

The Emergence of a Globalized City Through Multilingual Local Practice: A Situated Reading of Signs in Jeddah

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Abstract—The current research aims to add to the ethnographic studies by providing an overview to the linguistic landscape of the city of Jeddah which is considered as one of the most important historical and cultural cities in Saudi Arabia. It mainly attempts to analyse texts shown on public and private signs found in government buildings, streets, districts' names, malls and commercial shops. The study makes use of a sample of 300 signs collected randomly from different parts of Jeddah, interviews and observations. Following Bourdieu's (1991) design approach to describe an intellectual character to space with a new ideological load, the study intends to examine the influences of certain ethnographic factors on the linguistic landscape; namely the geographical distribution, power relation, globalization and the presence of English, modernity and prestige. To investigate information and symbolic functions, linguistic landscape analysis was carried out to the data collected. Results obtained from the study include that Jeddah's linguistic landscape has specific characteristics influenced by the aforementioned ethnographic factors, occurrence of alignment between official language policy and language use and practice, slight variation in the linguistic landscape between the three parts of the city is noticed and that English language is gaining more prominent status compared to Arabic language.

Index Terms—Jeddah, linguistic landscape (LL), Saudi Arabia, private signs, public signs

I. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape (LL), as defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997) as the “visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (p. 23), has been explored all over the world including cities like Jerusalem (Ben Rafael et al., 2006), Bangkok (Huebner, 2006), and Tokyo (Backhaus, 2007). However, little studies have been done about cities in Saudi Arabia (Abdelhay et al, 2016). In fact, the lack of sources and the scarcity of archives and textual resources on LL in Saudi Arabia in general and in Jeddah city in particular have encouraged the researcher to conduct this research. The study aims to answer the following questions: 1) What languages form the linguistic landscape (LL) of Jeddah city? And 2) What roles do these ethnographic factors: geographical distribution, power relation, globalization and the presence of English, modernity and prestige play on the LL of Jeddah city?

By answering the above questions, this work reaches two goals: determining which language is more frequently used in the public and private signs of Jeddah city, and measuring the influence of certain ethnographic factors on the linguistic landscape of Jeddah. It is hoped that the study will be an important barometer of change not only in this specific linguistic landscape, but also in the wider society of Saudi Arabia.

As a methodological framework, the researcher uses interdisciplinary perspective to examine the earlier indicators of sociolinguistic value in public and private signs in Jeddah city, as well as the factors affect its linguistic landscape. Relying on visual records, languages written on public and private signs in Jeddah city are explored. These records may provide a fascinating insight into street culture in Jeddah city not captured by older textual records. The signs may have significant elements of the city's linguistic landscape. By viewing them, the magnificence of Jeddah's visual culture can be perceived and appreciated because they act as valuable markers for various buildings, crafts and trades throughout the city. Meanwhile, through analysing text writings on the public and private signs, this work is confined to investigating how the above-mentioned ethnographic factors can affect the linguistic landscape of Jeddah city.

The main sections of the paper are organised as follows: The first section presents the introductory remarks and the theoretical framework. The second section interprets the general concept of LL from a spatiotemporal perspective, while the third section provides data analysis and discussions. Finally, the paper concludes (in section 4) with some empirical observations and a brief conclusion.

II. THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The concept of the linguistic landscape (LL) was originally formulated by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in their work on social psychology to refer to languages involved in public and private signs. To put it their words, LL is “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public

signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration” (p. 25). In subsequent pioneering studies, languages on signs were generally measured through quantitative or statistical methods. Since then, LL research has expanded significantly and spanned diverse intellectual interests (Barni & Bagna, 2015; Shohamy, 2015). Studies on LL focus on identification of informative and symbolic functions of linguistic signs. LL is used to analyse and describe a country's linguistic situation, as can be seen in the study carried in Malta by Sciriha and Vassalo (2001). LL has been applied to specific countries and large areas with many languages such as the study carried in the Baltic area by Kreslins (2003). Interestingly, the concept of language can be expanded beyond its original formulation by including all semiotic communication in public areas such as streets or shop signs (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Iedema, 2003). However, it may be narrowed to refer to language internal variation within a single language. The present work investigates public and private signs in a particular place that is the city of Jeddah.

