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Overt or Covert: Who Cares About the Language Policy?

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the overt or covert language policy in action in the divided capital city of Cyprus, Nicosia, through the notion of linguistic landscape. Examining language use on public signs provides valuable insights into the linguistic situation of a given place, including the visibility of official language policies, ideological orientations, and power relations among linguistic groups. Official language policies refer to explicit or implicit rules and regulations that shape or control language use in public space. To this end, the study analyzes both top-down (official) and bottom-up (non-official) public signs displayed in two historically and socially significant neighboring areas of Nicosia: Arasta in the northern part of the city and Ledra Street in the southern part. Drawing on social action theory as a methodological framework, the study investigates whether the linguistic choices observed on these signs align with the provisions of official language policies or reflect covert practices shaped by social actors. Data were collected through systematic photographic documentation of public signs and analyzed in terms of language choice, order of appearance, and relative prominence. The findings reveal clear asymmetries between policy and practice, indicating that Greek is more visible and symbolically powerful than Turkish, particularly in the southern part

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of the city. Moreover, the results suggest that language policy, whether overt or covert, plays a limited role in shaping the linguistic landscape of public space.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, Nicosia, Cyprus, language policy, covert policy, overt policy

Açık veya Örtük: Dil Politikasını Kim Önemsiyor?

Özet

Bu makalenin amacı, dilsel manzara kavramı üzerinden Kıbrıs'ın bölünmüş başkenti Lefkoşa'da açık veya örtük dil politikasının nasıl uygulandığını incelemektir. Kamusal alanlarda bulunan tabelalardaki dil kullanımının incelenmesi, resmî dil politikalarının görünürlüğü, ideolojik yönelimler ve dil grupları arasındaki güç ilişkileri dâhil olmak üzere belirli bir yerin dilsel durumuyla ilgili değerli bilgiler sağlar. Resmî dil politikaları, kamusal alanda dil kullanımını kasıtlı olarak şekillendiren veya kontrol eden açık veya örtük kuralları ve düzenlemeleri ifade eder. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, bu çalışma Lefkoşa'nın tarihsel ve sosyal açıdan önemli olan iki komşu bölgesinde (şehrin kuzeyinde bulunan Arasta ve güneyindeki Ledra Caddesi) yer alan hem resmî (yukarıdan aşağıya dilsel manzara) hem de resmî olmayan, bireysel, ticari ya da özel aktörler tarafından üretilmiş (aşağıdan yukarıya dilsel manzara) kamusal tabelaları analiz etmektedir. Sosyal eylem teorisinin metodolojik bir çerçeve olarak kullanıldığı bu çalışma, söz konusu tabelalarda gözlemlenen dilsel seçimlerin resmî dil politikalarının hükümleriyle uyumlu olup olmadığını veya sosyal aktörler tarafından şekillendirilen gizli uygulamaları yansıtıp yansıtmadığını araştırmaktadır. Veriler, kamusal tabelaların sistematik fotoğraf dokümantasyonu yoluyla toplanmış ve dil seçimi, görünme sırası ve göreceli önem açısından analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, politika ve uygulama arasında açık asimetri bulduğunu ortaya koymakta olup; özellikle şehrin güney kesiminde Yunancanın Türkçeden daha görünür ve sembol olarak daha güçlü olduğunu göstermektedir. Dahası sonuçlar, açık veya örtük dil politikasının kamusal alanın dilsel manzarasını şekillendirmede sınırlı bir rol oynadığını öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dilsel manzara, Lefkoşa, Kıbrıs, dil politikası, örtük dil politikası, açık dil politikası



Linguistic landscape (LL), language visibility in the public space, has been one of the mostly addressed topics during the recent decades. It has been focused on in various books, dissertations and articles. It has been treated from various perspectives. One of these perspectives is linguistic landscape vis-à-vis language policies since in most cases, linguistic landscape in a public space is both shaped and controlled by laws and regulations. In fact, as Backhaus (2007, p.11) mentions, the data concerning visibility of language in the public space can provide significant evidence about not only official language policies, but also information about “language attitudes, power relations between different linguistic groups, and the long-term consequences of language and script contact, among others”. Thus, it would be important to see how the main provisions of the language policy are reflected in the language of public signs. However, as was argued by Anuarudin et al. (2013) discrepancies between what language policy stipulates and how language actually functions are quite obvious. In other words, language policy and language policy in action (i.e. language use) may sometimes be in conflict.

