

# The Visibility of the English Language in the Linguistic Landscape of Two Teacher Training Colleges in Israel

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## Abstract

This research examines the visibility of English in the schoolscape of two Israeli teacher training colleges. English in Israel is part of a complex, multilingual reality. Not an official language, it carries prestige and is common in media, commerce, industry, and science. In higher education, its presence, however, is limited, despite being a mandatory, curricular subject. This study examines all signage in English posted in two colleges, focusing on the forms and types of language displayed, informative, commercial, and educational. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with international students. No student is accepted without testing in English, nor are students granted a degree without successfully attaining nationally-set standards, yet English displayed in the colleges is predominantly of the top-down type and does not stem from the institutions themselves. Furthermore, visible English is mainly for informative and commercial purposes, not educational. Educational English is often accompanied by a commercial agenda. Research confirms that the presence of English in one's surroundings not only exposes students to linguistic information but has practical value. The findings of this research reveal limited visibility of English, due perhaps to the perceived threat of English to the Hebrew language.

**Keywords:** English, linguistic landscape, schoolscales, signage, visibility

## Introduction

It is an unattested fact that English is a globalized language and the *lingua franca* of certain domains in Israel (e.g., business, science). English is prominently displayed by commercial ventures in order to reach out to multiple sectors of a diverse population. The strong proclivity towards English comes to the forefront in research about language use in the environment” (Backhaus, 2007). Names of local businesses presented in English carry positive connotations. Cenoz and Gorter (2006, p. 269) state that English, worldwide, is associated with cosmopolitanism and modernity, and with “international orientation, future orientation, success, sophistication,” and Yeh (2019) notes that “proficiency in English is the pinnacle of academic and professional achievement.” A combination of factors make English attractive to Israelis, for Hebrew alone is of little use abroad. English offers social and professional mobility with strong ties to popular culture and global

communication. This research examines the presence of English in an academic setting, at two Israeli teacher training colleges. The aim of this study is to determine the extent to which the English language is visible in two institutions of higher education and the purposes for which English is displayed. It is posited that the display of English affects those required to study English.

Israel, as a nation, possesses a strong language ideology. There is a strong connection between people's attitudes about Hebrew and their linguistic behavior. Most Israelis believe that Hebrew has been successfully revived and it is the main uniting factor of a gathering of exiles that makes up the Jewish nation today. Hebrew is central to a common Jewish culture (Fellman, 1973). Friedrich (1989) asserts that one significant characteristic of language ideology is rationalization, and in Israel, the use of Hebrew is rationalized as a core element of society. Support for linguistic homogeneity in Israel underlies linguistic practices, social discourse, and influences attitudes about English.

Spolsky and Cooper (1991) observe that language use is representative of the attitudes of a given population. In Israel, English is not an official language. As a *de facto* language, it has a growing presence. The status of English in academia, however, is less straightforward. On the one hand, English is considered the *lingua franca* of a larger community of academia and it is a national curricular requirement for students and academics alike, while on the other hand, there is a clear preference for the local language. This has direct implications on attitudes towards English and for the instruction of English as a Foreign Language in Israel.

### **Literature review**

Due to the increasing significance of English, largely due to globalization and a globalization of the English language, this research examines the linguistic landscape – the use of language in the public sphere (Bourhis & Landry 1997) – of two Israeli colleges. Linguistic landscapes reveal the vitality of a language, its role and importance, as language in the public sphere can serve “as a prism through which various sociolinguistic realities can be understood and interpreted” (Shohamy & Abu Ghazaleh-Mahajneh, 2012, p. 95). This research examines the visibility of the English language, its display in relation to Hebrew, the areas and manners in which English is used and the relation between visibility, language attitude and ideology. Gorter, Marten and van Mensel (2012, p.11) describe visibility as a “carnival mirror,” that offers one insight into language as it is used by society. It is acknowledged that in other Israeli, academic institutions of higher education, this reality may be quite different. In this study, an examination of the visibility of English reveals that visibility refers to more than just what is observed by the naked eye, but also to what is invisible.

### *Signage in the linguistic landscape*

Signage is examined for its form and function in research in linguistic landscapes, focusing specifically on factors such as the manner of translation, “monophonic,” if only one language is used, and “homophonic,” (Backhaus, 2007), also referred to as “polyphonic” by Coupland (2010), and whether signs are multilingual. Additional factors are noted, such as the difference between translation and transliteration (Spolsky & Cooper, 1991).