Pavlenko and Mullen (2015) maintain the process of understanding a sign is no longer perceived as a synchronous, technological or political skill. Instead, it is seen as inherent to intertextual and historical processes. Interpreting LL or reading public or private signs is a complex process that involves many ethnographic factors like ideologies, power relations, geographical distribution, globalization, modernity and prestige. Silverstein and Urban (1996) argue that interpreting signs uncovers embedded meanings. Scollon and Scollon (2003) find that words in signs have cultural meanings when they are appropriately "placed" in their spatiotemporal contexts and interpreted by historically skilled individuals. The same authors reckon that a textual analysis of signs alone does not provide adequate information about the local context of its interpretation. Only historical and ethnographic research can provide this information to avoid reenacting the landscape on the background of pre-existing conceptualizations. However, Gorter and Cenoz (2015) maintain that the analysis of individual signs does not adequately capture the cultural politics as reappropriation and translanguaging processes are critical.

III. THE RESEARCH SETTING

The research setting of this paper is the city of Jeddah which is one of the most important cities in Saudi Arabia. It is known in Arabic as Jeddah /'dʒedə/; Arabic: جدة *Jiddah*, but pronounced as ['dʒɪd.da]. It is situated on the middle of the west coast of the Red Sea (see Figure 1). According to recorded history, Jeddah was established as a seaport in AD 646 during the Islamic Caliph reign (Abu-Ghazze, 1998; Yafi, 2013). It is an entry point for Makkah, the holiest place for Muslims. It has become a major urban centre in the Middle East and a growing regional economic hub. The city has experienced unprecedented growth in recent decades, from 50,000 people in the 1940s to nearly four million today (as of 2017). As the commercial capital of Saudi Arabia, Jeddah has an important location. The initiative focuses on developing capital investment in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East in the field of scientific and engineering leadership. With reference to the Innovation Cities Index, Jeddah ranked fourth among innovation-centric cities in the Africa - Mideast region in 2009. The city's motto (جدة غير) “*Jeddah Ghair*” “Jeddah is different,” which can be translated as “Jeddah has a unique character,” has been adopted by locals as well as tourists.