Thus, the aim of our study is to explore the extent to which LLs reflect official language policies in the north and south parts of the divided capital of Cyprus, Nicosia. More specifically, the study attempts to see the differences between overt and covert language policies vis-à-vis language visibility. To this end, the language visibility of two neighborhoods (*Arasta* in the North and *Ledra Street* in the South) has been scrutinized (see Figure 1).

Two approaches have been used in this study: top-down and bottom-up. The rationale behind the former approach was to see to what extent official public signs reflected the official language policy provisions. On the other hand, the focus was also on bottom-up signs to see the attitudes of people towards covert or overt language policies.

Literature Review

The Linguistic Landscape as a field of enquiry is a relatively new topic which got impetus after Landry and Bourhis’ article published in 1997 where the concept of Linguistic Landscape was defined as: “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25).

Nowadays it has become one of the most addressed topics by researchers from both applied linguistics and neighboring fields although the field has certain unresolved moments in its epistemology. However, the field continues to provide neighboring fields with data that enable deeper insights into the pro-



cesses taking place in society. It needs also to be mentioned that even the term linguistic landscape has been supplemented by many ‘-scapes’ and its scope has been significantly widened (Shibliyev, 2019). In fact, these perspectives can be described as kaleidoscopic in nature in constant change both in terms of its scope and methods involved. In other words, the scope of linguistic landscape research has long since expanded from urban to rural areas, and from physical to virtual landscapes (Hiippala et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2024; Keles et al., 2020; Vinagre, 2022).

One of the obvious perspectives in the field is the one where researchers consider public signs to establish the relationship between language visibility and the relative power and status of both the dominant language and minority languages. It is also obvious that dominant languages rather than minority ones prevail in place names and commercial signs (Gorter, 2006).

It has also been accepted that even though LL can be associated with semiotics as it focuses on signs, its scope can relate to sociology of language, language policy, and planning (Van Mensel, 2016). As a matter of fact, many studies have been conducted in multilingual areas where language contact may cause political or social conflicts (Gorter, 2019). These studies aim at seeing whether the promoted official language is in conflict with English as a colonial language (Rosenbaum et al., 1977). Researchers have also considered linguistic landscapes from historical perspectives with emphasis on power and identity. This may enable them to figure out the longitudinal impacts of various language laws and language management regulations on societal dynamics. In other words, by analyzing the dynamics of change throughout a specific period of time, one can obtain direct formation of social structures and cultural identities (Blommaert, 2013; Gorter, 2006).

As our literature review shows, globalization has a crucial impact on linguistic landscapes. Researchers have begun to explore not only international and transnational tendencies, but also issues concerning mobility in urban linguistic diversity (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). On the other hand, this can be observed via analysis of the linguistic landscape of a specific object like a subway system in a city. For instance, Tang (2020) focused on the linguistic landscape of the Circle Line stations in Singapore. Similarly, Xiao and Lee (2022) employed a sociolinguistic approach to examine the use of English in a museum in Beijing.

There are also cases when linguistic landscapes are examined in relation to specific events. For instance, the Covid-19 pandemic event was the focal point for Hopkyns and Hoven (2022), who analyzed linguistic signs of Abu Dhabi with emphasis on language diversity and inclusion. In fact, the scope of



linguistic landscape research has been widened to include new horizons. One of these horizons is considering linguistic signs from the perspective of social identities in society. For instance, Motschenbacher (2020) focused on the linguistic landscape of Wilton Manors' LGBT community in Florida.

The role of globalization and internationalization has been one of the perspectives in LL research as they may contribute to the frequent use of English in urban settings (Chern & Dooley, 2014). Linguistic signs in urban settings have also been explored from the perspective of linguistic imperialism in some studies where the prevalent use of English is explained in terms of linguistic imperialism. For instance, Phillipson (1992) thinks that dominant use of English in such fields as politics, economy or science is the direct result of ambitions of imperial powers. There are also studies which deal with possible ways to cope with the threat of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1997; Ullah & Akram, 2023).

