

# 6 English in Norwegian and Ethiopian Linguistic Landscapes

## Returning to Symbolic Language Use

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### Introduction

The question of the role of English has been considered within Linguistic Landscape scholarship for as long as researchers have been using the term to describe or categorise their work. Remarking on the visibility of English in the public space did not, of course, start with the earliest LL publications. In the same year that Landry and Bourhis published their landmark paper, Ross (1997, 31) – in a paper almost as totemic for his field of applied linguistics as the milestone article by Landry and Bourhis is for LL studies – discusses a stroll around the suburb in Milan where he lived, where “shops, bars, restaurants, and more besides flaunt English names.” Twenty years later, Bolton (2012, 31) refers to this flaunting as “the intrusion and use of English in the public spaces of the world’s cities.” A cursory glance at Troyer’s excellent resource, the Linguistic Landscape Bibliography on Zotero, reveals 88 journal articles, nine book chapters, six dissertations and theses, and two monographs which feature “English” in the title, attesting to the prominence given to this line of enquiry in Linguistic Landscape research.

We seek in this chapter to understand what we mean when we refer to the symbolic use of English in Norway and Ethiopia. At first glance, comparing sites as disparate as Oslo and Addis Ababa might seem problematic, given their divergent histories, lived experiences, and trajectories, but the comparison is – we contend – productive and fruitful, not least because of the transformations underway in both cities. The transitions in Oslo and Addis Ababa are very different, not least in their motivations, public articulations, and visible consequences. However, at their heart social, economic, and cultural transformations are felt (to – we acknowledge – differing extents and in contrasting ways) in both cities where the visibility and use of English is accelerating, and the functions performed by what we understand as English are increasingly complicated. In this chapter, where we interrogate the blurring of the boundaries between the functions of languages as they appear in public spaces, we are acutely aware of the socio-economic underpinning of positionality, and therefore the potential for the function(s) of signs in

English to be construed in conflicting ways by different categories of people and groups. It is widely held in Ethiopia, for example, that the use of English is intertwined with the country's so-called "modernisation," whilst in Norway English echoes successful economic growth. In tribute to the work that Elizabeth Lanza has done in invigorating research connectivity between Norway and Ethiopia, we attend to the relationship between the symbolic and communicative values identified with English in the Linguistic Landscapes of Oslo and Addis Ababa.

Within Linguistic Landscape research, Landry and Bourhis (1997) identified two complementary functions for languages as they appear in the public space: informational and symbolic. They contend that the informational function ranges from demarcating the territory of specific ethnolinguistic groups (or, more likely, some of the groups who inhabit a particular space and enjoy some level of power) through to indicating the languages in which services can be accessed or are expected to be accessed. This is contrasted with the symbolic function, which is "affectively charged" (1997, 27) and symbolises the strength of respective ethnolinguistic communities. These functions have been internalised in much Linguistic Landscape research to the extent that they are largely unproblematised; indeed, in much scholarship within the humanities and social sciences, symbolism (when not referring, for example, to Russian or French schools of symbolism in art or poetry) is seen as uncontroversial and does vital work as shorthand for meaning, exemplification, and signification. Nevertheless, there are some important contributions to the discussion regarding symbolic language use. Before the coalescing of scholars around the concept of Linguistic Landscape, Kelly-Holmes (2000, 71) identified what she refers to as a "competence hierarchy," within which the value of a named, bound language is independent of its utility or its communicative function, but – through fetishisation – has become symbolic. By way of example, Kelly-Holmes (2000, 72) cites SEAT-brand cars, whose erstwhile advertising slogan, "German engineering, Spanish design," stresses the technical competences of Germans in contradistinction to Spaniards' artistic and aesthetic insights. Kelly-Holmes's point serves as an important foundation stone for understanding symbolic language use in the public space, and one upon which Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) build. They scale up from the symbolic and/or communicative function of individual signs to argue that the Linguistic Landscape *in toto* can be seen as the symbolic construction of the public space. Drawing on Lefebvre (1991) and Spolsky and Cooper (1991), they contend that the Linguistic Landscape "carries crucial sociosymbolic importance as it actually identifies – and thus serves as – the emblem of societies, communities, and regions" (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, 8). When referring to named languages, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006, 26) conclude that the emplacement of, for example, English in the public space does not imply any knowledge of the language; we nuance this to note that recognition of the language *as* English is an essential part of its symbolic role.