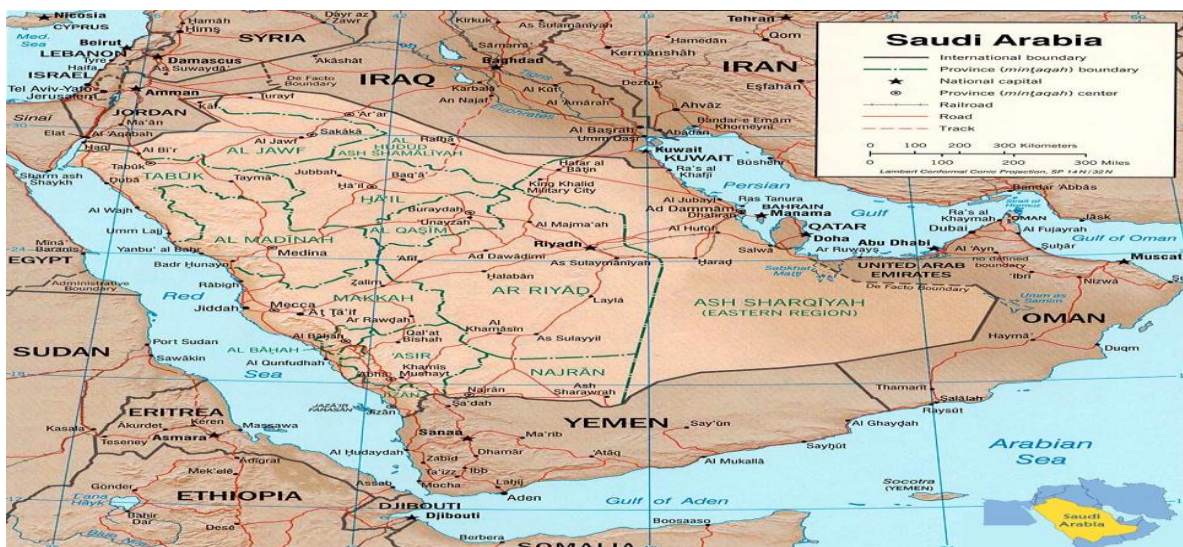


Figure 1. The Geographical Location of Jeddah (Source: <http://www.asia-atlas.com/saudi-arabia.htm>)

Jeddah has witnessed a number of fluctuations and inherent dynamic conditions. The spatial relations in the city were reorganized directly after Saudi Arabia was united in 1932. In response to the dramatic growth in the economy of the country (Bradley, 2005), high-rise buildings, streets, and shopping centres were constructed alongside the original forms creating a monolithic landscape of high-rises and low-rises. As a result of the "localization" of these conditions in the style of commercial centres (*suqs*), new semiotic forms are surfacing besides the "traditional" styles.

From the 1970s onward, the economic boom in Saudi Arabia has led to the migration from the city centre and the exodus of families and residents to the north to take advantage of a new lifestyle. Therefore, Jeddah city has stretched out for miles on the Red Sea coastline. Now, the oldest part of Jeddah, which has emerged in contrast to the urbanized parts outside this part of the city is known as “*Al-Mantiqa at-Tarekheyya*”. This historical dynamism is still visible in the cityscape where the labels of the social space are embedded. The spatial and economic structure of Jeddah city is the result of a binary thinking style. Rather than completely destroying the old structures, the new changes and transformations have built on them, rearticulated them, or even coexisted with them simultaneously, creating a complex image with multiple perspectives and voices seeking to define Jeddah's semiotic landscape (See Abdelhay et al., 2016).

There is no chaos in Jeddah's semiotic and material landscape, rather it is hierarchically organized in a manner that indicates successive and overlapping discourse regimes have restructured the space. Thus, the city has been subject to a variety of historical influences and incursions from being a seaport to becoming the icon city of ideas and modernity.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Conducting linguistic landscape research does not fall into any standard methodology. In the current research, a mixed method approach was used. The quantitative analysis was used to examine the collected samples, while qualitative analysis was basically used to investigate the interviews and observations. Furthermore, a mobile camera and a voice recorder were used to take photos and conduct interviews. To elicit more information, a consultation of textual archives about the city and interviews with local officials and citizens were made.

Following the studies of Huebner (2006) and Bachaus (2007) in Bangkok and Tokyo respectively, the data of this study was gathered from a particular territory in Saudi Arabia, namely Jeddah. 300 signs were collected randomly as a sample from three areas in the city. These signs represented official and non-official signs in government buildings, district names, street signs, commercial signs, hoardings and trade names. Then, the collected data was categorized according to certain features: language features (such as languages used or scripts employed), semiotic features (such as code preference and font sizes) as well as other features (being public or private signs). Photographs of signs were taken as evidence. After that, signs were interpreted by name, characteristic and function. It is worth mentioning that interviews were held with officials and private owners for further clarifications. The data was collected between 2018/2019.

V. THE INFLUENCE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON JEDDAH'S LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

The current research proceeds with the assumption that the linguistic landscape of Jeddah city is influenced by certain ethnographic factors, namely; the geographical distribution, power relations, globalization and the presence of English, modernity and prestige. To confirm this assumption, the city is divided into three distinct parts: the old part in the south, the central part and the new urbanized part in the north. The geographical distribution of Jeddah city is explored in subsection (A). Subsection (B) focuses on the effect of authority and public on the linguistic landscape including a description on the effect of power relation on official and nonofficial signs. Subsection (C) is devoted to measure the influence of globalization and the role of English on the linguistic landscapes of Jeddah city. Finally, in subsection (D) the role of modernity and prestige on the linguistic landscape of Jeddah city is shown.

