Language Inequalities in the Algerian Public Space: A Semiotic Landscape Analysis

Authors : Sarah Smail

Abstract : Algeria has been subject to countless conquests and invasions that resulted in having a diverse linguistic repertoire. The sociolinguistic situation of the country made linguistic landscape analysis pertinent. This in fact, has led to the growth of diverse linguistic landscape studies that mainly focused on identifying the sociolinguistic situation of the country through shop names analysis. The present research adds to the existing literature by offering another perspective to the analysis of signs by combining the physical and digital semiotic landscape. The powerful oil, gas and agri-food industries in Algeria make it interesting to focus on the commodification of natural resources for the sake of identifying the language and semiotic resources deployed in the Algerian public scene in addition to the identification of the visibility of linguistic inequalities and minorities in the business domain. The study discusses the semiotic landscape of three trade cities: Bejaia, Setif and Hassi-Messaoud. In addition to interviews conducted with business owners and graphic designers and questionnaires with business employees. Withal, the study relies on Gorter's multilingual inequalities in public space (MIPS) model (2021) and Irvine and Gal's language ideology and linguistic differentiation (2000). The preliminary results demonstrate the sociolinguistic injustice existing in the business domain, e.g., the exclusion of the official languages, the dominance of foreign languages, and the excessive use of the roman script.

Keywords : semiotic landscaping, digital scapes, language commodification, linguistic inequalities, business signage

Conference Title : ICASSL 2023 : International Conference on Applications of Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : April 13-14, 2023