Using linguistic signs in the public space has also been focused on from the perspective of learner awareness of bilingualism and language diversity. Cenoz and Gorter (2008), for example, underscore the importance of using linguistic landscape in second language acquisition. Moreover, it is believed that focusing on LL can contribute to learner awareness of the fact that language can be a powerful symbolic and affective tool. As Rowland (2013) points out, this can be achieved by asking learners explore hidden meanings and associations in linguistic texts in public signs. For instance, Chern and Dooley (2014) report of designing linguistic landscape-based activities to enhance language learning catering for both pragmatic and critical reading skills. In the same vein, Solmaz and Przymus (2021) focus on linguistic landscape-based activities designed for EFL teachers and EFL teacher candidates. Similar research has been carried out with Saudi students by Al-Jarf (2021) to show how linguistic landscapes can be used for teaching English at a tertiary institution. Also, linguistic landscape has been focused on by Roos and Nicholas (2019) to investigate young EFL learners' experiences in Germany.

Researchers in the field have gone further when dealing with LL for pedagogical purposes focusing on 'schoolscapes' believing that the linguistic signs in schools can be used as a valuable instrument for both learning about languages and raising language awareness (Gorter, 2018). Similarly, Dressler (2015) investigates the linguistic signs in a public elementary school and claims that it may help a bilingual program to understand how the linguistic landscape can foster bilingualism.



Research on LL in Cyprus with Various Perspectives

The linguistic landscape research on Cyprus has been frequented in recent years from various perspectives. Using the linguistic landscape for teaching/learning purposes is one of these perspectives. For instance, Kılıgın and Erozan (2025) explores a specific street in the vicinity of a university campus from the angle of the potential use of linguistic signs for developing instructional materials for students. They claim that using linguistic landscape-based materials for pedagogical purposes exposes learners to authentic materials and creates opportunities for genuine language practice. Also, Koç (2019) analyzes the linguistic landscape of a university campus (Eastern Mediterranean University) from a similar perspective. Similarly, Önal (2014) focuses on LL in a wider geography, considering the linguistic signs of a city in Cyprus - Kyrenia. Another perspective that has been followed in research in the North is taken by Erozan and Büyükoğlu (2025) who examine the linguistic landscape of the old town section of Gazimağusa, which is known as *Suriçi*. They explored the competing linguistic situation by applying the social action theory with three perspectives: representation of self, good reasons and power-relations.

In fact, little has been written about the language policy planning in Cyprus. It is also true that the absence of an explicitly declared language policy implies its complete lack as in many nations language policies are absolutely covert. Nevertheless, as Karmellou (2008) emphasizes the importance of language planning policy for multicultural and multi-ethnic Cyprus where language has a crucial power to shape the citizens' collective conscience and ethos. She also touches upon the role of language policy in inter-community relations and the ways that language educational policy may promote interethnic relations. Papapavlou and Pavlou (2007), exemplify the language policy in Cyprus as a covert policy due to the fact that it has never been officially declared.

Actually, this is true for both communities (Greek and Turkish) although language-related issues have been touched upon in various parliament sessions in the South (Karyolemou, 2008). However, as Hadjoannou and Tsiplakou (2016) note, the constitution of the South contains no provisions concerning official language policy planning agencies. The same is true for North Cyprus where no community-based bodies have been appointed officially. In other words, the common feature for both parts of the island can be said to be the lack of any official language policy organizations. It would not be quite logical to expect the two communities to have language policies in terms of corpus planning since the languages spoken on the island are just regional dialects of the mainland languages. However, what concerns language acquisition planning, decisions can be taken by local legislative entities including the ministries of education.



Thus, as explained above, this study aims at finding out to what extent LLs reflect official language policies or ‘non-policies’ in the north and south parts of the divided capital of Cyprus: Nicosia. To this aim, official and non-official signs, i.e. top-down and bottom-up, partly constituting the linguistic landscapes of the divided city of Nicosia were analyzed to find out how official rules and regulations shape the LLs. Arasta region in the north and its continuation in the south, Ledra Street, made up the context of the study.

Language Policy, Language Planning and their Reflections on the LL

Conscious intrusion of the official or legislative bodies into language use in the community is a phenomenon whose history dates back to the first millennium. In part, this could be explained by pragmatic considerations when the standardization of a certain variety as a standard language was inevitable. But later, socio-political considerations prevailed, and language issues began to be used as an instrument to manipulate national aspirations. Nevertheless, research findings seem to provide contradictory results concerning the efficiency of language policy planning. In other words, there seems to be a gap between the propositions of the law and actual practice. From this viewpoint, it would be interesting to investigate whether the presence or absence of the official language policy finds its reflection in the public space.