When looking to apply an understanding of the symbolic use of English in the Linguistic Landscape, we recall Leeman and Modan (2009, 351), who remind us that, crucially, “the extent to which the perlocutionary force of [the] signs is symbolic depends in part on the viewer,” calling upon us to pay attention to the potential range of interpretations of language use in the public space. Leeman and Modan (2009, 350) also note that the symbolic and informational functions are not mutually exclusive; for example, they note that Chinese is sometimes used in establishments to provide information (such as food on menus) but at the same time to signal authenticity (in this case of the cuisine served) to Chinese customers. The use of English, therefore, can be both symbolic and informational at the same time to the same individual or group. In short, function lies in the eye of the beholder. The functional load may well shift between languages within the public space, a conclusion which returns us to the now well-established principle in Linguistic Landscape research that we must attend to the extent to which individuals *read* the range of languages on display. Analysing the Linguistic Landscape of Thai restaurants in Hamburg, Androutsopoulos and Chowchong (2021) neatly distil the explorations of use of language by noting (in their case, in Germany) that English enjoys high symbolic value, and – crucially – “its choice does not presuppose an international audience.” In other words, the use of English can, unlike in Ben-Rafael et al.’s (2006) case, address an audience who cannot produce (in speech or writing) the language. This is not using the language in order to communicate with a group whose repertoire includes English, but more precisely to reach individuals who recognise English as English. Androutsopoulos and Chowchong (2021) go on to note how the use of a given named language indexes origin and, by extension, authenticates claims made by the sign-owner, despite the fact that its “practical, communicative value ... is quite low.” In this chapter, we set out to explore the correlation between symbolic and communicative values.

When we began this chapter, it emerged that, as authors, we had broadly similar interpretations of the “symbolic status” of English, which was a term to which we frequently returned. For both Johannessen and Mendisu, “symbolic” equates to a conscious decision to obtain a certain effect, rather than a need to reach a certain audience or a lack of confidence in writing in Norwegian. This echoes Spolsky and Cooper’s (1991, 81–84) Sign Rule 3, which is predicated on the symbolic value condition, but not necessarily the preference “to write signs in your own language or in a language with which you wish to be identified.” Subtly nuancing this, Johannessen contends that the motivation is to shape and influence a response. In considering this symbolic role for English, we look to Giddens’s conceptualisation of disembedding, or the “‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (1991, 21). Giddens explicitly challenges the inclusion of language as a disembedding mechanism on the grounds that language, along with power, are

“intrinsic features of social action on a very general level, not specific social forms” (1991, 23). However, in this chapter, we discuss the potential for language (as recognisable, named languages, such as English, Norwegian, Amharic, etc.) to act as “symbolic tokens” (Giddens 1991, 22), which cross a wide spectrum of boundaries (literal, imagined, and metaphorical) and whose power and value is activated for a range of different purposes above and beyond the content message.

As such, we look in this chapter at the situated practices of the use of English in two very different settings. To do this, and in recognition of Lanza’s considerable body of work in Norwegian and Ethiopian settings, we first provide some contexts to scaffold the discussion of the symbolic use of English in Oslo and Addis Ababa.

### **Contexts: Norway and Ethiopia**

Norway has generally been considered a monolingual country where everybody uses Norwegian, a North Germanic language. This is actually a misconception, as there have always been other groups living in Norway. The indigenous Sámi population speak Sámi languages (from the Uralic language group), and there have also been phases of Finnish (another Uralic language) migration into Norway over several hundred years. In addition, Norway is known for its dialect diversity, competing written standards, and lack of any unified and agreed upon oral standard (Røyneland and Lanza 2020, 4). Equally, according to Statistics Norway (2020b), in twenty-first-century Norway, people from Europe, Asia, and Africa make up 15% of its population of 5.4 million. While English used to be a language spoken and used by an educated minority of the population, it is now a language that everybody feels that they know to a certain extent. The reach of English extends across many, if not most, parts of life in Norway. Although there are immigrants from English-speaking countries, the numbers are comparatively few in contrast to those from non-English-speaking countries. For example, in 2020 there were (including immigrants’ Norwegian-born children) 16,000 from the United Kingdom and 10,000 from the United States, compared with 115,000 from Poland, 43,000 from Somalia, and 39,000 from Sweden (Statistics Norway 2020a). At the same time, whilst all pupils learn English at school, according to information from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, four out of five pupils choose an extra foreign language at school from grade 8; most choose Spanish, followed by German and French. These languages have little visibility in the public space in Norway. It is clear that the widespread presence of English witnessed today is not due to migration or education, but rather due to other factors that we explore here. Norway’s capital, Oslo, is home to approximately 700,000 souls, of whom 34% have an immigrant background. Until very recently, a formally recognised official language for Norway has not been explicitly identified;

but, in the context of a perceived threat from English, a new language law was proposed in May 2020, and voted on in 2021. The aim of the new law is to strengthen the status and legal protection of Norwegian in Norway. The law also defines the status of Sámi, other national minority languages, and Norwegian sign language. According to the law, Norwegian and Sámi are to be recognised as the two official languages of Norway.

