

Full Length Research Paper

The language of shop signs in Amman: A sociolinguistic study

Prof. Riyad F. Hussein, Mohammed Y. Nofal* and Ahmad J. Mansour

Philadelphia National School University of Jordan, UNRWA.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: amma2jo@yahoo.com.

Accepted May, 2014

This study aimed to investigate the languages used in shop signs in Amman, Jordan from a sociolinguistic perspective. In order to achieve the objective of the study, the researchers posed two questions concerning language choice and the factors that influenced it. The study was conducted on shop signs in three different areas in Amman, Jordan, namely, Al-Wehdat Camp, Sweifieh and Jabal Al-Hussein, and the number of shop signs totaled 680. The sample was selected on grounds of convenience and it included 90 participants who were asked to fill out a three-section sociolinguistic questionnaire. The researchers made use of two instruments; a survey of shops and a sociolinguistic questionnaire. Results revealed that there were two main categories of shop signs regarding the languages used in them; namely, monolingual or bilingual signs. Results also disclosed that using foreign names in shop signs was profoundly enhanced by prestige, positive attitudes towards foreign names, commercial interests, type of goods/services provided and the educational and economic levels of customers.

Key words: Shop signs, business language, sociolinguistics, factors, Jordan.

INTRODUCTION

Naming is the process of associating symbolic descriptions to a particular person, object or property to identify it (Berlage et al., 1996). This can be quite deliberate or a natural process that occurs in life as a phenomenon that attracts the attention of the users of a language. Naming can be viewed as a sociolinguistic process that ties society members by means of language. This process makes people or objects identifiable and distinguishable within their societies. It is also a universal phenomenon that applies to all languages throughout history.

Naming practices among business persons usually reflect the nature of the goods they sell and the services they provide. Shop naming and signs could disclose some characteristics of the community such as the linguistic background.

Therefore, the study at hand aimed to investigate the language used in shop signs in Amman, Jordan. It also explored the factors that stand behind language choice in shop signs. To accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the researchers answered the following two questions:

What languages are used in shop signs in different areas in Amman?

- What are the factors behind language choice in shop signs?

Although the investigation of shop signs in a sociolinguistic perspective is carried out internationally, it is rarely studied in the Middle East, especially in Jordan. Thus, the current study may hopefully fill a gap in the literature. Moreover, the sample chosen for the study, which included shop signs in three different areas in Amman, Jordan, was rarely investigated; the study may fill another gap. Besides, the method used, which is both qualitative and quantitative, may add to its significance.

Results reported in this study cannot be generalized to shop signs in Jordan. It is limited to the sample and instruments used in it. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized beyond the sample chosen for the study. Besides, they are confined to the time, place, i.e. Al-Wehdat Camp, Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh, and the selected sample.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretically, Abed-el-Jawad (1986) stated that the main purpose of naming is to provide a symbolic system of identification. He added that "the choice of names in the Arab culture is often a careful mental process that is influenced by linguistic, social, psychological or cultural considerations" (p. 81). He also maintained that names have significant meanings that may imply the name givers' attitudes and beliefs.

In the case of naming in Jordan, Hussein (1997) pointed out that naming can be derivative from a diversity of sources, including social or religious beliefs and values, geographical locations or known places with historical or social significance, the names of wild and domesticated animals, birds, insects, colors and professions or careers.

According to Palumbo and Herbig (2000), it was also defined as "a trademark or a distinctive name of a product or manufacturer. It is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or any combination used to identify the goods and services of a seller." (p. 120).

Branding has been defined by a variety of scholars such as Palumbo and Herbig (2000), Balmer and Gray (2003) and Walker (2006). According to Walker (2006) branding is "a process of attaching an idea to a product." (p. 172) According to Balmer and Gray (2003), brand is seen "to encapsulate the additional values that are inherent and associated with the corporation and its products and services." (p. 983)

Regarding linking the product with its brand name, Charmasson (1998) stated that it is the brand name that determines the identity and plays a crucial role in marketing products and services as well as their acceptance by the public.

According to Louw and Lamb (2000), the way consumers perceive brands is a key determinant of long-term business-consumer relationships. A successful brand has a recognizable name which signals specific attributes to the consumer, and performs many key functions. According to Palumbo and Herbig (2000), these functions include the following:

- It identifies the product or service and allows the customer to specify, reject or recommend brands.
- It communicates messages to the consumer. Information provided could include statements regarding their users' style, modernity or wealth.
- It functions as a piece of legal property in which the owner can invest and through law is protected from competitor trespass. (p.1).

