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Legitimization and recontextualization of languages

The imbalance of powers in a multilingual landscape

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We use the uneven distribution of languages in the public spaces of the University of Zambia and the voices and narratives that emerge to argue for legitimization and recontextualization as critical components in the presence and contestations of languages. Using data from interviews and photographs of signage in place, we show legitimization of foreign languages in which English, Japanese, and Chinese forge a place of linguistic contestation and legitimization through control and superiority. We argue for the apparent hegemony of foreign languages and the striking paucity of monolingual signage of indigenous languages as the imbalance of powers. While the former shows the influence of the global in the local, the prospects for the latter continue to diminish as their chances and opportunities as linguistic capital for wider/global communication do not look so favourable. We conclude with the glaring reality of recontextualization as capital for the display of indigenous inclined discourses.

Keywords: legitimization, recontextualization, imbalance, Zambia, multilingual landscape

1. Introduction

Framed within the overarching framework of Linguistic Landscape (henceforth LL), we use the uneven distribution of languages in the public spaces of the University of Zambia (henceforth UNZA) as well as social actors' voices and narratives to argue for legitimization and recontextualization as critical components that account for the presence and contestations of languages in this multilingual landscape. In particular, our focus lies in interrogating the signs together with the narratives that emerge to unearth the factors that account for the languages' pub-

lic presence. Essentially, arguing for legitimization and recontextualization entails taking the view that there is a sense in which language (in public spaces) represents an instrument of control (enacted, contested, and upheld) and manifests symbolic power in discourse and society (cf. Hodge & Kress, 1993; Bourdieu, 2001). Thus, when we look at the uneven distribution of languages (cf. Simungala, 2020), our focus is not merely on language on signs since this indirectly minimizes the potential of the voices and narratives that emerge from the producers and consumers of signage in place (Banda & Jimaima, 2015).

By looking at the percentage distribution of languages in the LL of UNZA, the voices and narratives from the social actors who shape and are shaped by LL, we note, show, and account for legitimization through the apparent hegemony of foreign languages over indigenous ones, the striking paucity of monolingual signage of indigenous languages, and the glaring reality of recontextualization as capital for the display of indigenous-inclined discourses. We predicate our theorizations on the idea that the simple presence or absence of different languages in a landscape transmits symbolic messages about the importance, power, significance, and relevance of certain languages or the irrelevance of others (Shohamy, 2006). In all this, we acknowledge the role of human agency as well as the social materialities in the eventual production and consumption of signage as we are interested in understanding the motivation behind the emplacement of the signs in question since the aspect of human agency cannot be disassociated from the production and eventual consumption of LL items (Ben Rafael et al., 2006).

The structure of the paper is such that the next section provides a context for the study and an overview of Zambia's language situation. This is followed by a discussion of conceptual matters as well as materials and methods. The rest of the study then discusses the findings after which a summary and conclusion are provided.

2. Contextualising the study: Some critical insights

In addressing the imbalance of powers in this multilingual landscape, a look into the socio-historical aspects that have shaped the existence of UNZA is critical as they provide a window through which legitimization and recontextualization can better be understood. Simungala and Jimaima (2021a) remark that UNZA is Zambia's premier University located in the capital city, Lusaka. It is the largest and oldest public learning institution established in 1965 and was officially opened on 12th July 1966. The University has two campuses i.e. the Great East Road and the Ridgeway campus with 13 schools/faculties. The former is the main campus and the research site for this investigation. It is situated on the south side of the Great

East Road about 9 kilometres from the town centre. UNZA draws on the *crème de la crème* from the multiple dispersed localities of Zambia as its students. This is why, when Simungala (2020) attends to the languages constituting students' linguistic repertoires, he demonstrates the conflation of multiple languages in their daily discourses and casual conversations. This reality is not surprising as UNZA brings together students from all parts of Zambia, whose linguistic repertoires are diverse.

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of international students at UNZA. This is evidence of the strides UNZA continues to make internationally as it offers quality education. In their 2020 ranking of universities, uniRank, a leading research entity, showed that UNZA has steadily improved its position over the years from holding the slot of number 55 in 2016 to number 45 in 2019 and number 18 in 2020 (Mwebantu, 2020). This is undoubtedly due partly to UNZA's investments and collaborations in bilateral arrangements. As we later argue, such bilateral arrangements and memoranda of understanding partly explain the presence of foreign languages in the LL of UNZA as seen on bilingual signs. Thus, while it is easy to anticipate that these bilingual signages can be found at an institution associated with foreign universities and financiers, it will become apparent that beyond this anticipation, there is a sense in which there are voices and narratives that emerge to forge UNZA as a place of linguistic contestation through control and superiority.

