of freshness and newness; signs printed and hand-written on paper often appearing in uppercase letters manifest the dynamic nature of the LL, ensuring the flow of special offers and even linguistic and non-linguistic changes; most remarkably, monolingual English signs painted inside sand bottles symbolize important environmental, historical, and cultural information on the ancient city of Petra, which contributes significantly to the popularity of Petra as a worldwide tourist destination among members of the tourist population, particularly the international visitors.

Key words: English, linguistic and paralinguistic practices, linguistic landscape, materiality, Petra

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