Spolsky and Cooper (1991, p. 33) outline three conditions of signage. The first is that signs are written in languages that people know; secondly, signs are posted with the expectation that people will understand them, and lastly, signs have “a symbolic value condition” and appear in a language that people wish to be identified with. Shohamy (2010) adds that signs also indicate which languages are locally relevant or in the process of becoming relevant. In light of this, one might expect to see signs in English in academia in Israeli colleges.

Research about signs frequently categorizes them, prompted by the work of Landry and Bourhis (1997) into “public signs (i.e., government-promoted signs) and “private signs” (i.e., commercial signs) respectively, or top-down and bottom-up signs, (Huebner, 2006; Rosenbaum et al., 1977); some researchers present different terminology, like “code preference” and “regulatory signs” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 147). One sign may fit into several categories simultaneously. Huebner (2006) explains how a sign in an elevator of an office building can be top down, as required by the national government, and simultaneously bottom up, as posted by the management. Acknowledging the problematic nature of this division, he posits that there exists a cline, with language used for official and unofficial purposes of varying degrees. A common feature is an initial and basic distinction to indicate which signs are displayed as a result of a required policy, and which involve an element of choice. Spolsky (2009a) proposes that in the place of top-down (in adherence to official policies) or/and bottom-up (“more autonomous actors”) (Spolsky 2009b, p. 49), researchers refer to “the sign makers” and the “sign readers.” Categorization of signs is frequently connected to the domains to which signs belong, as they relate to traffic, public needs, heritage and historical buildings (Barni & Vedovelli, 2012), and prohibition and warning, declaration of ownership, tourism, building names, and signs intended for foreigners (Spolsky & Cooper, 1991).

### *Schoolscapes*

This study falls within the field of schoolscapes, which focuses specifically on the reality portrayed by the landscape of an educational environment. Institutions of all types display formal and informal discourse in hallways, classrooms, offices and common areas. Faculty, students and administration, who are visually literate, read not only signs, but read the messages sent by

their environment. Just as the design and architecture of an educational setting can influence a learning environment, so can messages – explicit or implicit. Different aspects of schoolsapes have been the subject of much study; Martin-Jones and de Costa Carbaral (2011) examines language policy, Gorter and Cenoz (2014) focus on multilingualism, Cassels Johnson (1980) examines nation-state discourse, Brown (2012), looks at on ethnography, and the research of Kahn and Troiani (2015) and Szabo and Liahonen (2015), the language in private and public institutions. In numerous studies (Liahonen & Todhar 2015; Szabo & Liahonen 2015), the English language lies at the center of research into schoolsapes. Orikasa (2017) examines exposure to English at a public university in Japan. Biro (2016, p. 11) notes that “Studies of the signage in schools can lead to a better understanding of what goes on inside schools and as such better contribute to educational research.”

Studies into schoolsapes illustrate that the environment reflects educational, cultural and linguistic values, at micro and macro levels. Todar (2015, p. 529) states that the “[S]igns, boards, and displays encountered, including symbolic elements, can reveal much about the linguistic profile and the linguistic character of a given place, the status of the languages used and the value system of a given place.” With schoolsapes inseparable from language ideology, linguistic practices, and literacy, Brown (2012, p. 282) argues that schoolsapes are “the school-based environment where ... [the] written (graphic) and oral constitute, reproduce and transform language ideologies.”

Language policy may require that English be taught, but this does not always dictate what occurs in reality. Cooper (1989) examines the role of the French Academy in unifying France, focusing on the differences between linguistic policy and reality. Spolsky (1989) examines Maori bilingualism in New Zealand for policy and practice, and research has been conducted on French immersion schools in Canada (Cooper, 1989). Although there is a great deal of research in an Israeli context about linguistic landscapes (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, & Trumper-Hecht, 2006; Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Spolsky & Cooper 1991; Spolsky, 2009a), most examines the interplay of Hebrew, Arabic and English in the environment. A limited amount of research examines schoolsapes in Israeli context. The research of Amara (2018) focuses on Palestinian schools, “where Arabic is the language of personal, cultural, and national identity [and where] Hebrew is important for social mobility, higher education, and shared citizenship” (Amara, 2018, p. 7). Examining the order, distribution and function of languages, he concludes that Arabic is most prevalent, and that Hebrew is widely-spread, but that English, while of value to students, “barely features.” Waksman and Shohamy (2009) examine the schoolscape of colleges in Israel, specifically in relation to a transition of the language of social protest and injustice from public spaces to institutional spaces.