Ethiopia, located in the Northeastern part of Africa, is the second most populous country in Africa with a population of almost 110 million inhabitants. It is a highly multilingual country in which close to 90 languages are spoken; of these languages, the most widely spoken ones include Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali, Afar, Sidama, Wolaytta, Hadiya, Gamo, and Gurage. Amharic and Afaan Oromo each account for 30 million speakers. The 1994 Constitution of Ethiopia grants all Ethiopian languages equal rights and identifies Amharic as a working language of the federal government. As recently as March 2020, however, a new language policy has been adopted, and it increased the number of working languages to five, adding Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali, and Afar. English is one of the most important foreign languages in the country, even though, as noted by Lanza and Woldemariam (2014a, 109), “there is a recognized general low degree of proficiency in the language.” English is considered the main language of international communication, and a majority of government documents are translated into it. In addition, it plays a key role in the country as a main language of secondary and tertiary education, as most subjects are taught in English.

Addis Ababa is the capital city of Ethiopia with close to 3 million inhabitants, of whom almost 20,000 are foreigners according to the 2007 population and housing census. The city hosts the headquarters of the African Union and many other international organisations; as such, it is considered the diplomatic capital of Africa. Nevertheless, the great majority of the city’s residents are Ethiopian, and most speak Amharic as a first or second language. Amharic is one the working language of the federal government of Ethiopia, and it has more than 30 million speakers in the country. The Amharic language has a long tradition of written culture, and it is actively used in the media, administration, and education. English is mainly used as a language of instruction, beginning in secondary schools and extending to university level. Given the global profile of Addis Ababa, English is also the main language of communication for diplomacy and international relations.

### **Contexts: Linguistic Landscapes Research in Norway and Ethiopia**

Although Lanza has been involved with Linguistic Landscape research since before the first formal workshop in Tel Aviv in 2008, her contribution to this field of scholarship is intertwined with her work in Ethiopia rather than in her adopted Norway. This is not to say that little research has examined

language use in the public space in Norway; there is an important and growing body of work on multilingualism in the country, in particular in relation to indigenous Sámi languages and languages – such as Russian – which make the far north of the country visibly multilingual. In their study, which crosses several national borders, Pietikäinen et al. (2011) conclude that there are several competing language orders for signage that includes Sámi languages: the national order, the minority language order, and the global order. This global order, which brings English (and other languages) into view, is part of the process of creating “an international space of mobility” (Pietikäinen et al. 2011, 296), and it is a phenomenon attested in both the Norway and Ethiopia data explored here.

The presence of English in Oslo is explored, in particular, by Stjernholm (2015) and also Berezkina (2016), who considered Norwegian, English, and the languages of minority groups in Oslo’s Grønland district. Stjernholm’s study (2015) is particularly pertinent for this chapter, since she compares language choices in the Linguistic Landscapes of two Oslo districts (Majorstua and Grünerløkka) from the perspective of businesses’ globalisation and localisation strategies. According to Stjernholm’s findings, shop names in English in Oslo are typically examples of disembedding, and they are often – but not always – found in international chains, where owners’ economic profit interests lead to the streamlining of many printed signs and information as well as the use of only one language, English (see also Cenoz and Gorter 2009, 58). Stjernholm (2015, 17) gives the example of an Oslo-based bakery chain, “United Bakeries,” which is Norwegian but uses an English name. Glocalisation, on the other hand, is considered to signal something that was originally global or transnational that has been adapted or translated using local semiotic resources, such as a take-away burger shop that uses elk meat rather than beef.

There is a significant body of work on Sámi in place names and road signs (with some space devoted to the Kven language), much of which has been published by Puzey. This includes discussion of the contested emplacement of Sámi in the Sámi administrative area in northern Norway (Puzey 2011) and the recognition of the tension between regional and national authorities in northern Norway. There, the former continue to emplace Sámi in the public space, whilst “some top-down actors on the national level act in a restrictive capacity” (Puzey 2012, 132), and there remains evidence of hostility and violence towards bilingual boundary signs (Puzey 2009). Not all Linguistic Landscape research in Norway has been limited to the far north or the capital. Berezkina (2018), looking at Norway’s state-managed virtual Linguistic Landscapes, concluded that the websites are becoming less multilingual, with consistent use of Bokmål Norwegian and English, whilst Nynorsk Norwegian and Sámi are relegated to cursory translations undertaken to comply with legal requirements.