Regarding the influence of foreign names on business, Simonson (1997) asserted that "foreign influences are strong in business, because the access to different cultures is increasingly present in daily life, where consumers are subject to the influence of foreign images." (p. 105). He also, asserted that "the speed with which these new identities and images will be adopted

depends on the attitude of each consumer in relation to these influences. (p. 105).

Likewise, Campbell (2004) suggested two reasons why speakers of a native language tend to adopt foreign names. The suggested reasons are primarily 'need' and 'prestige'. She also noted that "when speakers of a language acquire some new item or concept from abroad, they need a new term to go along with the new acquisition; often a foreign name is borrowed along with the new concept." (p. 64).

Empirically, McArthur (2000) explored the multilingual nature of shop naming process in Zurich, Switzerland and Uppsala, Sweden. The study sampled particular areas in the city centers of those two major cities. In Zurich, the sampled group, consisting of 31 shop names, displayed a considerable inclination towards English language by 17 English-including shop names (55%). The case in Uppsala was not different. The dominance of English in the field of business naming was felt to varying degrees. The sampled group consisting of 86 shop names displayed a remarkable tendency towards using the English language by 38 English-including shop names (44%).

The conclusions to be drawn from McArthur (2000) study are twofold. One of the interesting contributions of McArthur's (2000) study to English shop naming literature is that the study is actually the manifestation of omnipresence of English, regardless of the languages that it coexists with. The other conclusion is the demonstration of the multilingual nature of the society in shop naming.

Schlick (2002) investigated the phenomenon by focusing on the store signs in Klagenfurt in Austria, Udine in Italy, and Ljubljana in Slovenia. The research results confirmed that the shop signs and window displays in Udine (Italy) showed less foreign influence than those in Klagenfurt (Austria). However, what is significant to note at this point is that the Ljubljana (Slovenia) sample interestingly contained at least the same proportion of English as the Klagenfurt sample. The factors which contributed to this result reportedly were the fact that Ljubljana sample contained an inundation of international company names as well as the exposure to American movies on Slovene TV where they are shown in the original language whereas in Germany and Austria dubbing is employed.

Later, Schlick (2003) conducted another study regarding the use of English and other foreign languages in shop signs in eight European locations in four countries, which are London and Nuneaton in UK, Vienna, Leoben, Trieste and Pordenone in Austria, and Ljubljana and Kranj in Slovenia. The research results interestingly indicated that the location which displayed the largest proportion of business names containing some English was Kranj (36%) in Slovenia. Kranj was followed by Vienna, Trieste, Leoben and Ljubljana. Pordenone showed the least examples of signs contain-

ing English (21%). In this conclusion, Englishization of the shop signs in Nuneaton and London was excluded from the rest of the sample. The samples acquired from non-English samples maintained that the language most in evidence in store signs was predictably English, after the local language. English was followed by French, Italian, and German.

MacGregor (2003) studied the influence of English on shop signs in Tokyo. In her study she sampled 120 shop signs found in three streets near Siejo Gakuen-mae train station. The preliminary assumptions included the fact that Japan is still a considerably monolingual country, notwithstanding its close economic ties with the rest of the world. Therefore, Japan was considered to be relatively safe from the global influence of English. The conservative nature of Japanese society, however, did not apply English language use in Japan since English language appears in some of the most popular domains such as music, fashion, print media, and advertising. The current penetration of English into deep strata of Japanese society was reflected in the study which asserted that of the 120 signs, half of the signs in the sample (50%) exhibited the influence of English in varying degrees. The research data were divided into three main categories as unilingual, bilingual and trilingual signs. Bearing in mind the importance of Japanese in business naming, the researcher concluded that 'foreign languages, mostly English, function to embellish the Japanese and to a lesser extent communicate meaning on their own. Results revealed that while Japanese is the language of the signs for restaurants serving Japanese food, pastry is equated with French and bread is linked to Scandinavia. The fashion industry is the battlefield of English and French.