3. The multilingual contexts of Zambia

The dispersed localities of Zambia in South-Central Africa are home to a variety of languages that belong to approximately 72 ethnic groupings (Simungala & Jimaima, 2021b). Zambia's cultural-linguistic diversity forms part of the Bantu languages, the largest language family in Africa. As observed by several scholars (Kashoki, 1978; Marten & Kula, 2008), Bantu languages exhibit a high level of mutual intelligibility as do all the languages indigenous to Zambia. There are several standpoints concerning how many languages are indigenous to Zambia. Mambwe (2014) attributes this to the erroneous association of language, tribe, and ethnicity. Amidst several standpoints, expert views from linguists and language specialists put the number at between 26 and 30 language clusters (Kashoki, 1978), but it is not surprising to see some publications which talk of 72 languages equating to the 72 ethnic groupings (Simungala & Jimaima, 2021c).

Zambia is divided into ten provinces with each province having been legislated an indigenous language as a lingua franca except for North-Western province which has three, bringing the total to seven regional languages. As such,

Zambia has been divided into seven linguistic zones (Banda & Jimaima, 2017). Bemba is the regional language designated for the Copperbelt, Luapula, Northern, and some parts of Muchinga and Central provinces; Nyanja for Lusaka and Eastern provinces; Tonga for the Southern and parts of Central provinces; Lozi for the Western province; and Lunda, Kaonde, and Luvale for the North-Western province (Mambwe, 2014; Simungala et al., 2022). It is important to note, however, as Jimaima (2016) and Banda et al. (2019) advise, that the idea behind the regionalization of the seven languages assumed immobility and the stable language practices which go against the normative expectation and real linguistic/language practices in place, given the mobility and circulation of speakers and languages.

English is Zambia's national official language and holds a very long history, dating back to Zambia's pre-independence period. Zambia is often characterized as exoglossic owing to how the English language has succeeded in ousting the indigenous languages. Even after gaining independence, the country continued to use English as the official language of government, national, and international communication, and for educational purposes (Marten & Kula, 2008). Largely a consequence of the ideology of 'One Zambia One Nation' proposed and implemented by the country's founding president, Dr Kaunda, it was the thinking of the time that the English language was a neutral language which would unite the many speakers of the different languages as there was a looming rivalry (Nkolola-Wakumelo, 2012) among the 72 ethnic groupings.

English has not remained the only foreign language owing to traces of French, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese in the LL of Zambia. For French, Jimaima (2016) historicizes that despite having been introduced in the sociolinguistic mix of Zambia by 1888 by the missionaries and later into the school system as 'French as a Foreign Language', it has not made notable inroads onto the LL of Zambia. For the UNZA LL, there is no single trace of French despite being a part of the taught languages in the Department of Literature and Languages. Without stretching the argument further, the characterization of the invisibilization of French in the LL of UNZA acts as a foil that brings into the spotlight the visibilization of the Chinese language. As we show later in the paper, the built environment housing the Confucius Institute forges an ongoing legitimization process in which Chinese becomes part of the unfolding LL of UNZA. We attribute the influence of the Chinese language, as we later argue, to China's renewed interest in Africa. Jimaima (2016) reminds us that the huge capital investment in such business ventures as road constructions has given unprecedented linguistic capital to the Chinese language over other foreign languages such as Italian, Hindi, Arabic, and Spanish. While there are many foreign languages displayed in the LL of Zambia, we draw on only English, Chinese, and Japanese as they are the ones one finds on UNZA's LL.

4. Material ethnography of Linguistic Landscape and aspects of legitimization and recontextualization

Despite the shift in the conceptualization of what is constitutive of LL studies in the recent years, in the formative years, the attention to language in the environment, words, and images displayed and exposed in public spaces predominated (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings forms the LL of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). It is acknowledged that the field of LL is endowed with the heuristic potential to describe the sociolinguistic situation of a place and add a different dimension to the study of multilingualism. As such, Shohamy (2006) argues that the absence and the presence of particular languages in any LL tells us something about the productivity and vitality of the languages concerned. While we agree with Lyons (2020) that LL studies are slowly moving away from the counting of languages, we argue that there is a sense in which the counting of languages, when used with the lived experiences of social actors, brings to the fore valuable insights. Jimaima and Banda (2019) advance that the insistence on counting languages in LL meant that a great many voices instantiated by unscripted material culture in place have been muted. It is for this reason that we use voices and narratives, in addition to the uneven distribution of languages in UNZA's LL.