Language Policy Planning in the Southern Part

According to the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus (Republic of Cyprus, 1960, art. 3), Greek and Turkish are the two official languages of the state. In fact, the Constitution granted equal rights to the languages of the communities that the island was made up. But the fact is that the 1960 constitution is still in function even today although it is no longer valid in the northern part of the island. Moreover, as it will be seen in the later sections of the article, this provision is partially observed in the South. This is especially explicit in official documents (passports, acts of birth and death, currency and stamps) in which the two official languages of the island, Greek and Turkish are visible. As regards the language of the media, the constitution of the South guarantees broadcasting at least 75 hours in a week for both communities, Greek and Turkish (Hadjioannou & Tsiplakou, 2016).

As previously noted, there seems to be no official bodies to deal with language policy planning in the southern part of the island. But language management issues are the prerogative of the institutions including the ministry and lower ranks. It can be concluded that even though the 1960 constitution of the Republic of Cyprus which declared Greek and Turkish as official languages, its actual use in the south is limited to the use of Turkish in such areas “as government-issued Identification Cards, passports, currency bills and government-issued forms”. Yet, Turkish is not used in actual communication



in the Greek Cypriot community (Hadjioannou & Tsipalou, 2016). In fact, as Hadjioannou and Tsipalou (2016) mention, all interactions, official or unofficial, are carried out solely in Greek. Absence of Turkish is explained by the lack of direct interactions with Turkish Cypriots.

What concerns the status of English in the South Constitution, Article 189 envisages that “the English language may be used in any proceedings before any court in the Republic”. In fact, English has widely been used in various sectors of the civil service (Karoulla-Vrikki, 2009; Trudgill & Schreier, 2006). It is also true that its use was significantly limited in the 1994 regulation which required that all official documents be issued only in the official languages, Greek and Turkish (Hadjioannou et al., 2011).

So far, no official documents have been adopted by legislative bodies concerning language use in the public space although certain attempts have been made. For instance, in the 1990s, two attempts were made to propose using national languages though neither proposal was voted into law. On the other hand, according to Karoulla-Vrikki (2009), various decisions have been taken by the Cabinet of Ministers in the South which make the use of Greek mandatory in business, various manuals, menus, prescriptions, etc. Christodoulou (1993), Papapavlou (2001) and Karyolemou (2001) justify this with crisis of the Greek in the island and the need to support it to withstand the destructive power of English.

It would be hard to agree with some researchers (Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2007, p. 166) completely who find the language policy in Cyprus as a covert policy since some elements of status planning and acquisition planning are explicitly declared in official documents. But the researchers are completely right when it comes to standardization due to the fact that the communities do not have their own specific standard varieties. In other words, rather than speaking about ‘Cypriot language’, we deal with Greek Cypriot Dialect (GCD) and Turkish Cypriot Dialect (Kıbrıs Ağzı). Among minority languages, researchers mention Armenian, Cypriot Maronite, Kurbetcha (a Para-Romani) and Mandi or Mandidites (Christian Gypsies of Cyprus).

Language Policy Planning in the Northern Part

The only document that contains language issues is the 1983 TRNC Constitution Article 2 which proposes that the official language is Turkish (TRNC Constitution, 1983 Article 2). Since 1983 when the TRNC was declared language issue has never been touched upon officially at the government level. What concerns acquisition planning, the TRNC Education curriculum is a replica of the mainland education system. In most cases, decisions are taken at the institutional levels. There seems to be no need to deal with the standardization since the standard variety of Turkish is the official language.



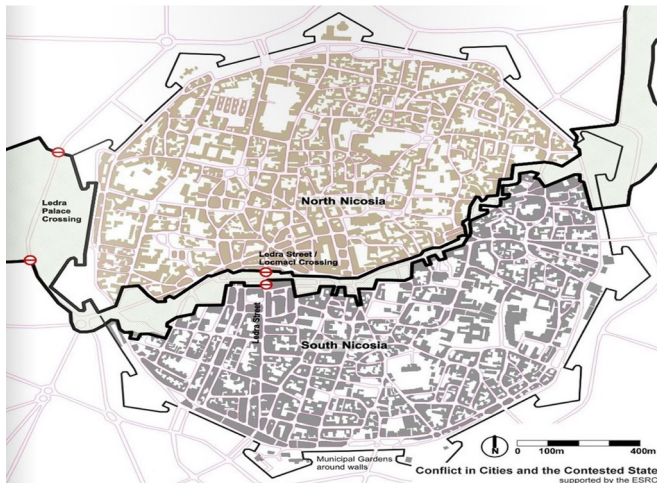
Thus, in this part of the island, Greek has no official status. Instead, English is used at various levels as a medium of instruction. In fact, in nearly all private schools and universities English is used as a language of instruction. It also remains to be widely used in both interethnic communication and tourism. Some newspapers are in English as well. There are also TV/radio programs in English, Arabic, Greek and Russian, etc. In fact, in recent years, Russian has become a commodity in the north.