A. The Geographical Distribution

The researcher has divided the city into three distinct parts: the old part in the south, the central part in the centre and the new urbanized part in the north (See Figure 2). So, these three geographical localities sample the setting in this work. It is presumed by the researcher that a differentiation in the linguistic landscape of these three parts exists. A survey for the public and private signs in these three areas is done. Then, a comparison is made to clarify the reflection of linguistic landscape on languages used on signs.

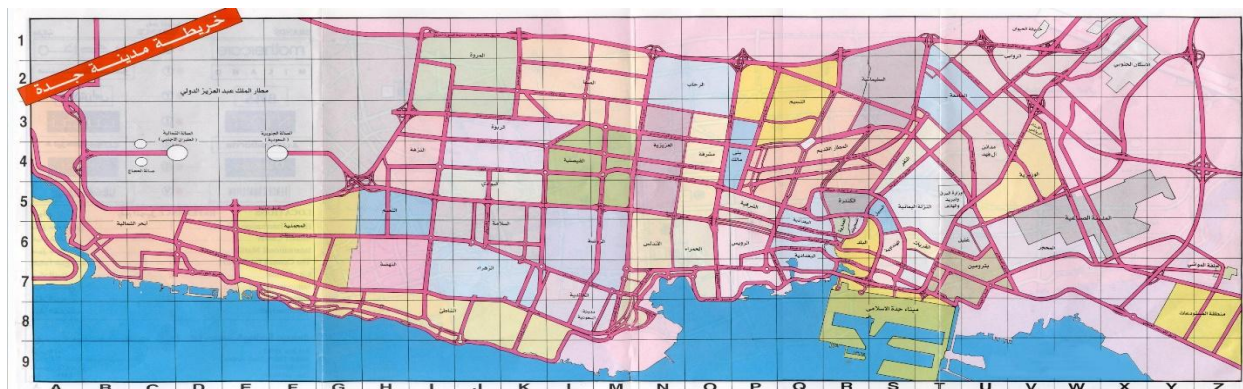


Figure 2. The Stretch of Jeddah City Along the Red Sea Coast (Source: <https://www.mosoah.com/references/maps/jeddah-neighborhood-map-pdf/>)

A number of 300 signs from the three areas of Jeddah city are randomly collected as a sample. The appeared languages in the signs are basically Arabic and English. Few Asian and African languages are used. Table 1 below, displays the language distribution on signs in the three parts of the city.

TABLE 1
LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION ON SIGNS IN THE SURVEY AREAS: SOUTHERN, CENTRAL AND NORTHERN PARTS OF JEDDAH CITY

Part of the city	Arabic	Percentage	English	Percentage	Other Languages (Asian and African)	Percentage
Southern	152	50.7 %	145	48.3%	3	1.0%
Central	148	49.3%	137	45.7%	15	5.0%
North	146	48.7%	153	51.0%	1	0.3%

The results on the above table show no significant differences found in the use of Arabic language and English language in the three parts of the city. The two languages (Arabic and English) are jointly visible on most official and nonofficial signs. Both languages are highly represented in sign names. It is noticed, however, that Arabic is used a bit more than English in the southern and central part while English exceeds Arabic in the northern part. Clearly, both Arabic and English dominate the scene of the linguistic landscape of Jeddah city and appear in all combination patterns in governmental sign boards and private businesses and advertisements. Table 2 below, on the other hand, indicates that most signs in the three parts of the city are either monolingual (Arabic or English) or bilingual (Arabic and English), while multilingual signs are infrequently used. The same table compares percentages of monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs in the three parts of the city.