We are mindful of the reality that LL items do not faithfully represent the linguistic repertoires of social actors but, rather, the items represent linguistic resources that individuals and institutions make use of in the public sphere (Ben Rafael et al., 2006). Thus, to capture legitimization and recontextualization, we make reference to Stroud and Mpendukana's (2009) material ethnography as it privileges local materialities, agency, and voice, thus overcoming many shortcomings witnessed in quantitative approaches of the earlier LL conceptualization (Jimaima & Banda, 2020). As construed in recent studies, the LL does not solely comprise of displayed and represented languages because other semiotic materialities that enact and uphold meaning (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) are LL tokens, together with language as spoken by social actors in their day-to-day interlocutions (Ben Rafael et al., 2006). We align our study with this positioning as the present undertaking considers language displayed in the public spaces of UNZA, predicating the same on the lived experiences of social actors. In this connection, it is the view of Shohamy (2006) that the LL should not just be about language(s) displayed but, also, the languages missing from public spaces. Consequently, similar to Berger's (2010) notion of 'No Sign as a Sign' is the instance of the languages expected to be present in a landscape yet missing on signage in place. We are

mindful of these earlier contributions and we ride on them as they sufficiently inform the present undertaking.

We look upon the legitimization of languages in space from the perspective that LL items serve important informational and symbolic functions. The languages displayed in a particular place represent a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). This is why, as used in this study, when we refer to legitimization in LL, we are interested in how the powers-that-be give legitimacy to language. We see language as representing an instrument of control which manifests symbolic power in discourse and society. Thus, our interest in the legitimization of languages is anchored on three interrelated considerations: to make a language legitimate is to give it legal force or status, to sanction it formally or officially, and to demonstrate or declare it to be justified. In this way, our use of legitimization differs from earlier studies such as the one by Reyes (2011).

The notion of recontextualization is conceived as an interactive phenomenon through which texts or discourse can be relocated and embedded. Chen (2015) observes that recontextualization is being used increasingly in linguistic and discourse research as it ascertains the role of human urgency in extracting text; in this case, we note instances of language and language use from the original context which could be historical or cultural and placing them in another context for reuse. Once recontextualization of language is seen from this perspective, it points to semiotic remediation through which an activity or process is (re)-mediated and deployed anew to serve a different function (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Prior & Hengst, 2010).

We wish to highlight that as we look at the conflation of languages in the LL of UNZA and argue for legitimization and recontextualization, we refer to English, Chinese, and Japanese as foreign languages. We are tempted to refer to these named languages as (emerging) global languages just like Nunan (2003), Northrup (2013), and a host of others have done concerning English. We however hold back and consciously decide not to yield. This is because there are strong arguments against this view, especially that English is not evenly distributed around the world (Mufwene, 2010). In fact, for some scholars, the notion of global English is a fallacy. We are however quick to acknowledge the influence of all the foreign languages on the Zambian LL. In the past decade, both Chinese and Japanese have more than doubled their footprint in Zambia through the various ventures in which the government of the Republic of Zambia is receiving aid. Through this avenue, as we later argue, we see the mobility of both Chinese and Japanese. For the languages that are indigenous to Zambia, we sometimes use the terms local language and indigenous language interchangeably.

5. Materials and methods

For data, we draw on Stroud and Jegels' (2014) ethnographically oriented walking approach, a conflation of walk, talk, gaze, and photography. Walking in the LL of UNZA was conceived with a dual purpose: to capture digital images of signage in place using a digital camera and to conduct walking interviews. To fully exploit the LL, the interviews were semi- to un-structured, where respondents were asked to give their (immediate) impressions and understanding of the languages displayed in public spaces. The selection of the respondents was purposive, only identifying respondents within the confines of where particular signs with particular languages are found. In total, 16 walking interviews were held with students together with two key respondents interviews who are in senior management roles within the office of the Dean of Students Affairs. The key respondents manage the infrastructure and authorize the emplacement of signage in place.

The digital capturing of signage in place realized a total of 416 images ranging from posters, notices, pathway guidance signs, advertisements, billboards, and many more. Both the indoor and outdoor spaces of the University (main administration block, faculties, recreation centres, halls of residences among others) constituted the LL of UNZA. The languages displayed and represented are tabulated in Table 1 below. Essentially, the Table accounts for the distribution and visibility of LL tokens across the various faculties of UNZA. The frequency responds to the number of signs captured in a category, while the percentage is a subsequent representation of the number of signs. Each sign was carefully looked upon and attention was drawn to the language(s) present, and in what order (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Table 1. The Distribution of Languages in UNZA's LL

Languages	Frequency	Percent
English only	357	85.6
Japanese only	2	.5
Chinese only	10	2.4
English and Chinese	20	4.8
English and Indigenous Languages	20	4.8
English and Japanese	6	1.4
Artefacts/Symbols	1	.2
Total	416	100

In what follows, we use the percentage distribution of languages as shown by Table 1 above as well as the narratives from social actors to argue for the use of legitimization and recontextualization of languages to explain the imbalance of powers in the LL of UNZA.