Method

The study limited its focus to two neighboring sections of the capital city of Cyprus (Ledra Street in the south and Arasta in the north of the city of Nicosia). In fact, they are among the most frequently visited vicinities for tourists.

The origin of the word *Arasta* is the Persian word *Araste*. It meant the part of the mosque where traders were allowed to conduct their business. Later the word was used to name any market area. Before the division of the city, *Arasta* was the most important shopping street of old Nicosia (in the North), linking into *Ledra Street* in the south of the city. The street was famous for its shoe and textile shops, and since it was close to the Selimiye Mosque and the Bandabuliya (Municipal Market), it was a social meeting location for the people. *Ledra Street*, on the other hand, was traditionally the main shopping street in Nicosia, and properties on the street are still largely for commercial use. After the removal of the barrier (Lokmacı/Ledra crossing) between the two parts of the city in April 2008, the visitors to both sides of Nicosia had the easiest and most accessible pedestrian crossing point, which revitalized the Ledra area of South Cyprus and the Arasta area of North Cyprus (Arasta Street, 2021; Ledra Street, 2025).

Figure 1: Map of the Neighborhood – Arasta and Ledra Street



In this study, the main emphasis was placed on language visibility vis-à-vis language policy. In other words, our driving motivation for the research was to attempt to understand the role of language policy in language visibility. Concerning the methodological framework, the vicinity was documented in terms of language use in both top-down signs (to understand how official language policy is implemented by the official institutions themselves) and bottom-up signs (to see how the private sector reacts to the official language policy provisions). For this purpose, the first step was taking the photographs of all linguistic signs (road signs, billboards, street names, institution names, notes which provide additional information, commercial shop signs, public signs on government buildings, etc.), excluding temporary signs such as posters and announcements providing information about discounts, job vacancies, etc. in two days (25-26 October, 2024). The second step was categorizing these signs as bottom-up and top-down for the South and the North, respectively. The third step was further categorizing the signs based on the languages and their saliency such as Turkish-only, English-only, Greek-English, Turkish only, Turkish-English, etc. The final step was counting the signs on each category and calculating their percentages.

Results and Discussion

The data obtained from each of the two neighboring areas, *Arasta* and *Ledra Street*, were analyzed separately. Social action theory with three perspectives applicable to language visibility was used to analyze top-down and bottom-up public signs. The rationale behind considering top-down signs was to see whether official signs (governmental and/or municipal) are in consensus with the language laws adopted by the official bodies, whereas analysis of bottom-up linguistic signs would provide evidence concerning the reaction of private businesses (shops, restaurants, hotels) to the provisions of the language laws and regulations.

Ledra Street (in the Southern Part)

There were 27 signs in this category, and they were first categorized based on the languages visible on them as monolinguals, bilinguals and multilinguals. Then, bilingual and multilingual signs were further analyzed according to the order of the languages they included. The public signs comprised road signs, street names, and state organs.



Table 1: Visibility of Top-Down Signs – Ledra Street

LL Languages	Top-down
Greek only	25.92% (n=7)
English only	3.70% (n=1)
Greek-English	48.15% (n=13)
English-Greek	7.41% (n=2)
Greek-English-Turkish	7.41% (n=2)
Greek-Turkish-English	7.41% (n=2)
Total	(n=27)

The results of data analysis showed that almost half (48.15%) of the top-down signs were bilingual, i.e. Greek-English whereas one-fourths were monolingual Greek. On the other hand, only 3.70% were monolingual English, and 7.41% were trilingual including Greek-English-Turkish or Greek-Turkish English. Very interestingly, while the majority (48.15%) of the top-down signs were bilingual including Greek and English, only 7.41% were bilingual containing English and Greek.

English is the most widely used language on official signs; it is used on 74.08% of the top-down signs in different positions. The highest frequency of use of English is on Greek-English bilingual signs (48.15%). For instance, the signs showing street names are written in Greek and English, respectively. As can be seen in Figure 2 (see Appendix), street names are written in Greek first, with Greek script, and then in English. Similarly, a sign belonging to a state university is written in the same format (Figure 3). However, on 7.41% of the top-down signs, English is used with Greek but in an opposite order – Greek first, English second. English is also used in combination with other languages on some bilingual or trilingual signs. There are also some (14.82%) trilingual signs on which English, Greek and Turkish are used in different order (Figures 4 and 5).