In Ethiopia, the last few years have witnessed the flourishing of Linguistic Landscape research, mainly due to the highly productive collaboration of

Hirut Woldemariam and Elizabeth Lanza, who have produced a series of publications on the topic (Lanza and Woldemariam 2009, 2011, 2014b, 2014c; Woldemariam and Lanza 2012, 2014, 2015). One of the major topics treated in some of their studies is the place of English in the LL of some of the major cities of Ethiopia, mainly Addis Ababa. For example, earlier studies analysing the Linguistic Landscape of Addis Ababa (Lanza and Woldemariam 2011, 2014b) acknowledge the prominence of English in the capital. The growing use of English has been explained through the concept of “sociolinguistic consumption” suggested by Stroud and Wee (2012). Although globalisation and the commercial value of languages play a role in the choice of languages, it only explains one aspect of the decision-making process. This is mainly because the choice of language in this case is related to social and epistemic authority of one over the other. In this case, the choice of English is associated with the choice of a particular archive of knowledge and experience.

Several studies have been undertaken on Linguistic Landscapes in Ethiopia, mainly looking at the relationships among local languages and their relation to policy. For instance, Mendisu, Malinowski, and Woldemariam (2016) interrogate the absence of local languages in the Linguistic Landscape in some of the towns closely identified with speakers of these languages. Even though language policy encourages the promotion of local languages in public life, the arrangement of the public space does not reflect the intentions of the policy. This echoes the conclusion reached by Fekede and Gemechu (2016), who scrutinised the Linguistic Landscape of the regional city of Jimma, where they detected a notable absence of the region’s main language, Afan Oromo. Others, such as Raga (2012) and Yigezu and Blackwood (2016), have looked at linguistic identities articulated in the Linguistic Landscape. Raga (2012) considers the city of Jimma and the relationship between language attitudes and visibility in the public space, whilst Yigezu and Blackwood (2016) tackle the uneven use of Harari alongside other languages (including Amharic and English) in the ancient regional capital of Harar.

## **The Present Study**

By contrasting the data collected in Oslo and Addis Ababa, we explore in particular the notion of symbolic use and discern the competing influences which drive our understanding of what English comes to mean in these two cities. The differences between the histories and profiles of Oslo and Addis Ababa are as striking as they are productive in terms of teasing out what is meant by the symbolic use of English. The key considerations in what follows are the extent of the correlation between symbolic and communicative values, and the socio-economic realities which underpin the use of English. For the purposes of our analysis, we highlight the typology devised by Amos (2016, 133), and, in particular, the system for classifying signs

that he designates as “field,” referring to the “associated discourse of the text,” which has gradients such as food and drink, traffic, security, and finance. In his study of Liverpool’s Chinatown, Amos focuses on the communicative function of the text and teases out the opposition set up by some between symbolic signs and authentic representation (Amos 2016, 148). In our chapter, we take his “system” of field to probe the extent to which the English used in a sign in Addis Ababa or Oslo makes a reference (however obliquely) to the domain of experience to which the sign is attached. In other words, we consider whether the use of English words, such as an abstract term like “taste,” shifts the functional load when referring to a café, for example – where there is a communicative intention – in contrast to a property management business – where the resonance does not seem immediately apparent.

In approaching the Linguistic Landscapes of Oslo and Addis Ababa, we organise our discussion through three sets of comparisons. We open with two main city-centre streets, which cater to international travellers as well as domestic passers-by on their way to work. The second comparison is of two local marketplaces and, in particular, places where shoppers go to have some kind of experience in addition to purchasing something. The third comparison takes as its setting one of the exemplifications of consumerism in late modernity: the shopping mall.

### *Henrik Ibsens Gate, Oslo, and Africa Avenue, Addis Ababa*

Henrik Ibsens Gate (Henrik Ibsen Street) in central Oslo is in an upmarket part of town; it starts at Norway’s National Theatre, runs alongside the Royal Palace, and takes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its site, therefore, resonates as national, particularly given the Norwegian landmarks that punctuate its route and its naming after the country’s arguably most famous playwright. At the same time, the street includes central Oslo’s busiest metro station, Nationaltheatret, which includes a stop for the airport express train, Flytoget. The street is therefore visited by locals and tourists alike, and the use of English also targets an international audience. A highly desirable commercial location, Henrik Ibsens Gate is dotted with a high number of small shops, although some are part of bigger chains. Within the genre of shopfronts, the field of the premises (Amos 2016, 133) emerges as particularly salient, as does the socio-economic orientation of the business and its expected customer base. There is a clear orientation towards the use of English and an absence of Norwegian in the high-end businesses on Henrik Ibsens Gate.