### ***English in the Israeli educational system***

Israeli academia is, to a certain degree, largely in English; academics read in English, present at international conferences, carry out collaborative research and often publish in English. The study of English is mandatory from approximately age eight until the completion of a university degree, with it being almost impossible for learners to be exempted from the study of English. Students accepted into higher education are tested to ascertain that they meet national standards, which if not achieved, require further study. The Council for Higher Education lays out specific guidelines, at a national level, for all colleges and universities regarding the teaching and learning of English. The content of courses in Hebrew is often based on concepts and terminology originally from English and includes required reading in English. Although there is a great deal of variation from one institution to another, all aim to create a positive and professional image by branding themselves as well-respected and worthy institutions and the study of English is often linked to high standards. Despite the indisputably significant role of the English language in educational settings, the English language is not as physically visible in education as one might imagine. In other words, while the curriculum requires English, there is limited exposure to English in an academic environment.

English plays an additional and unique role in Israel – that of a neutral language that is neither Jewish nor Arab, neither Hebrew nor Arabic. This neutral language can be used to mediate and negotiate tension and conflict. Given this useful function and the limited opportunity to use the Hebrew language outside of Israel, combined with the increasing need for globalized English, it might be expected that English would be visible. And while it is an unattested fact that English exhibits vitality on a daily basis within greater Israeli society, its use is that of what has been termed “the outdoor media” (the brevity with which a product can be conveyed, in English) (Crystal, 1997, p. 159). It does, however, not necessarily exhibit the same level of visibility in institutions of higher education.

### ***The linguistic landscape and the learning of language***

Barni, Kolyva, Machetti, and Palova (2014) note that while it is difficult to “isolate the effect of the linguistic landscape on language learning, ... it is important to take into account that exposure to the L2 [second language] can take place in different ways outside the classroom and this is the case even more so when English is the target language” (cited in Cenoz & Gorter, 2008, p. 273). They examine how English in the environment heightens and promotes language awareness, which in turn, provides motivation to learn languages. Cenoz and Gorter (2008, p. 277) confirm the pragmatic significance of English in the environment, “for signs that are viewed, read, and interpreted require linguistic competence, application, sociolinguistic

knowledge and the knowledge of discourse. From a psycholinguistic perspective, key [reading] components, such as word identification, parsing, syntactic-semantic representation, text representation, and understanding.” are involved in the processing of information in visual displays of language (Tokowicz & Perfetti, 2005). Aided by semiotic and metalinguistic cues, other features, such as illustrations, aid the reader in formulating thoughts and drawing conclusions. The presence of English contributes to the input required to develop second language literacy skills, and some incidental learning is likely to occur as a result of exposure to English in public spaces (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008).

### ***Linguistic ideology***

A display of language, specifically English, provides not only an additional learning context, but also contributes towards economic capital, as research indicates that higher education correlates positively with national wealth. In other words, from higher education, eventually, stems an educated work force, and bilingual and multilingual individuals who prosper in today's globalized world (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008, p. 273), as supported by a knowledge-based economy and higher education (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). English conveys status and is of substantial value.

Re-established as the national language with the founding of the State in 1948, Hebrew remains a source of national pride and is subject to conscious language policy and planning. Hebrew is the main language of higher education. While English may be used as a tool in the preparation of academic content, English does not always reach the students as such. In other words, lecturers translate concepts and terminology originally in English into Hebrew for students. Likewise, they limit the reading of required texts in English, many of which have Hebrew translations. Frequently, relatively few English resources are listed in the bibliographies of course syllabi for fear that students will encounter difficulty, not fare well in the course, reflecting negatively upon lecturers in ensuing student evaluation. The completion of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is largely a formal, administrative requirement, in that having to pass English, does not necessarily mean that one has to know and be able to use English.