This dominance of English has also appeared in various studies (Chern & Dooley, 2014; Phillipson, 1992; Tang, 2020; Ullah & Akram, 2023; Xiao & Lee, 2022), which can be explained by the fact that English is considered as a language of modernity and prestige. This underscores the perspective of good reasons in the social action theory (see Erozán & Büyükoğlu, 2025).

Contrary to the low number of top-down sign, there were 133 signs in the bottom-up category. Similarly, these bottom-up signs were first categorized on the basis of the languages visible on them as monolinguals, bilinguals and

multilinguals, and then the bilingual and multilingual ones were further examined in relation to the order of the languages on them. The bottom-up signs involved shoe/clothes/gift/souvenir/etc. shops, restaurants/cafes, law offices, doctor or dentist clinics, jewelry shops, and a cinema.

Like the top-down signs, the analysis of the data revealed that almost half (48.12%) of the bottom-up signs were bilingual, whereas 43.61 % were monolingual in different languages. More specifically, 29.32% were monolingual English (see Figure 6), 8.27% were monolingual Greek (see Figure 7), 3.01% were monolingual Italian (see Figure 8), 2.26% were monolingual French (see Figure 9), and 0.75% were monolingual Spanish. There were also some (5.25%) trilingual signs including Greek-English-Turkish (0.75%), Greek-English-Italian (0.75%), Italian-English-Greek (1.50%), French-English-Greek (0.75%), and French-Greek-English (1.50%). It can be seen that Turkish was used in only one (0.75%) trilingual bottom-up sign as the third language (see Figure 10). This number was 7.41% in top-down signs.

Table 2: Visibility of Bottom-Up Signs – Ledra Street

LL Languages	Bottom-up
Greek only	8.27% (n= 11)
English only	29.32% (n= 27+12=39)
Greek-English	27.82% (n= 37)
English-Greek	15.79% (n= 21)
Greek-English-Turkish	0.75% (n= 1)
Italian	3.01% (n= 4)
Italian-English	3.01% (n= 4)
Greek-English-Italian	0.75% (n= 1)
Italian-English-Greek	1.50% (n= 2)
French	2.26% (n= 3)
French-English	0.75% (n= 1)
French-English-Greek	0.75% (n= 1)
French-Greek-English	1.50% (n= 2)
Spanish	0.75% (n= 1)
Spanish-English	0.75% (n= 1)
Greek-English-Romanian-Russian	0.75% (n= 1)
International Brand	2.26% (n= 3)
Total	(n= 133)



Arasta Neighborhood (in the Northern Part)

In Arasta region, 24 top-down signs were analyzed by following the same procedure used in the analysis of the signs in Ledra Street. After the categorization of the signs according to the languages visible on them as monolinguals, bilinguals and multilinguals, the order of the languages on the signs were focused on. The signs in this category included road signs, police or military signs, and state organs.

Table 3: Visibility of Top-Down Signs - Arasta

LL Languages	Top-down
Turkish only	54.17 (n=13)
English only	8.33 (n=2)
Turkish-English	29.17 (n=7)
Turkish-English-Greek	8.33 (n=2)
Total	100 (n=24)

Data analysis showed that more than half (54.17%) of the top-down signs were monolingual Turkish (see Figure 11) whereas 29.17% were bilingual including Turkish-English (see Figure 12). On the other hand, only 8.33% were monolingual English (see Figure 13), and similarly, 8.33% were trilingual including Turkish-English- Greek (see Figure 14). Except for *Turkish only* and *English only* signs there were no other monolingual official signs. Likewise, bilingual signs included only Turkish-English or English-Turkish combinations, whereas trilingual ones (two signs) included Turkish, English, and Greek.

Although only 24 top-down signs were spotted in the Arasta region, the number of bottom-up signs was 82. The bottom-up signs consisted of shoe/clothes/gift/souvenir/etc. shops, restaurants/cafes, jewelry shops, markets, menus, etc.