By way of example, we highlight the Bolia furniture shop to explore the tension between the communicative and symbolic uses of English. English has a particularly high symbolic value in Bolia, which presents a choice of the very latest furnishings and fittings of the most modern and highest quality. Signs in Bolia promise handmade quality, sustainable materials, and always



the newest fashion. Key phrases are in English: “The New Collection has arrived” or “Hello Spring Collection and goodbye Winter.” Given the prestige of the shopping location and the higher socio-economic profile of the expected clientele, including locals, tourists able to afford pricey Norway, and diplomats visiting the city, the balance between the communicative and symbolic function of the signs is relatively even. There is an expectation that Norwegian passers-by will not only recognise “Hello Spring Collection and goodbye Winter” as words from the English language, but they will also understand the invitation to revive their interior decoration. For the tourist or the diplomat, English clearly fulfils a communicative function, inviting them to admire Scandinavian furniture and maybe even invest in it. To adapt Modan and Leeman’s framing (2009, 315), the perlocutionary force of such signage is both communicative (in that the propositional content of signs in English is understood) and symbolic (in that the use of English activates a shared series of associations for groups).

Henrik Ibsens Gate is not a gated street and does not limit access to only well-heeled shoppers; some businesses recognise that the communicative value of Norwegian is high. These are typically shops that deal with more basic needs, such as health (opticians and chemists), or the Ark bookshop (meaning “sheet of paper” in Norwegian). Whilst there is a market in Norway for books written in English, the majority of titles on the shelves of the Ark bookshop are in Norwegian, and the social reality of Oslo’s bookworms is that Norwegian is the preferred language for reading. To this end, signage in the window of Ark is in Norwegian (Figure 6.1) since the association between the English language and the novels on sale is unhelpful from the perspective of sales.

Africa Avenue, also popularly known as Bole Road, runs from Meskel Square in central Addis Ababa, to Bole International Airport. Its route, therefore, is a key artery in the city, and one along which visitors to the city travel on arrival; when fused, its name and its route underline its significance. Diplomats and business representatives heading to the African Union Commission travel down Africa Avenue on arrival in the city, and several embassies are found on the street, including Morocco’s and Namibia’s. The street’s credentials as African, therefore, are foregrounded in a way that echoes Henrik Ibsens Gate’s resonance as Norwegian. Equally, the street sees tourists, diplomats, and African civil servants in the way that Henrik Ibsens Gate does in Oslo. Africa Avenue is also an area of high footfall for local and temporary residents, and it caters to these groups with cafés, restaurants, banks, and so on. With its mix of public, official signage (including directional signage and those on national and local government buildings) and signs on private businesses, Africa Avenue is as multilingual as other capital cities, but the visual arrangement of languages does not reflect the linguistic ecology of Ethiopia. The two most widespread languages on display – as per our estimation – are Amharic and English, often in combination with one another, but with at least as many signs in English alone.



Figure 6.1: Ark bookshop with a sign reading “Fyll opp til lave priser. Populære nyheter!” (“Fill up at low prices. Popular news!”).

English appears most widely in signage associated with commercial properties, such as shops, cafés, and restaurants; in comparison with Henrik Ibsens Gate, the use of English is more widespread. More significantly, English on Africa Avenue is consistently used to name premises, often drawing on North American or European toponyms. These range from London and Amsterdam to New York (used as the name of a supermarket). Even more numerous than the toponyms are the nouns, expressions, and abstract ideas, which draw to varying degrees on English to present businesses. From more transparent, does-what-it-says examples (such as “World Fiberglass and Water Proofing” or “Fashion Point”) to those where the use of English is not obviously associated with the business (such as “Princess,” “Honey Dream,” or “Impact”), there are both symbolic and communicative values attached to English, although the distribution can be uneven. To illustrate this, we take two examples: “Book World” and “Day & Night.” Both use English, and, more precisely, both use English for its symbolic value. This symbolic value includes the fact that English is not the language of any of the ethnolinguistic groups of Ethiopia. However, the communicative value of English in the name “Book World” is higher than it is in “Day & Night” since the propositional content of “Book World” as a fragment indexes directly the domain into which the establishment falls. For passers-by with

little clue as to the business of “Day & Night” (a home furniture, garden, and appliances shop), the name of the premises does symbolic but little communicative work.

The distinction between the use of English on Africa Avenue and on Henrik Ibsens Gate points to another dimension of the value of English. On Henrik Ibsens Gate many of the shops did not have English names (nor did many of them have particularly Norwegian names), but English was used in slogans, taglines, and short texts to convey a certain modishness. On African Avenue the communicative acts performed by English sometimes signal the purpose of the premises – as in the case of “Book World.” At other times – as in the case of “Day & Night” – the fact that English is used is its value, regardless of what the expression means if translated.