6. Findings and discussions

6.1 Exoglossic hegemony: The legitimization of the English language

In Table 1, the dominance of the English language (illustrated by Figure 1) on signage in place is noted with 357 monolingual signs which accounts for 85.6%. This, together with information gathered from the interviews brings into the spotlight the advantaged position that the English language has enjoyed over the years. This present reality speaks to the status and importance of English not only to UNZA as an institution of higher learning, but also to the broader perspective of Zambia as a nation. The dominance of the English language arises from its legitimization as the nation's official language. This then begs a (return) trip down memory lane to understand the current happenings. Emanating from status planning, the birth of Zambia on 24th October 1964 saw the English language adopted as the national official language. This was not surprising as it simply continued the long-held tradition born out of colonialism through which Northern Rhodesia, as Zambia was then called, was colonised by Britain. Thus, it can be argued that the rise to prominence of the English language in Zambia is largely due to its legitimization seen through the status and power accorded to it both in the pre- and post-independence periods. Consider the narratives and Figure 1:

We've been with the English language way before independence. That's why some people call it a colonial language imposed on us. That's why I am not surprised on its current status in Zambia.

The nature of this place [UNZA] entails that English should be seen on all the signs. I mean, this is the highest institution of learning in the land of which the medium of instruction here is English. If you look around everywhere, majority of the signs should be in English.

Using the narrative above we wish to underscore that the use of English as the medium of instruction at UNZA has given impetus to the language, hence its exoglossic dominance. Thus, as is expected, the medium of instruction has a bearing on what appears on public signage in such spaces. This is because most of the notices and signage in general, like the ones in Figure 1, which shows the dominant use of the English language on three different signs, are emplaced by man-

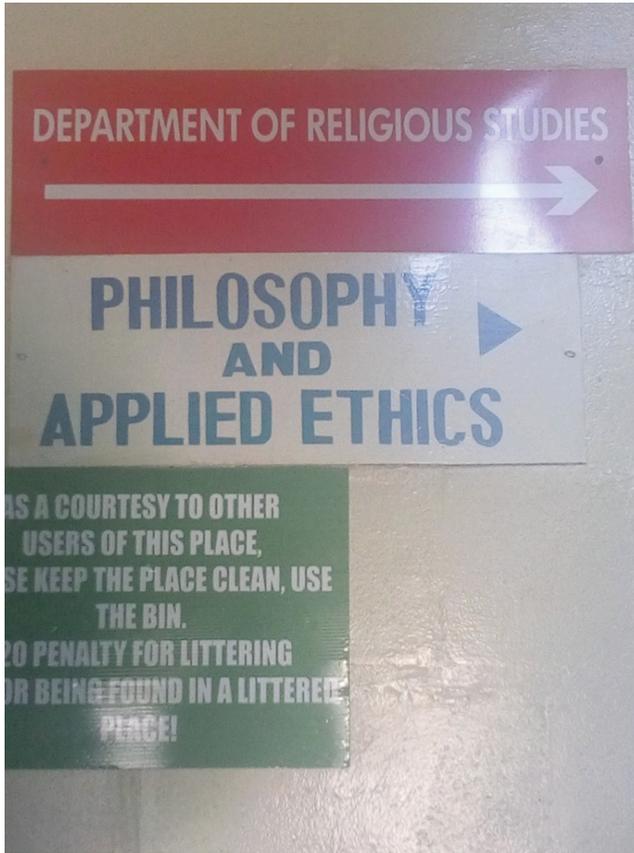


Figure 1. Dominance of English

agement via faculties and administrative departments. This undoubtedly raises the hegemony of English.

6.2 Chinese and Japanese: Legitimization through relative advantage

In this section, we turn to the presence of Chinese and Japanese in the LL of UNZA. We highlight that even when the two foreign languages have no legal force or status (as they have not been sanctioned formally or officially), the powers behind them – the Confucius Institute and the Lusaka office of Hokkaido University (a Japanese University with a memorandum of understanding with UNZA) – deploy them through various semiotic materialities and thus labours to legitimize them. Using data from Table 1, we start with Chinese and note that the percentage distribution of monolingual signs at 2.4%. Consider the following extract:

- Researcher: What do you make of the distribution of Chinese on the LL of UNZA?
- Respondent 2: Well, the thing is China has managed to sell their language to other countries more effectively.
- Respondent 3: Needless to mention, China is taking over the world through its economic influence and language.