Following the same procedure of analysis, the results obtained showed that half (50%) of the bottom-up signs in the Arasta region were monolingual: 29.7% Turkish (see Figure 15), 13.41% English (see Figure 16), 2.44% Greek (see Figure 17), 1.22% French, and 1.22% Spanish, respectively. On the other hand, 29.27 % were bilingual, including Turkish-English (18.29%) and English-Turkish (6.10%) mainly (see Figure 18 and 19) in addition to other combinations (one sign for each combination). There were also some (8.54%) trilingual signs (see Figure 20) including Turkish-English-Greek (7.32%) and French-Turkish-English (1.22%). In contrast to Ledra Street, where Turkish appeared in only one bottom-up trilingual sign (0.75%) as the third language and in four top-down trilingual signs (14.82%) as the second or third



language, the Arasta region exhibited a different pattern. More specifically, on the Turkish side, i.e., Arasta, 8.33% of the official signs, which were trilingual, involved Greek as the third language in order. However, Greek was used in monolingual (two signs), bilingual (one sign), and trilingual (six signs) bottom-up signs.

Table 4: Visibility of Bottom-Up Signs – Arasta

LL Languages	Bottom-up
Turkish only	29.27 (n=24)
English only	13.41 (n=11)
Turkish-English	18.29 (n=15)
English-Turkish	6.10 (n=5)
Turkish-English-Greek	7.32 (n=6)
Greek only	2.44 (n=2)
Italian only	2.44 (n=2)
French only	1.22 (n=1)
Spanish only	1.22 (n=1)
Spanish-English	1.22 (n=1)
Turkish-Greek	1.22 (n=1)
French-English	1.22 (n=1)
English-Greek	1.22 (n=1)
French- Turkish-English	1.22 (n=1)
Other	12.19 (n=10)
Total	100 (n=82)

Findings and Conclusion

The data obtained from two adjoining locations (Arasta in the North and Ledra Street in the South) which were analyzed in terms of the social action framework with three perspectives by categorizing linguistic signs as top-down and bottom-up produced interesting findings. As previously noted, our driving force was to see the role that language policies could play in language visibility. In other words, it would be important for us to understand (a) the role of language policies in shaping the language visibility of the public space and (b) whether the type of language policy (overt or covert) has any effect on the agents.

Concerning Ledra Street, the findings show that Greek-English bilingual signs were quite dominant (comprising almost half of them) in top-down ones. This was in breach with the official policy of the South which obliges the use of both official languages (Greek and Turkish) in official (i.e., top-down) signs. Of monolingual top-down public signs, one-fourths were in Greek only



whereas this number was less than four percent for English. Monolingual Turkish was non-existent. Overall, English emerged as the dominant language, appearing on approximately three-fourths of all signs. Regarding language salience in bilingual or multilingual public signage, Greek holds greater prominence, as it is placed first in most cases. These findings are in contradiction with the findings of the two recent studies conducted in the North (Erozan & Büyükoğlu, 2025; Kılıgın & Erozan, 2025), which both reveal that Turkish (L1) rather than English (L2) dominates in the public space.

Table 5: Visibility of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Signs – Ledra Street and Arasta

LL Languages	Top-down		Bottom-up	
	Ledra (%)	Arasta (%)	Ledra (%)	Arasta (%)
Greek only	25.92	0	8.27	2.44
Turkish only	0	54.17	0	29.27
English only	3.70	8.33	29.32	13.41
Greek-English	48.15	0	27.82	0
Turkish-English	0	29.14	0	18.29
English-Greek	7.41	0	18.79	1.22
English-Turkish	0	0	0	6.10
Turkish-Greek	0	0	0	1.22
Greek-English-Turkish	7.41	0	0.75	0
Greek-Turkish-English	7.41	0	0	0
Turkish-English-Greek	0	8.33	0	7.32
Italian	0	0	3.01	2.44
Italian-English	0	0	3.01	0
Greek-English-Italian	0	0	0.75	0
Italian-English-Greek	0	0	1.50	0
French	0	0	2.26	1.22
French-English	0	0	0.75	1.22
French-English-Greek	0	0	0.75	0
French-Greek-English	0	0	1.50	0
French-Turkish-English	0	0	0	1.22
Spanish	0	0	0.75	1.22
Spanish-English	0	0	0.75	1.22
Greek-English-Romanian-Russian	0	0	0.75	0
International Brand	0	0	2.26	0
Other	0	0	0	12.19



Our findings show that the number of bottom-up public signs exceeds those of top-down ones significantly. Similar to the top-down signs, almost half of the bottom-up signs were bilingual, and percentage of monolingual ones was also slightly above forty three percent. In fact, great majority of these signs whereas those with monolingual Greek were nearly four times less. Along with these languages, there were monolingual signs including such languages as Italian, French and Spanish. Turkish monolingual signs were non-existent in bottom-up signs. What concerns trilingual signs, they included Greek, English, Italian, Turkish and French with variations in terms of languages used and their order in the signs. Findings also show that Turkish is used significantly less in bottom-up signs.