TABLE 2
MONOLINGUAL, BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL SIGNS IN THE SURVEY AREAS

Part of the city	Monolingual Signs	Percentage	Bilingual Signs	Percentage	Multilingual Signs	Percentage
Southern	165	58.3%	120	40.0%	15	5.0%
Central	151	50.3%	130	43.3%	19	6.3%
Northern	142	47.3%	154	51.3%	4	1.3%

It is observed from the results in the table above that the majority of signs in the three parts of the city are monolingual (Arabic script) 58.3% for the southern part, 50.3% for the central part and 47.3% for the northern part. In some signs, Arabic or English are used in isolation or transliterated as monolingual. The bilingual signs constitute 40.0% for the southern part, 43.3% for the central part while the northern part of the city has the most bilingual signs, 51.3%. Multilingual signs rarely appear in the linguistic landscape of Jeddah city. They constitute a small portion 5.0% for the southern part, 6.3% for the central part and 1.3% for the northern part. In some bilingual signs, both English and Arabic are dominant. (See photo 1, 2 and 3).



Photo 1. A Monolingual Sign (Arabic)



Photo 2. A Multilingual Sign of Chinese Restaurant (Chinese, English and Arabic)

Despite the relatively big number of labourers from different Asian and African countries living in Jeddah city especially in the central part, their Asian and African languages hardly ever make a presence on signs. Only very few signs written in Asian and African languages (mostly Amhara and Tiqri) are seen in shops (See photo 3).



Photo 3. A Multilingual Sign of Indian Restaurant

The results of the current research also indicate the high frequency of using English language in both monolingual and bilingual signs especially in the northern part of the city which entails the significant impact of this language on the linguistic landscapes, notably on private signs. Furthermore, the presence of the English language is likely to increase in street signs. In fact, the wide use of English language on the different kinds of signs may threaten the presence of the national language; namely Arabic on the same signs. Seemingly, the northern part of the city is more in tune with Western culture and modernization processes. The Western culture is reflected through the establishment of many branches of international companies, which is a factor among others that greatly contributed to change the scene and the move from Arabic into English in the linguistic landscape. (See photos 4, 5, 6 and 7).



Photo 4. A Monolingual Sign (English)



Photo 5. A Bilingual Sign in English Its Arabic Transliteration



Photo 6. A Monolingual Sign in Arabic Transliterated English Words



Photo 7. An Arabic Sign and Its English Translation

B. Power Relation

In the linguistic landscape, power relation can be reflected in different shapes. To measure the impact of power relation on the linguistic landscapes of Jeddah city, a distinction between official (top-down) and nonofficial (bottom-up) signs is made. By comparing public and private signs, the variations between official language policy and the patterns of language use in private signs are foregrounded and described. Official signs are issued by government. Such signs include street signs and signs on governmental buildings. These signs are meant to provide information service. Nonofficial signs, on the other hand, are signs created by non-governmental institutions (e.g., shops). Owners of private signs regard them as tools to promote their stores and attract customers (commercial advertising).

Clearly country's official language policy dictates the language choice of the government signs (Basic Law of Governance, No. A/90, 01-03-992). Thus, Arabic as the official national language is expected to be the most commonly used language on the public signs. However, English is widely used as a global language which confirms the assumption that signs are always designed to convey existing power relations. In consistency with Laundry and Bourhis (1997), the results obtained in this research entail that language profile of official signs is quite similar to the nonofficial signs in Jeddah's linguistic landscapes. Very few discrepancies are noticed.

Interestingly, it is noticed that most governmental buildings, road signs and institutions such as hospitals, medical centres and schools adopt the government's policy in writing signs. However, there is preference for the Arabic script to be written on the top and centre of the page whereas English is used in the bottom for translation.



Photo 8. Bilingual District and Street Signs

Power relation is also reflected in the colour choice of public signs. As a marker of symbolism and in order to enhance nationalism among citizens, it is noticed that most official signs especially traffic signs, names of districts and names of streets are in green and their writings are in white, the colours of the Saudi flag (See photo 9), which directly or literally reflect the aesthetic characters of the nation.