### **Methods and procedures**

Both colleges studied in this qualitative research, referred to as College A and College B respectively, are teacher training colleges that grant various degrees, (i.e., B.Ed., B.A., B.Sc., M.Ed., M.A., a Teaching Certificate). Both are also home to English Departments, where native speakers of Hebrew, Arabic, English and other languages train to become teachers of English, and where graduates of other fields can retrain. Both colleges are presently establishing and maintain strong international ties, and are active participants

in student, faculty and administrative exchanges through the European Erasmus Program. College B administers a large-scale, cross-cultural educational project that promotes multicultural education and children's rights, developing curriculum in 21 academic institutions across seven different countries. Internationalization and cooperative endeavors overseas are of significance and conducted almost entirely in English.

The aim of this study is to determine the extent to which the English language is visible in two Israeli colleges, and the purposes for which English is displayed, and to examine how the display of English may affect those who are required to study English. The researcher took still pictures of all signs, of all types (e.g., permanent educational displays, advertisements) posted in English on both campuses, including those partially in English. All signs displaying English were included in the data. The two linguistic landscapes were monitored for one full semester, a period of six consecutive months, beginning with the academic year, in September 2017, until the end of March 2017. Data were collected twice weekly at each institution. All signage in English was photographed, initially using a digital camera, and subsequently with an iPhone, with analyses conducted on photographs. Duplicate signs were recorded, noting information such as location. Unlike some previous research in the field (Backhaus, 2006), the total number of signs was not calculated to determine a numerical percentage of English signs, because the data were not meant to represent the entire landscape of the college, rather shed light on where and how English appears. A data-driven approach examines the form and function of signs, in relation to the targeted population. Separate data bases were for maintained for each college. During the time that the visual data were collected, foreign students enrolled in the colleges were also interviewed in partially-structured interviews about the visibility of signage at the college and their personal, language-related experiences on campus.

The data were downloaded and categorized into bottom up and top down categories. Top-down signs include those that all educational institutions are required to post, such as standardized safety regulations (e.g., traffic arrangements). Bottom-up signs include those that the college chose to post, such as signs for specific services and internal advertising. There is further division, as driven by the data, into three, main sub-categories, namely, (1) informative signs,-- those whose prime purpose is to relay information, (2) commercial signs – those whose function is to promote a product or service, and (3) educational signs – those that bestow knowledge.

While the purposes of signs in general are to communicate information, identify objects, and persuade people to become consumers, this study may bring to light additional issues, including overlapping functions of signs, the marking of linguistic dominance and linguistic ideology. Also included is students' exposure to English and the implications this may have for their attitude and motivation. While there is no argument as to the importance of English in Israel, the results of these specific academic environments may suggest otherwise – that while English is present in greater

Israeli society, its presence in these schoolsapes is limited.

## **Results**

### ***Schoolscapes***

English has limited representation in these colleges. In spite of the fact that English is a part of Israeli curriculum, and a mandatory subject of instruction with clear pedagogical aims, it does not have a significant, visible presence. The requirements of the Ministry of Education and the Council of Higher Education to study English generally do not come to light. Bulletin boards that post information about EFL/EAP courses (e.g., lecturers, location of classes, updates) are entirely in Hebrew, as are the signs announcing the location of the offices, as well as the two English departments. In fact, nowhere is the name of either of the college displayed anywhere on campus in English (This later changed in one college), despite the aforementioned strong and currently-developing, international presence.

### ***Top-down signage***

In an examination of signage in public places, a strong Hebrew ideology emerges. Hebrew is the dominant language, as reflected both in top-down and bottom-up signage. In the former, a policy of the homogenization of language is evident, even on signs, stipulated as a legal requirement, where it is required that English be posted. Often text in English is limited, summarized or only partially translated from Hebrew. In one such sign, posted on a cupboard, details are provided, in Hebrew, outlining the location and the different types of firefighting equipment located within, as well as what type of equipment should be used on different types of fires (e.g., electrical, flammable liquids), but, in English, a single word appears – FIRE. In a similar sign, the location of the main electrical circuit is marked in Hebrew and a sign warns of the danger of electrocution, while a single word appears in English – DANGER. English appears where required, in minimal form, and where it is not required, it is not always evident. More than twice as many signs of a top-down nature (34 signs) displaying English were observed in comparison to those in English of a bottom-up nature (16 signs).