### *Bærums Verk, Greater Oslo, and Haya Hulet Market, Addis Ababa*

Bærums Verk is a shopping centre which was developed in the 1990s from a former iron works where labourers both worked and lived. The main factory building was converted into a modern shopping centre, and the ground floor is occupied by two big shops for designer furniture and decorative items. Small houses, which used to be workers’ family homes, now contain little shops and workshops. For example, a confectionary shop sells special chocolates without individual wrapping to make them look locally made, although they are imported from Belgium. There are crafts shops that sell knitwear and wooden articles, which are made partly in Norway and partly abroad, again without plastic wrapping. The mostly car-free area lies by an idyllic river and a waterfall. There are modern sculptures between the buildings. In winter there is a Christmas market with family activities, such as horse-and-sledge rides for the children. The small shops, despite some of their names, do not sell mundane household items. They are almost like museum artefacts. Indeed, this is what they look like, both outside and inside. They sell small things like special food items, crafts, and art. Bærums Verk looks like a typical area of re-embedding or glocalisation. This is even true when it comes to the language of the shop names which are all in Norwegian. The arrangement of the site in conjunction with the deployment of Norwegian is intended to convey an idea of local cottage industries or farm buildings, which have names that mean “shed” or “factory” even though hardly anything is made there (see, for example, Figure 6.2, a cottage named *Snekkerbua* (“The Carpenter’s Shed”) in Norwegian). The use of English here would have undermined the effect that Bærums Verk’s owner, Carl Otto Løvenskiold, sought to achieve, which was to create an idealised shopping centre with sculptures and family experiences and a local affiliation, as conceived by Løvenskiold’s mother, Ingegjerd Ebba Dagmar Løvenskiold Stuart (Harnes, 2014). In other words, the symbolic value of Norwegian rises significantly, to the extent that the value of English in these circumstances would impact negatively on the associations sought



Figure 6.2: *Snekkerbua* (“The Carpenter’s Shed”).

by Bærums Verk’s owner-managers. Norwegian is clearly commodified and performs the role of glocalising products made in Norway but also products imported from abroad. From the perspective of Norwegian and non-Norwegian visitors to Bærums Verk, Norwegian takes on an unambiguously symbolic function.

There is no site in Addis Ababa that is directly comparable to Bærums Verk, and so we turn our attention to the markets of the city in order to consider the symbolic use of English, building on Lanza and Woldemariam’s work on English in Ethiopia’s LL (Lanza and Woldemariam 2009, 2014b; Woldemariam and Lanza 2014, 2015). The market in the Haya Hulet district of northwest Addis Ababa is radically different to Bærums Verk. It is not a repurposed industrial site that has been aestheticised and commodified for the purposes of retail, but rather an archetypal roadside market, where stalls line both sides of a street and wares are displayed during opening hours to passing trade. In stark contrast to Bærums Verk, this is not an idealised shopping experience where local identity is augmented. Instead, it is a widely known street market, which is particularly renowned within the city and beyond for the sale of clothes. Recalling older consumption practices, and therefore standing in contradistinction to larger Western-style department stores and supermarkets, Haya Hulet market is a place for direct retail



Figure 6.3: “Yitem Shake Juice” sign in Latin script with no Amharic text.

alongside a busy road where neighbouring stalls actively compete for business and noisy personal exchanges are part of the experience.

The signage in Haya Hulet market is sparse and usually limited to a sign which identifies the stall and, often but not always, conveys its wares. Using Amos’s (2016) typology, there are usually up to two “communicative functions” undertaken in the signs. First, the role performed by the text identifies the establishment name (the interpellating signage, which Stroud and Jegels (2014) note “bring[s] them into existence”). Second, the sign lists discursively the products on sale. Signs in the market often include two named languages, Amharic and English, and often – but not always – two scripts: Ethiopic for Amharic and Latin for English. There are stalls, such as “Yitem Shake Juice” (Figure 6.3), which only use the Latin script; the word “Yitem” is not a proper noun in Amharic, but it may well relate to a name in another Ethiopian language.

Going through the market, there is an uneven pattern for the distribution of labour between Amharic and English. Amharic is often used in interpellating signage, but this role is also taken on by English for some stalls. At some stalls, Amharic is completely absent. The relationship between the two codes is often close in terms of the visual arrangement and, thus, in the associations fostered. This is most acute in the sign for “NY KIDS



Figure 6.4: Sign for “NY KIDS FASHION” stall.