Photo 9. A Bilingual Street Official Sign

In another vein, the results in the current research show some discrepancies with public and non-official signs. Even though the Saudi authorities impose the use of Arabic language on shop signs and many other forms and put strict penalties and fines when regulations are violated (Ministry of Commerce, 2020, article 3), commercial companies and shop owners (bottom-up actors) sometimes misuse the rules and use English instead. In recent years, the adoption of 2030 vision which encourages the diversification of the economics as well as recreation and tourism contributed to the change of the linguistic landscape of the private signs. In fact, public spaces opt for bilingualism. In order to foreground Jeddah as a commercial cosmopolitan city, for example, many non-official retail businesses like shops home furnishings, food, clothing, health products, appliances, auto supply, electronics, pharmacies, as well as financial institutions, private schools and medical clinics tend to use bilingual signs (Arabic and English). Private bilingual signs also include signs of hotels, suits, telephone companies, service industries such as health clinics, travel agencies, banks, money exchangers ... etc. In all these signs both Arabic and English are placed together.

Interestingly, the presence of English overtakes that of Arabic on signs in restaurants, beauty and barber shops, souvenir shops, jewellery, clothes and fashion shops which are located in malls and commercial centres. There, it is noticed that the vast majority of signs are monolingual (English), especially in shops where international products are sold. The text on the sign is written either in English (monolingual) or in Arabic words which are transliterated into English (See photo 10). The purpose of such signs, as claimed by interviewees in this work, is basically to identify with international products. However, private signs in service enterprises such as auto repair shops, barber shops, laundries, butcher shops, tailors, and real estate offices which offer services to locals and residents are monolingual signs (mostly Arabic).



Photo 10. A Monolingual Sign in Arabic Transliterated an Arabic Word

Furthermore, the results indicate that the use of English is quite noticeable in shop signs particularly in the northern part of the city. It is very common to see the shop's name written either monolingual in (English) or bilingual in a combination of English and Arabic. The influx of English script onto nonofficial signs is not imposed from above or from the government, rather it is a choice of private actors in the linguistic landscape. As a matter of fact, in all official bilingual signs, Arabic script is above English script or parallel to it and in most cases the scripts do not have the same appearance and font size where the presence of the mother language is stronger.

Results also show no significant difference is observed in terms of appearance of the two languages and their font size of the texts used on non-official signs. In addition, no difference is observed in code preference between top-down and bottom-up in most of these signs. The overwhelming preferred code in the top-down signs and bottom-up signs is Arabic (See photo 11). However, in many bottom-up signs, code preference varies geographically (See photo 12). For example, in bilingual signs, where there is a hybrid language, results indicate that in the southern and the central parts of the city, the graphically larger language is Arabic, whereas in the northern part of the city, English appears to be in the same size as Arabic or a bit larger (See photo 13).



Photo 11. An A Bilingual Sign From the Southern Part of the City



Photo 12. A Bilingual Sign From the Central Part of the City



Photo 13. A Bilingual Sign From the Northern Part of the City

C. Globalization and the Role of English on Saudi Linguistic Landscape

Results of the collected data display significant evolutions occurred in an unprecedentedly quick manner in the Saudi society. These societal changes are owed to many factors one of which is globalization. Both globalization and technological advancements enhance the role of English in Saudi Arabia, and present it in every realm of daily life. English is considered as a marker of sophistication and globalization (Inya, 2019). Currently, English in Saudi Arabia is not the same as two or three decades ago. Now, English language is playing an increasingly substantial role in Saudi society. Saudis have gained positive attitudes towards English language and the Anglo-American culture in general. So, the role of English is shifting, with the widespread growth in number of domains in which the language is used, and its status is changing as the exposure is gradually increasing. Internationalization is connected with the appearance of English (Bryyel-Olmeda & Garau, 2009), and its speed in public life expresses a passion for Western culture, especially among upper classes (A.H. Al-Athwary, 2017). In the same respect, Razaite (2017) claims that the use of a certain language in public spaces is one way to offer tourism as a tendency in economic commodities. The subjects informing this research note that shop owners seek to give their businesses attractive names in English even if they are meaningless aiming to attract more customers, especially foreigners coming to do Hajj or Umra.