Figure 2. Confucius Institute

From the interviews, the respondents give their impressions on the presence of Chinese in the LL of UNZA. The competitive advantage that Chinese has, as shown in Table 1, illustrates – among other things – the Chinese global economic agenda and capital investment in Zambia. The presence of the Confucius Institute, shown in Figure 2, heightens the presence of Chinese, giving it impetus and a competitive advantage over other languages. In this connection, this resonates with the words of respondents where China permeates all spaces with its global economic agenda.

While relative visibilization and competitive advantage somehow legitimizes Chinese, as seen from Table 1 (which suggests a positive status, hence Chinese language vitality in Zambia), we wish to point out from the outset that its productivity is limited and mostly confined to these spaces. Drawing on material ethnography, it is instructive to problematize the built environment of UNZA of which the Confucius Institute building is constitutive, and has become part of, in



Figure 3. Chinese Bilingual and Monolingual Signs

particular, the unfolding artefactual materiality for the co-construction and consumption of China's political and economic ideology globally. A faithful analysis of Chinese signage at UNZA extends beyond the observable materialities in place; it invites an assessment of the Chinese global ideological underpinings in a comparative sense with other global players. This is slightly beyond the scope of the paper. However, what is obvious from the LL of UNZA is that the presence of the Confucius Institute on UNZA grounds continues to weave a sociocultural narrative and history about China for the UNZA's communities. What this means is that despite Chinese monolingual signs standing at only 2.4%, the degree to which social actors consume Chinese materialities extends beyond the 2.4% as they daily refer to the Confucius Institute as a Chinese building. Granted, its situatedness as the first building one sees when entering the University extends its permeative effect among the social actors for it has invisibilized most of UNZA's infrastructure. By extension, its towering presence at the frontage of UNZA symbolically silences other foreign voices such as French and Japanese. By this act, English only survives due to its long historical presence through policy inscription. Thus, the presence of Chinese in the LL of UNZA and its legitimization only go to show the strides that the Chinese are making in popularizing the language through their global economic agenda. As Scollon and Scollon (2003) write on the symbolic

and indexical features as defining attributes of languages in LL, the use of Chinese here is symbolic rather than indexical. Thus, the Chinese signs in the LL of UNZA symbolizes foreign taste while indexing a Chinese-speaking community.

As with the domineering and towering Confucius Institute described above, in both Figure 2 and 3, we notice that in terms of code (language) preference and information ordering on the bilingual signs, Chinese has been placed above the English translation. The grammar of visual design is instructive about this ordering about which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) remind us that, in this arrangement, Chinese is prioritized as the ideal while English is the real. We wish to highlight that through legitimization, the placement of Chinese above English entails the reclaiming and ownership of space. Incontrovertibly, by allowing the Chinese to design and emplace signage in the manner they have done, the Confucius Institute exploited this freedom to their advantage and have thus elected to give relative advantage to Chinese over all other languages in the LL of UNZA even though there are few social actors who deploy it for meaning-making. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the signs with the Chinese language have become more symbolic rather than indexical in such instances as the oral narrations of place often accomplished by statements like ‘you will find a new building or a building with Chinese characters’ when giving directions (cf. Banda & Jimaima, 2015; Banda, Jimaima & Mokwena, 2018). Consider the narrative below:

China wants Chinese to be the new English, they (China) want to popularize their language and culture so that they can make it easier to penetrate the market.

As noted from the narrative above, we wish to add that since the Confucius Institute pushes the frontiers of Chinese in Zambia in general and at UNZA in particular, it necessitates the transportation of the global into the local. It is an undeniable fact that Chinese is slowly becoming what others would term a global language and its influence is being felt in many African countries; Zambia is no exception. Brookes and Shin (2006) argue that amid growing concerns about the People’s Republic of China’s burgeoning influence around the globe, Beijing has now set its sights on Africa. Consequently, even beyond the LL of UNZA, signs with the Chinese language are seen in the LL of Zambia, owing to China’s global economic agenda as well as the expertise it offers in infrastructural development. On the latter, a number of Chinese companies have set up base in Zambia and are involved in the financing and uptake of many government contracts such as road constructions, building of government infrastructure etc. Through this avenue, the Chinese language has found its way on the LL of the dispersed localities of Zambia.