### ***Bottom-up signage***

In the bottom-up signage posted by the colleges, English makes an appearance mainly in two domains, the first being advertising and marketing, and the second, technology. Beyond college walls, in commercial settings, the use of English language is abundantly evident because English sells. On these two college campuses, English is used to advertise businesses on campus, the cafeteria, named “daily” and the campus store named “arta” (both in lower



case letters). There is additional, extensive advertising across campus, often on permanent and temporary easel-like display boards erected specifically for this purpose. Advertised are businesses off campus which target students, offering them services and discounts at restaurants, wedding halls to rent, and holiday travel packages.

English is evident in a bottom-up manner in the advancement of technology. This type of advertising includes the promotion of iPads, a brand that has a standing agreement with one college. Each new student who enrolls is provided with an iPad. The same company also stands behind many seemingly unrelated advertisements in the hallways of the college, including inspirational messages painted on structural columns in a common area. In Hebrew, all of the words are nouns, while in English, words are both nouns – *future, leadership, vision* and verbs – *inspire* and *explore*, implying that the English has been directly translated from the Hebrew. Placed in classrooms, next to lecturers' computers are mouse pads, with the same words that appear on the pillar, in school colors. Another structural pillar in the college displays the name of the college, and slogans such as Start up, with the word *it* inserted between the words, to read *Start it up*. This same slogan appears in the form of a large, mat-like sticker at various locations throughout the college, including the main entrance, where the English is accompanied by Hebrew text that translates as *technology and progress for teaching*. A large sign posted at the entrance of the college comprises of a student working on an iPad and it reads *iB* (the name of the college). While such ads appear – at first glance – to be advertising for the college, in actuality, they advertise the joint venture between the college and a specific computer company. This use of English, which on the surface is technology-focused, is motivated by a commercial interest. At College A, the use of English in technology is evident in the advertising of the college radio station whose posters read *On Air* – in English.

#### *Informative signs*

Informative signs are most often monolingual and do not display any English. All facilities, such as offices, washrooms, services, and facilities (e.g., elevators), on both campuses, are marked only in Hebrew. When visitors from overseas arrive, they are frequently personally escorted on campus tours, thus eliminating the need for English signage. The exception to this is when a delegation that is of what the college considers to be of a substantial size (e.g., conference participants) , a sign at the entrance of college A is hung on the fence, at the main gate, and in college B, an internet-generated message on a television monitor in the main lobby welcomes guests – in English. For such visits, additional temporary signs and free-standing bulletin boards direct visitors to venues and activities. Informative signs are accompanied by symbolically represented information, thus avoiding a need for English. Next to a computer room, a sign announces computer lab in Hebrew, followed by the widely-recognized symbol of prohibition, a red circle with a line through the circle, around a fork and knife, and likewise with a mobile phone.

Although viewers clearly understand that food, drink and phones are prohibited, it is not immediately apparent that this is a computer lab.

Informative signs are evident in one other domain – artwork. At College A, the art department routinely advertises exhibitions and events in Hebrew, English and Arabic, (the only Arabic visible on either of the two campuses). Displays of art that stem from the college art department feature Hebrew titles, translated into English, and full or partial translations and/or explanations accompany all work exhibited. In one art installation a painting of flower blossoms is accompanied by a Haiku poem about flower blossoms in Kyoto, Japan, in English only. The college also hosts a program for gifted children and their art exhibitions displays too are multilingual. At College B, where there is no art department, framed prints line the walls of the halls near the administrative offices; as well as the main hallway, the entrance to the college, has been transformed into a public art gallery. Artwork is accompanied by tiles in Hebrew and English, and additional information is often included (i.e., the artist, the name of the piece, the medium used, and in the case of the prints, the museum where artwork is on permanent display) in English too.

Throughout both colleges such displays of English can also be found on commercially printed information. Such notification most frequently warns of imminent danger in the environment, the location of dangerous substances, where drivers must slow down and where floors have been washed recently and are wet. Scattered throughout the college is similar and standardized, commercial use of English denoting information such as transparent, glass doors that must be pushed to open. Quite often information that appears in Hebrew is not accompanied by any English but is instead accompanied by the aforementioned iconic symbols. At College B, the words “women's washroom” appear in Hebrew, with no translation to English. A sign sporting a standardized symbol of a woman wearing a white dress, on a red background was later added under the Hebrew words (after the data for this study were collected). Similarly, at College A, Hebrew accompanies a silhouette of a female head; there is no English. One international student interviewed explained she left a class to go to the bathroom but had to wait for 15 minutes outside the bathroom door before another woman entered and she was sure that it was in fact the women's washroom and not for men.