English, as a global language, is also regarded as the language of science, technology and business which explains its high status in the largest Saudi companies. The biggest oil company (ARAMCO), Sisco and the largest telephone companies, for example, adopt English as a medium in all their work. Correspondences, information on websites and services are all in English instead of Arabic (Almahmoud et al., 2020). In addition, many professions require an English test as part of the application process, and almost all employers require their job applicants to speak English proficiently. Therefore, many employers offer English courses to their employees in order for them to meet their needs. Moreover, English is necessary for many professions in the service sector. It is vital that waiters, taxi drivers, hotel receptionists, travel agents and shop assistants be able to communicate with foreigners in English. Within educational settings, the Saudi Arabia's educational system imposes English as the first foreign language to be learnt. It is the only compulsory subject in the primary, intermediate and secondary public schools. In addition, the number of international schools (British/American curriculum) is increasing in Saudi Arabia where English is used as a medium of instruction from kindergarten. So, students have more exposure to this language. At the tertiary level, English is gaining more prominence and is becoming a compulsory subject in most specializations.

D. Modernity and Prestige

The results of this paper are in consistency with those in Haarmann's (1986) study in terms of perception of English as a sign of modernity and prestige. This can stimulate the feelings of customers and creates a pleasant mode of global civilization. Shop owners show in the interviews that English is adopted as a 'lingua franca', and most of them use English words on signs as a way to reflect their 'modernity'. Indeed, English language is used for prestige purposes, rather than for the real need since most of the concepts can simply be translated into Arabic. This leads to the assumption that the abundance of the English language on signs especially in the northern part of the city indicates an orientation towards Western culture. Through its role in actualizing underlying sociolinguistic realities through shop signs, street names, and public signage, English plays a key role in the "linguistic landscape" of this part of the city. It is most common to hear English words and expressions in fashion and communicative shops, as well as restaurants. In the northern part of Jeddah, English is widely associated with values such as style, modernity and fashion. It is often regarded as a very trendy language, used by most customers who wish to look fashionable (Goddard, 1998). MacGregor (2003) points out, English is associated with all positive images in society. There seems to be an increasing sense of identity among Saudis with the English language as a result of this increased familiarity with it. Clearly, English plays a significant part in the Saudi's daily life in several different ways, including these sign boards.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research in the present work is in Jeddah where its linguistic landscape is investigated. To this end, the mixed-method approach is adopted. The overall results have shown no significance differences in types of languages used in public and private signs. Findings from the collected data lead to the following conclusions:

1. The linguistic landscape of Jeddah city is changing due to the quick societal changes. A number of shifts are taking place or should be anticipated. These changes are due to the confluence of the following factors: the geographical distribution, power relation, globalization and the presence of English, modernity and prestige.
2. The study suggests a kind of alignment between official language policy and language use and practice. In other words, the top-down and bottom up lie on relatively straight path concerning languages used in signs and code preference.
3. English is gaining a more prominent status and is becoming very noticeable on streets. However, the status of Arabic as a dominant language is decreasing.
4. The public signs reflect the greatest role played by the authority to preserve the national language policy of the country and to respect English as a globalized language at the same time. However, more restrictions on the content of private signs have to be imposed.
5. Slight variation in the linguistic landscape between the three parts of the city is noticed. In order to unify the linguistic landscape and create a unique image of the city, the authority has to create ways to merge these three parts of the city. In this way, the linguistic landscape becomes more coherent and consistent.

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