When top-down public signs in the Arasta neighborhood were analyzed, it could be seen that more than half of the public signs were in monolingual Turkish whereas nearly one-third of them were bilingual where Turkish and English were used. The number of monolingual English constituted less than ten percent. This implies that official attitude towards Turkish is significantly positive. It could also be seen that the number of trilingual top-down signs in Arasta constituted less than ten percent of the total. The languages that involved were English, Greek and Turkish.

As with Ledra Street, the number of bottom-up public signs approximately four times exceeds those of top-down ones. It was found out that exactly half of the bottom-up public signs in Arasta were nearly monolingual ones, great majority of which were in Turkish. The share of English cannot be underestimated. There were also monolingual public signs in Greek, French and Spanish. Concerning bilingual public signs, Turkish-English one prevailed. Moreover, the nearly one-fifth of the bottom-up public signs were English-Turkish. It was also found out that majority of trilingual signs involved Turkish, English and Greek. Unlike the linguistic landscape in Ledra Street where Turkish was almost non-existent, nearly ten percent of the trilingual signs involved Greek. In fact, Greek was used in monolingual, bilingual and trilingual bottom-up signs.

Thus, comparison of linguistic signs in two localities revealed that monolingual Turkish signs are completely non-existent in both top-down and bottom-up signs in Ledra Street whereas monolingual Greek signs are present in Arasta. But monolingual Greek is completely absent in top-down signs in Arasta. It was also evident that English was consistently used in both top-down and bottom-up signs in both localities although their ratio was not symmetrical: the share of English in Arasta was significantly higher in Arasta in top-down signs whereas the situation with bottom-up ones was completely different as nearly one-third of bottom-up signs in Ledra Street was in English.



As a result, it can be concluded that Greek is more powerful than Turkish due to the functions that the latter performs. There is gap between what language policy stipulates in the South and what the real situation with language visibility is: the language law which obliges the use of official languages (Greek and Turkish) is completely ignored. Moreover, the linguistic visibility in both sides enables us to claim that two parallel phenomena are in progress today: globalization of English and language diversity. This is, at least true for the two localizations under scrutiny. Thus, it can be concluded that language policy (whether overt or covert) has limited impact on language visibility, and this is especially evident in the public signs in the North.

Ethics Statement This study was prepared in accordance with the principles of research and publication ethics, and all works consulted have been cited in the reference list.

Author Contributions Fatoş Erozan: Conceptualization, Methodology (Data collection and analysis), Investigation, Writing up, Submission and Revision.

Javanshir Shibliyev: Conceptualization, Methodology (Data collection and analysis), Investigation, Writing up and Revision.

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Abbreviations

LL Linguistic landscape



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Appendix

Figure 2: Bilingual Top-Down Sign (Greek and English) – Ledra Street



Figure 3: Bilingual Top-Down Sign (Greek and English) – Ledra Street



Figure 4: Trilingual Top-Down Sign (Greek, English and Turkish) – Ledra Street



Figure 5: Trilingual Top-Down Sign (Greek, Turkish and English) – Ledra Street



Figure 6: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (English only) – Ledra Street



Figure 7: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (Greek only) – Ledra Street



Figure 8: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (Italian only) – Ledra Street



Figure 9: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (French only) – Ledra Street



Figure 10: Trilingual Bottom-Up Sign (Greek, English and Turkish) – Ledra Street



Figure 11: Monolingual Top-Down Sign (Turkish only) – Arasta



Figure 12: Bilingual Top-Down Sign (Turkish and English) – Arasta



Figure 13: Monolingual Top-Down Sign (English only) – Arasta



Figure 14: Trilingual Top-Down Sign (Turkish, English and Greek) – Arasta



Figure 15: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (Turkish only) – Arasta



Figure 16: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (English only) – Arasta



Figure 17: Monolingual Bottom-Up Sign (Greek only) – Arasta



Figure 18: Bilingual Bottom-Up Sign (Turkish and English) – Arasta



Figure 19: Bilingual Bottom-Up Sign (English and Turkish) – Arasta



Figure 20: Trilingual Bottom-Up Sign (Turkish, English and Greek) – Arasta