Using data from Table 1, corroborated by Figures 4 and 5, we turn to the relative advantage of Japanese arguing that there is a sense in which the language is legitimized in the LL of UNZA. Table 1 demonstrates that Japanese and English

YOU
WIT
IN T

Enter the New World
with Japanese Language

Registration starts from NOW till 17th April 2017

UNZA Japanese Course

Class Schedule:
 Level 1 (Beginners) starts on 21st April 2017, 14:00
 Level 1: Every Friday 14:00 - 16:00 for 11 weeks
 Level 2 starts on 20th April 2017, 14:00
 Level 2: Every Thursday 14:00 - 16:00 for 11 weeks

Fees: K150 for students / K400 for others

Venue: School of Education, University of Zambia
 (Department of Literature and Language Seminar Room, 1st Floor)

Contact Information:
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 0976134774 / sande.ngalande@unza.zm
 - Hokkaido University Africa Office in Lusaka, Dr. Midori DAIMON
 0963019815 / unzajapanese@gmail.com

Check Facebook
"Japanese Class UNZA"

※Located at School of
Veterinary Medicine,
University of Zambia

※Provisional Registration: Send SMS [Name, e-mail address, course level which you want to register] to the above mobile numbers.

Figure 4. Japanese for Beginners

bilingual signage stands at 1.4% with English as the preferred code. Figure 4 is an advertisement for the course 'Japanese for beginners.' Promising better prospects for the job market and opportunities for postgraduate studies, individuals are invited to enrol for this short course with insistence on expanding one's horizon. In this way, learning the Japanese language becomes legitimate because of the numerous opportunities it comes with.

While Figure 4 is dominated by the English language, a closer look reveals that the signage expresses Japanese semiotically through the emplacement of Japanese Kanji on top while the rest of the sign is in English. When looked upon with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) insights, the placement of the Japanese characters in terms of information ordering and its concentration on the sign projects Japanese as a language of choice: the ideal. The English language used says, 'Enter the new world with Japanese language', positioning Japanese as a language of upward social mobility. Likewise, Figure 5 is equally dominated by English with



Figure 5. Japanese poster

only the name of the University in Japanese at the bottom of the signage. Just like Figure 4, Figure 5 likewise advertises study opportunities. Thus it can be concluded that the two signs are inviting social actors to Japanese as a legitimate language owing to what it has to offer. Consider the narrative:

Just like Chinese, the Japanese are also offering scholarships. I wouldn't mind enrolling for the short course because it will increase my chances of getting a scholarship.

It should be advanced that what started out as a short course dubbed 'Japanese for beginners' now has alongside it a full course made available for all UNZA students without attracting additional costs. This can be seen as a way of legitimizing the presence of the Japanese at UNZA. At another level, with reference to Chinese which now has a Bachelor of Arts in Chinese language and linguistics programme, there is a sense in which a symbolic power struggle exists between

China and Japan. In fact, departmental meetings which involve Japanese players are rarely held at the Confucius Institute as doing so would heighten the contestations. Thus, UNZA can be seen as the place of linguistic contestations and legitimization of languages/control and superiority. In other words, the presence of Japanese or Chinese should never be seen as neutral as there are hidden geopolitical ideologies in their presence on the LL of UNZA.

6.3 The paucity of monolingual signs of indigenous languages

We now turn to the paucity of indigenous languages or the lack of them in the LL of UNZA. Using data from Table 1, we are quick to note the absence of monolingual signage of indigenous languages. First, we use monolingual signs given our understanding that the lone placement of a language on a sign says something about its potency through cultural heritage and as a means for meaning-making. It would be expected that as a result of the language-in-education policy in which Zambian indigenous languages have been zoned, the result of which Nyanja has been promulgated for use as a regional language for Lusaka province, monolingual signage with Nyanja would be found on the LL of UNZA. However, this is not the case. The extract below shades some light on this reality.

Researcher: What do you make of the paucity of monolingual signs with indigenous languages in UNZA's LL?

Respondent 7: I think it's the attitude that we really have towards our indigenous languages because its starts from way back ... we just have this negative attitude.

As can be seen from the sentiments of a respondent above, the paucity of monolingual signage of indigenous languages is attributed to the (negative) attitudes which social actors have towards local languages. In this regard, two things are to be noted. On the one hand, the absence of Zambian indigenous languages on monolingual signs in the public spaces brings into question the imbalance in power relations. Undoubtedly, English, Chinese, and Japanese have more linguistic capital as they have powerful forces behind their circulation. On the other hand, it would imply that the absence of local languages is representative of their lack of relevance for adoption and subsequent display as preferred codes in communication and representation on signage in place. Consequently, the status of indigenous languages by their very absence on monolingual signs is indicative of their low standing, especially as they relate to English, Chinese, and Japanese. Consider the insights from a respondent below:

Our local languages were hardly seen on posters and billboards even before the arrival of Chinese in Zambia. It has always been English, showing that our local languages were never a priority over foreign languages.