FASHION” (Figure 6.4), where the close positioning of the Amharic text above the English text suggests some level of translation. Indeed, the English version is a direct translation of the Amharic. The identification of English with the United States is instantiated by the almost universally recognised NY acronym for New York, and it is indexed by the image of a child who is supposed to represent, we argue, a North American girl.

The symbolic use of English here is complemented by the picture of the girl, and they work together through fetishising the language to index “competence” (Kelly-Holmes 2000) in fashion. The Amharic and English texts are translations of each other, as is the case of Azeb Perfume (a case of the personalisation signage genre, in Stroud and Jegel’s (2014, 192) terms). In the Azeb Perfume sign, the traditional understanding of code preferences is disrupted; the text in Amharic is larger and centred, but the English text appears above the Amharic. The ways in which the potential consumer reads the text are multiple, and within this understanding of the symbolic use of English, the signs at the market exemplify the process of disembedding. Equally, there is extensive evidence of a reliance upon Amharic as a localising agent.

*The Rykkinn Senter, Greater Oslo, and Friendship Business Center, Addis Ababa*

The last pairing that we consider involves suburban shopping centres, which can be found in many parts of the world now since they are no longer the preserve of the Global North. Traditionally, in late modernity shopping malls are enclosed centres housing a range of shops with different owners and often anchored by one or two larger department stores. The businesses are

joined by pedestrianised promenades, which are often balconies overlooking terraces or small stalls. The physical organisation of shopping centres follows a broadly shared pattern; the layout is recognisable in both Norway and Ethiopia. We compare two suburban shopping centres precisely because of their target clientele. These centres are not primarily frequented by the wealthiest residents of Oslo or Addis Ababa; rather, they target the lower-middle classes, in other words, individuals with some disposable income but not from the wealthiest socio-economic bracket. We do this comparison in order to consider whether social-class positioning contributes meaningfully to our discussion of the symbolic use of English. In this section, we examine the Rykkinn Senter, which is located 20 km from central Oslo and 2.5 km from Bærums Verk, and the Friendship Business Center, which is only 4 km from central Addis Ababa. Both sites attract publics that differ from those targeted by the other locations discussed here: there is little overlap between shoppers at the Rykkinn Senter and consumers on Henrik Ibsens Gate; and the Friendship Mall (as it is often referred to locally) is frequented by a wealthier section of Addis Ababa society compared to the Haya Hulet market. The Friendship Business Center is one of the few shopping malls established in the city. However, the development of shopping centres has become more common over the past 15 years as part of Ethiopia's social transformation in the wake of the growth of what is understood locally as a new middle class.

The Rykkinn Senter may be only 2.5 km from Bærums Verk shopping centre, but it has a very different profile to the repurposed iron works. It is the local centre for a densely populated suburb, and it also attracts customers from further away. The socio-economic profile of the clientele of the Rykkinn Senter is, we contend, less affluent than those who shop on Henrik Ibsens Gate, but the businesses in the shopping mall still target what might be described as a Norwegian middle class, by which we refer to those with some level of disposable income. The shops at the Rykkinn Senter are mainly chain stores with very little local affiliation, and many of the businesses have English names even though the chains are Norwegian or Scandinavian (for example, Buddy, Kid, FitnessRoom, Clas Ohlsson Compact Store). Confirming our assertion regarding the widespread ability of many Norwegians from different socio-economic backgrounds to understand, at the very least, some English, in the Rykkinn Senter there is evidence of English being used for communicative and symbolic purposes. For example, in KappAhl, a clothing shop, the slogan on an advertising poster reads – in English – “Every body is a beach body,” illustrating the process of disembedding and counting on the English language to take on some of the communicative load in addition to its symbolic role. This, we argue, is on the basis that the propositional content – referring to body positivity – relates directly to the product on sale.

Not all texts in KappAhl are in English. The chain store's owners recognise the expectations and abilities of their customers as well as the need to convey more complex details. Less prominent in the shop, but containing

important information, a sign in Norwegian reads “*Alle varer til herre. Gjelder ikke i kombinasjon med andre tilbud eller rabatter*” (All goods for men. Not in combination with other offers or reductions). Even globalised, disembedded businesses that use English to showcase on-brand messaging and trendiness resort to Norwegian when they feel the need to convey necessary information.

In Ethiopia, the Friendship Business Center is a shopping mall located outside the centre of Addis Ababa, in a way not dissimilar to the Rykkinn Senter’s peripheralisation in Greater Oslo. The Friendship Business Center is found in the southwest of the capital, within the city’s ring road, and near Bole International Airport. Whilst the spatial organisation of the Friendship Business Center is akin to that of the Rykkinn Senter, with a broad range of privately owned businesses leasing retail space, the kinds of shops are very different. This difference lies not in the kinds of products on sale – there is a comparable range of clothing, sporting goods, interior furnishings, and cafés – but in Addis Ababa there are fewer chain stores and a higher proportion of small, independent business. By way of example, we look at the sign above Etbas Boutique, which sells clothing and shoes for women (Figure 6.5).