The only exception to where information is disseminated in both colleges to students and faculty in both Hebrew and English is technology. English makes an appearance in computer-generated conventions shared with staff and students alike, in messages that read *Save the date, infolio* (a portfolio of information related to technology), and *SimTeach*, a computer-generated program for simulated teaching, all of which are followed by detailed information in Hebrew. English is, in this case, used as an attention-grabber. In rare cases, English makes up some of the content. Most often, its use does not extend beyond individual lexical items or short expressions, like *Zumba* (aerobic exercise) or *Move in House* (a fitness class).

### *Commercial signs*

The function of advertising lies behind the majority of signs in the college that display English. Advertisements for Coca Cola and Fanta appear alongside advertisements for Italian-made coffee and Nestle ice cream. There is English on vending machines, on ATM machines and taxi services located at the front desk. English is a common language of marketing in Israel. Even the formerly used scripts of Coca-Cola in Hebrew and Arabic that once held large appeal for tourists have been rewritten in English. The globalization of the English language holds a particularly strong position in marketing. Signs of a top-down type used for the marketing of a commercial nature make up the bulk of signs in English observed in this research.

Advertising on college campuses is often specifically geared towards students, products such as Rescue Remedy, (a natural substance to reduce stress), and computer equipment (i.e., external hard drives), and offered to students at discounted prices. Students enrolled at the colleges are given college agendas with all college events pre-marked, and pages of advertising for local businesses (e.g., food services). Bulletin boards around campus, one near a café and others on the landings of stairwells post information. Originally intended for college-related information, these have been taken over by commercial advertising with commercial ads slipped in under the display glass, so that they outnumber school-related events. At College A advertising is even located inside individual washroom stalls. Different stalls within the same washroom promote two different commercial English courses, both which advertise the exemption of students from the study of English, upon completion of the courses offered. One such business increases accessibility by providing a telephone number on post notes which can be conveniently torn off. More commercial signs (18 signs) were observed than another type of signs. (In comparison, there were 16 informative signs, and eight signs of an educational nature).

### *Educational signs*

A limited number of signs of a top-down and educational nature are visible at both colleges. At College B their participation in the European Erasmus/Tempus program is announced on a variety of large, laminated signs, posted at various locations throughout the college, including the main entrance. Although these signs are of different sizes and designs, they are all in the same colors, display the name of the program, its logo, slogan and a flag of the European Union. At the other college, which also participates in this program, this activity is not visible.

At College A information about academic conferences is displayed, but not at College B. The posters are all, without exception, limited to the field of science (e.g., Biology, Chemistry and Physics) and mathematics, and most are in English, with limited use of Hebrew, used only for local conferences. These

conferences – in developmental plasticity and the molecular basis of evolutionary change, and a meeting of the Meteorology consortium – are aimed at faculty, not at students. They disseminate information to faculty, as confirmed by their location in the faculty lounge, an area off limits to students, and the corridor leading towards the faculty lounge. While the overall message is a positive one – that one needs English to advance professionally – this goes unnoticed by students, to whom such posters are irrelevant and/or inaccessible. Even at the annual, college-wide researcher's conference, an event where lecturers share their work with one another, the use of English does not extend beyond a translation of the name of the conference and the titles of the individual presentations, printed in the conference schedule, the latter often translated literally from Hebrew to English, and displayed with margins written from left to right, like Hebrew. At College B, faculty shares their publications in a glass display case adjacent to the library. All publications are in Hebrew, with the only exception being the work authored by native speakers of Arabic, who, it seems, may prefer to publish in English. Although native speakers of Arabic may publish in Hebrew and native speakers of Hebrew may publish academic work in English, no such publications are displayed. This could be, in part, due to who is represented. This voluntary display of publications is mainly that of junior faculty, who are more likely to publish in Hebrew, while experienced and more senior lecturers and professors, who may publish in English, no longer feel a need to display their achievement.

It is the bottom-up signs of an educational nature in English that are of particular significance to this research because they reflect the extent to which English plays an important role in these specific institutions. The choice of signage reflects the institution's attitude and the attitude of the administration towards English. The frequency and purpose of signs posted in English also determines the message that is relayed to students about English in higher education. The administration decides what it posts, the languages that signs are written in, what information is translated and what is not, while deciding on other factors as well (e.g., order of languages, size of font).