It would appear that the absence of indigenous languages on monolingual signs is historical. Thus, the apparent absence of local languages on the LL of UNZA provides evidence in support of the fact that the prospects of local languages continue to diminish and therefore their chances and opportunities as linguistic capital for wider/global communication do not look so favourable. Further still, the absence of local languages can be predicated on the status which ought to be raised beyond the mere pronouncements by policy makers who speak of the promotion of indigenous Zambian Languages.

Researcher: What is your comment on the absence of monolingual signs of indigenous languages even when our country has a policy which promotes Zambia's indigenous languages?

Respondent 8: If the policy itself is being implemented, it is being implemented poorly. It has to be revisited for it to be effective.

The sentiments by respondents 7 and 8 bring into the spotlight the apparent disconnect there is between language policy and individual choices which inform code preference on emplaced signage. It is therefore insightful to point out that the legitimization of language transcends policy pronouncements; it implicates critical sociolinguistic, political, and economic considerations, which until now cannot be seen in Zambian indigenous languages despite their use as languages-in-education and as regional languages. To this extent, the tradition sociolinguistic view about language attitudes, diglossia, and socio-economic values attached to a given language form a complex semiotic matrix which informs social actors about which language should be used in a given LL. Therefore, predicating the prospects of indigenous languages as material for UNZA's LL construction solely on their potentialities as usable semiotic resources for oral-lingualscaping does little in transporting these languages onto the signage for display and representation. Nevertheless, in their earlier studies of the LL of UNZA, Simungala (2020) and Simungala and Jimaima (2021b) reveal a variety of indigenous languages as constituting the repertoires of students, the absence of monolingual signs of indigenous languages entails that the spoken language(s) are not automatically transported on signage for a number of reasons.

6.4 The recontextualization of indigenous inclined discourses

We now turn to the bits and pieces of local languages that are spotted on bilingual signs. We have chosen to refer to all the signs under this category as indigenous-inclined discourses for the simple reason that we cannot place them in any named language owing to the strategy of the authorial intents in which ethnically neutral names have been used (see Simungala & Jimaima, 2021a). Table 1 provides that signs in this category accounts for 4.8% of all the signs in the LL of UNZA. The signs in question refer to name plates of students' halls of residence as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Name plates of Students Halls of Residences

Figure 6 is for hostels in UNZA's LL. Hostels names such as *Kafue* and *Zambezi* are named after rivers in Zambia. From the interviews and lived experience, it comes to light that the naming of hostels using indigenous languages is an instance of recontextualization. This is because it was a conscious effort which draws on geographical features which all social actors would relate to. In this way, the naming of hostels after rivers, especially the Zambezi which is the longest river in Africa, is done to accomplish a semiotic capital: a statement about Zambia's fauna and flora. *Tiyende Pamodzi* (trans. Let's walk together) is another hostel name that has been recontextualized as it speaks to unity and nation-building. It is instructive to state that the song *Tiyende Pamodzi* formed part of the First Republican President, Kenneth Kaunda's mantra of unity. It was sung on many occasions where Kaunda was asked to grace. In this connection, Blackledge (2010) argues

that in the process of recontextualisation, social events are not merely repeated. Rather, they are transformed in their new setting, perhaps through the addition of new elements, or through the deletion of others.

Thus, in the recontextualization of Zambia's indigenous languages in the LL of UNZA, one sees the socio-political force encapsulated in a repurposed segments of a song as the discourses aimed at fostering unity which was specially crafted by the authorial intent. In this connection, in the naming a group of hostels *Tiyende Pamodzi*, there was an intention to recontextualise the message in the song into the LL of UNZA, thereby extending the ideological narrative of oneness, togetherness, and comradeship to the young university mind. This being the case, and in our critical analysis of languages on signs, it is instructive to point out that signage forming part of the names of hostels at UNZA arises from shared sociocultural knowledge and histories. No wonder, as we note, indigenous languages are never alone as they accompanied by the English words 'Block' and/or 'Hostel' to stress the historical embeddedness of the ideologies that inform the code selection and emplacement. Thus, seeing the hostel names through the lenses of material ethnography, the conflation of indigenous languages, English language, and the semiotic materialities forming part of the built environment create a whole semiotic gestalt which has been strategically constructed for meaning making, creating 'processes of enregisterment, the process whereby speech practices become consolidated as repertoires of socially recognized register of forms' (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009: 364), and therefore forming a semiotic system within the university.