There is much to be said about the arrangement of this sign, including the resonance of the term “boutique” (a French word borrowed into English), the representation of two women in different styles of clothing, the double evocation of the United Kingdom, and the non-standard plural marker (“size’s”). However, our interest lies here in the disembedding of English within the specific social and economic reality of the Friendship Business Center. No Amharic or any other Ethiopian language is used in the signage here, and the text is all presented in Latin script, with no place accorded to Ethiopic. The expectation is that when the customer understands the propositional content, the linguistic choice is – from the sender’s perspective – by definition communicative. There is a clear interdependent relationship between the symbolic and communicative values of English here.



Figure 6.5: Etbas Boutique sign in English.



## Conclusions

It is unsurprising that English saturates the public space in Oslo and Addis Ababa. In a globalised world with hyper-mobile travellers, the reach of the English language crosses all continents and extends into peri-urban shopping centres in Norway as well as roadside markets in suburbs in Ethiopia. What we have sought to do in this chapter is use a set of comparisons in Oslo and Addis Ababa to tease out the correlations between the symbolic and communicative values attributed to English by those who manage the public space in the two cities. In the cities' important downtown streets, English is emplaced for the needs of international visitors as well as locals, fulfilling a communicative function for the former whilst also activating symbolic associations of modernity and trendiness. In local marketplaces like Bærums Verk and Haya Hulet, where experience is as important as consumption, English is not as visible and assumes a largely symbolic, rather than communicative, role. Finally, in the suburban shopping centres that cater to the local middle classes, there is both streamlining use of English for communication as well as for a symbolic function to convey fashionableness and a specific style.

There are important similarities between what we have identified in Oslo and Addis Ababa to note in these concluding remarks, not least in our revising of Giddens's (1991) disembedding process to include English (and potentially other named, bound languages) as "symbolic tokens" (Giddens 1991, 22). English, we argue, now has the currency that money does, as per Giddens's illustration of the disembedding mechanisms at play, as it can be taken out from its earlier social relations and reapplied elsewhere, where its value and power is (re)activated in radically different contexts.

When we consider the data gathered in Norway and Ethiopia, we can see that English is emplaced in a range of businesses in both Oslo and Addis Ababa as part of an intertwining with globalisation and the drive for sales. In addition, in the Ethiopian capital, the inclusion of English is a reflection of a wider social and cultural change experienced not just in Ethiopia but more widely across Africa. This, we contend, is part of a more fundamental process that is sometimes glossed as "catching-up," but which serves to dislocate well-established and grounded African languages that already successfully perform communicative functions in education, government, media, consumption patterns, and culture. At the same time, and specifically in Addis Ababa, English performs functions that Amharic and other Ethiopian languages cannot yet do in terms of symbolic value. In Oslo, the same functions are undertaken by English, but, crucially, the accent is placed on the significance, the resonance, and the associations with the English language (and therefore Anglo-Saxon culture) whereas in Addis Ababa, English is a vehicle for an abstract modernisation process. Lanza and Woldemariam (2009, 202) first noted this "symbolic function as a marker of modernity" in their study of the remote Ethiopian city of Mekele, often in tandem with

international brand names and labels. Over a decade on, and despite the transformation underway in Ethiopia, this phenomenon persists.

In this chapter, we explicitly have not sought to consider the potential for English to authenticate the products or services on offer in the premises we studied. Whilst there is evidence (such as Etbas Boutique, Figure 6.5) of English being deployed to index origin and convey a sense of authenticity, our primary concern has been to attend to the relationship between symbolic and communicative values. The bond between these two functions is, inevitably, fluid, and there are clearly no grounds to argue for specifically distinct Norwegian or Ethiopian understandings of the role that English plays. We contend that the viewer construes the extent to which English plays a symbolic or communicative role, rather than this function being inherent in the text itself. In both cities examined here, the balance between the symbolic and the communicative use of English shifts, and it bears repetition to note that we argue that a language can – and usually does – perform both functions at the same time. The accent may well be on the symbolic function in the market stalls in Haya Hulet, whilst in Henrik Ibsens Gate the significance tips towards the communicative role. In both of these examples, nevertheless, both functions are activated. Based on our analysis here, social, economic, and cultural factors contribute to the activation of the values we have identified, and our understanding is enhanced by the comparison between sites in Norway and Ethiopia.

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