Both institutions exhibit some permanently displayed information of an educational nature in English. The physics department at College A has erected a permanent installation at the entrance to a building, of Foucault's Pendulum with explanations in Hebrew and English. Permanent displays of publications by biology department members are on display in English and Hebrew, located next to a brief biography of each lecturer. (Since the data collection, these have been replaced with short biographies of each faculty member in Hebrew only, and there are no longer samples of their publications in English). At the same location, are two samples of student papers, two of which (out of a total of four) are in English.

English, as used for technology, is also on permanent display and frequently appears on signage as it relates to education within the domain of technology, but what comes to light in these signs is that while on the surface

they appear to be of an educational nature, they often fulfill a commercial purpose as well. This includes an entire hallway at college B, where all of the décor (including a comfortable work station), a classroom of the future (that houses the college robot and virtual reality technology), and colorful signage on the walls, is sponsored by a specific, commercial computer company that works in tandem with the college. Signs promote the use of technology through a variety of inspiring quotes and interactive activities, including letters that can be moved around a fixed board to write what the students wish (in Hebrew only), and white, plastic hand-held bubbles of text that they can hold up around their faces to pose for selfies, most of which is Hebrew text, but some of which are in English and sport expressions such as “Technology is awesome” I [heart] technology” and “My favorite app is...” The signs that line the walls include expressions like “don't bury your failures let them inspire you,” “Here we must run as fast as we can just to stay in place – And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that. Lewis Carroll,” and “I have never tried it before, So I am sure I can do it. Pippi Longstocking.” Adherence to the conventions of capitalization and punctuation are inconsistent with English conventions. Additionally, words in English, randomly line this corridor, words painted on the wall to resemble internal computer components, such as EXPLORE, DREAM, BELIEVE, and SHARE. Additional displays of English, while seemingly random, read “When clicked...repeat...wait \_ secs...Show...clear...Turn> \_\_\_degrees...repeat.” This hallway, sponsored by one specific company, brings forth a vitality of English not experienced elsewhere in either college. The message relayed here is that English is the language of technology, but further examination reveals that this technology is related to business. In examining the relationship of educational signage to commercial ventures, the former number of educational signs – eight – doubles in number to 16 signs.

Temporary, educational displays are apparent only at College B. These consist of poster presentations, and samples of student work displayed in a common area. This work is the culmination of a multi-disciplinary course, where the work prepared by students in the English department is entirely in English, while that prepared by native speakers of Hebrew and Arabic is in Hebrew, with some English, used for titles and definitions of main concepts, alongside Hebrew, in a polyphonic manner. Whether aimed at faculty or students, whether of a permanent or temporary nature, signs which use English for educational purposes are most often related to science or technology.

### ***Interviews with foreign students***

Interviews with students about signage add a deeper dimension and an external view of the linguistic landscape. Interviews with four international students who rely on English to navigate their way around the school provide insight into the effect of the colleges' dominant Hebrew policy. In semi-structured interviews conducted with visiting, international students at College

B, they expressed surprise at the lack of visible English. They observe how necessary English is, even for basic functions, like entering the college website. They stated that they had expected to see some signage in English but did not see any at all. One student said, “We just learned our way around because nothing at the college – nothing – is explained in English. Even the restrooms are labeled only in Hebrew.” They mention how the lack of English signage limited their accessibility to important information, such as classroom changes, absent lecturers and college-wide events, which in one case included an unscheduled evacuation of the college and the cancellation of studies due to a fire in the city. They also mentioned how odd the lack of English is in comparison to areas outside of the college, like malls, bus stops and restaurants, where information in English is readily available. Furthermore, two interviewees compared the lack of English at the college to their own college in Switzerland, where all signs appear in German, French and English.