While it can be argued that the English language is the linguistic capital for the display of indigenous languages in UNZA's LL, it is also clear that the said linguistic capital is shared between the two languages – each contributing to the creation of the whole. Thus, it can be concluded that even though the only time indigenous languages are spotted on UNZA's LL is when they are used together with English, taking the view that each material in the environment contributes to the construction and the consumption of the LL, the fragments of indigenous languages do not entirely depend on the English text for survival; they are inherently potent for the purpose for which they are deployed in the LL. This reinforces our earlier argument that legitimization is set in motion by forces that oftentimes transcend the economic consideration. The presence of the indigenous languages on the LL of UNZA is thanks to the socio-political ideology which envisaged peace and unity in naming UNZA hostels using local names. And again, thanks to recontextualization, we can see indigenous languages on the LL of UNZA.

7. Summary and conclusions

This article has demonstrated the uneven distribution of languages in the LL of UNZA as the imbalance of powers. Since human agency is at the core of LL, attention in this LL research was drawn not only to the signs, but to the social actors who initiate, create, emplace, and read the signs. Thus, the statistics of the distribution of languages in UNZA's LL speaks volumes about the significant investment attached to languages seen in the public space. For the very dominance of English on monolingual signs and the absence of indigenous languages on monolingual signs raises questions regarding the relevance of the former. In this regard, while the study illustrates Shohamy's (2006) argument that this apparent absence shows the insignificance and irrelevance of certain languages, it also reminds us about the sociolinguistic considerations which inform the nature of the LL. The notion of language attitude is not entirely confined to the spoken language only; it permeates the sociolinguistic considerations informing semiotic choices for the construction and consumption of the LL. This view is supported by Marten et al. (2012) who argue that visibility may be important for minority languages (and, we would add, major indigenous languages) such that being heard and represented is a sign of being recognized. From the forgoing, a conclusion can then be drawn that the presence and indeed the visibility of languages partly informs us about the significance attached to a language and somewhat entails a language is considerably powerful, but also that relative power enjoyed by a given language stems from the benefits associated with that language. The observable built environment at UNZA confirms that LL oftentimes is a mere reflection of the material (economic) affordances of certain languages rather than a signification of the presence of the community of practice.

Further, the dominance of the English language has been heightened by a policy which has legitimized it as the national official language. We are however mindful, as reminded by Blommaert (2010), that the state is not the only player in status planning as other stakeholders such as families and in this case individual social actors play a greater role. This is why, when we look upon signage in UNZA's LL, we are quick to highlight what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) call 'the sign maker's interest'. Sign producers have a choice, a preference and personal interest when they select language(s) to be present on a signage. In the case of UNZA, the three notable language players (English, Chinese, and Japanese) have shown that visibilization is largely a product of capital investment. Despite China having been the last entrant onto the LL of UNZA, it has substantially carved for itself a considerable size of the UNZA LL space, thanks to its built environment, investment into Chinese teaching programme development, and course offerings at Bachelor's level. Japanese is barely surviving with a beginner's language course in place,

while the rest of the UNZA programmes are taught in English. The point being made here is that these three languages have a legitimate claim to the UNZA environs due to their historical and capital investment while the indigenous languages, which are only used by individual local players have no claim to the physical space. Therefore, apart from the attitudinal issues raised above, the local indigenous languages have no built environment on which to emplace themselves. It would also seem that social actors are satisfied with mere oral-lingualscaping.

The imbalance of languages as distributed in this LL is one that is enacted, contested, and upheld by the social actors themselves. And this demonstrates how the economic consideration of the players implicate the ubiquitous spread of the signage in the LL. On account of this consideration, despite the policy direction which has promulgated Nyanja for use in Lusaka where UNZA is located, the socio-economic forces outweigh any policy direction in the construction and eventual uptake of the LL. It would seem the mere fact that Nyanja is a regional lingua franca for Lusaka does not give it enough linguistic capital to upscale it into the LL of UNZA. From this, the study partly contests Cenoz and Gorter's (2006) view on official language policy of minority languages as indigenous languages in this LL have not gained any currency from language policy to the extent that they can appear on signage. While Banda and Jimaima (2017) locate multiple indigenous languages some of which are 'minority' and unofficial languages across the LLs of Zambia, the same is not the case in this LL. However, thanks to recontextualization, the indigenous languages have been used together with English in the naming of hostels, forming a semiotic gestalt. Seen from this perspective, recontextualisation has the capacity to enact, reinforce, and uphold solidarity for Zambian indigenous languages in the LL of UNZA. Thus, our understanding of the LL of UNZA fits the recognition that multilingualism is always implicated by "power and authority, friction and freedom of mobility, turbulence and the violence of marginalization, and to the varieties of semiotic modes of representation and practice in which these dynamics become manifest" (Stroud, 2014: 2).

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Umusapu

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