### **Conclusion**

In analyses of visible signage in English at two specific teacher training colleges, the status of English comes to light. While English is a language of academic and curricular significance, it does not appear to be so on a pragmatic level, at either institution, which is at odds with the colleges’ visions and goals of internationalization and participation in various European academic programs. In other words, the results reveal some discrepancy between the stated educational importance and role of the English language and its visibility, display and use in the immediate environment. The two colleges studied remain very much monolingual institutions. English exists, in so far as that it is taught behind classroom doors, as regulated by the authorities, but its use rarely extends into public areas, with the exception of that which fulfills specific purposes, most commonly to advertise commercial ventures and promote technological innovation, one of which is related to the other. The one exception to this is the field of math and sciences, where while there is some use of English, but the intended audience is not one of learners, rather the faculty. English makes an appearance in these college settings mainly as a language advertising and business. English sells – so it is visible. The other reason for its presence is due to the adherence to regulations by external bodies (e.g., the local municipality and health and safety regulations). There is limited use of English for educational purposes, and even in some instances, where on a surface level the function of English appears to be educational, further, critical examination reveals that its purpose is twofold, a combination of educational and commercial functions simultaneously.

While globalization is reflected in Israel on a wide scale, particularly through the use of English, this is less applicable to education, where it is used mainly for commercial purposes, and is limited to specific domains. The signage in the linguistic landscape of higher education is still very much guided by a national linguistic agenda and it remains predominantly Hebrew,

despite a practical and professional need for English. The message relayed to the students by the schoolscape is that English is a specific-course related requirement; it does not portray English as a language of growing need and usefulness today.

What is observed in this study is linguistic ideology, an ideological perspective where Hebrew serves as the dominant language of Israeli academia. English has limited visibility, and exposure to English in the environment appears within a narrow scope. The role of English is marginalized by ideological belief and through “iconization” (Irvine & Gal, 2009, p. 404). There is, to some extent, too, what Irvine and Gal (2009, p. 404) term the “erasure” of language, in this case of English. As noted in this study, at both colleges the English departments (two English Language and Literature departments, English for Academic Purposes and English as a Foreign Language) are practically invisible. With the current number of native speakers who choose to become English teachers declining, with strong students of English opting for more lucrative professions, leaving the field manned by those of a lower level, and a national shortage of English teachers, these departments cannot afford to be invisible. There is a need for English to be present in an academic arena. It is not visible even though the former, national idea of 'one nation, one language' has become obsolete in today's present educational climate and Israeli linguists (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999) attest to the fact that the English language does not threaten Israel's national or cultural identity in any way. Reshef (2008, p. 754) confirms that “English seems to pose no real threat to Hebrew as the base language of Israeli society.” Knowledge of the English language is a necessity and knowledge can be enhanced by visibility, which in turn affects the attitude towards English and increases motivation to learn. Thus, exposure to English in the linguistic landscape of academia would not only send the message that English is important, but it would provide students with the language exposure necessary to develop the language-related skills they require for linguistic and intellectual enrichment and growth. Furthermore, the need for increased visibility of English has implications for favorable decisions of language planners and policy makers to promote the academic use of English.

The one place in which English does seem to have a presence is in the commercial sphere. Commercial ventures in educational setting are abundant. Researchers (Backhaus, 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Gorter, 2006) show that the learning of English is enhanced through exposure. The use of English promotes products and services that are of educational value, can encourage students to confront and overcome reservations they may have about learning English, increases motivation and allows them to experience success. The translation of top-down, informative signage into English, for instance, while a minor change, would not only expose students to the language they must study, but also convey the important message that English is of pragmatic value. Likewise, it would be beneficial to aim educational content, in English, specifically at students, and make such material accessible. It would be

beneficial to expand the dissemination of information in English beyond the specific fields of science and technology, so that it extends other fields, such as the humanities.

No effort is spared to ensure that Hebrew remains a language of linguistic vitality in Israel. But this need not, in any way, influence or detract from the recognition of the English language as a globalized language of growing and practical significance. A more visible presence of English as it relates to education, academia and specific areas, such as internationalization and education, would highlight the necessity and value of English. Such an awareness and effort should extend beyond the classroom to include the linguistic landscape and schoolscape in order to provide students with necessary exposure, and language-related skills. Whether students enter a profession or continue onto graduate-level studies, English is a necessary requirement in present day Israeli society. With further professional activity in English comes subsequent knowledge, advancement, and opportunity. English today is not visible to the extent that it is of benefit to students, yet there is no debate that it must be a required element of a student's academic knowledge and experience. Higher education in Israel is inseparable from the present global era and the ensuing globalization of education, an era in which the English language is the unattested globalized language of education; hence, the visibility and use of English in the academic settings needs to be promoted and enhanced.

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