Griffin (2004) examined one particular aspect of "English as an invader – its presence on street signs, on store fronts, in shop windows, outside commercial and public buildings, in billboards and other street advertisements, and in graffiti" (p.1). His interest in the prevalence of English was flourished by a study which examined the use of English in Polish magazine advertisements (Griffin, 1997). The scope of the study included advertisements in 12 major Polish magazines which represent different genres. Research results revealed that 88% of the 346 advertisements contained at least one English word and that average of 8.5 English words was used per advertisement. In addition to previous studies, Griffin (2004) intended to take a broader and more comprehensive approach in order to attain a better understanding of English-propelled foreign shop naming phenomenon on the streets of a non-English-speaking context. The study was designed to include a broader sample of shop names in Rome. The sample of the study included 17 streets in 7 different zones assigned to 14 subjects, who were asked, through a questionnaire, to indicate the context in which the English language appeared. Results revealed that there

was fairly an equal distribution of English shop signs among the chosen zones.

Stewart and Fawcett (2004) described the frequency of foreign languages in shop signs located in six small towns in northwestern Portugal. The study included a total of 271 shop signs. Despite the fact that shop signs in small towns in Portugal are monolingual, mostly in Portuguese, the remaining 27 signs (10%) are in English. It is interesting to note that the shop names display an absence of signs in Spanish in locations close to the border between Portugal and Spain, whereas English shop names were the common denominator. Almost two-thirds of the English language sample in the study was "snack bar". The other occurrences included phrases like fast food, fashion and style, Black-Gate Bar, handcrafts, and café.

Zughoul (2007) investigated the use of business sign language in Jordanian streets and analyzed the contents of those signs. He also discussed the sociolinguistic implications of the foreign language choices as featured in those signs. To attain his objectives, the researcher conducted a massive survey of business signs in nine major Jordanian towns including Amman, the capital city, and its suburbs. He selected a sample comprising 2400 signs. Results revealed that Jordanian business signs incorporate a tremendous source of indigenous cultural heritage and foreign values. Although the community is monolingual and unicultural, the use of English signs in the streets was phenomenal.

Qarqaz (2007) investigated shop business signs used in Irbid, Jordan. He analyzed shop signs into general categories from sociolinguistic and cultural perspectives to highlight the sources and factors which influence shop owners when naming their shops. A survey of business signs was conducted in four main streets in Irbid. The selected sample comprised 685 shop names. Results revealed that shop names can be classified into ten categories first names, foreign names, family names, place names, names that are related to nature, names expressing wishes, hopes and values, product names, famous character names, nationalistic names, and religious names. The first names were the most frequent names in Irbid representing (28%) of the total percentage, whereas religious names are the least with (2%) of them.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the current study was all commercial shop signs in the city of Amman, Jordan. These shops vary in terms of the services and goods they provide to their customers and their names differ in terms of the languages they have been written in.

Due to the difficulty of gathering and studying all shop signs in Amman, the researchers chose a purposively-selected sample of 250, 215, 215 shop signs from each of the areas in the Capital city of Amman, namely, Al-

Wehdat Camp, Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh respectively which are frequented by three socioeconomic groups, namely lower income class, middle income class and upper income class respectively. In addition, the researchers selected on grounds of convenience 30 shop owners from each of the above areas to find out the factors that influence the use of Arab versus foreign sign names. They were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed for this purpose.

The questionnaire covered a variety of important demographic variables, namely, gender, age, educational backgrounds, marital status, type of school respondents attended and workplace.

In order to answer the research questions related to language choice in shop signs, the researchers conducted a survey of shop signs in three major shopping areas in the capital city of Amman. Six hundred eighty wordings of such signs were collected. In addition, the researchers made use of a main sociolinguistic questionnaire as an instrument to fulfill the objectives of the current study.

The survey included 680 shop signs. These shops represented a diversity of services, business, enterprises and facilities such as restaurants, offices, money exchangers, medical centers, hotels, companies, food stores, clothiers, travel agents, jewelers, florists, photographers and many others.

The researchers collected these signs, analyzed and categorized them in terms of monolingual signs, including 'Arabic', 'transliteration' or 'foreign' and bilingual signs, including 'Foreign and Arabic translation', 'Foreign and Arabic transliteration' or 'mixed' (i.e. Arabic and foreign).

The researchers prepared and designed the sociolinguistic questionnaire which was validated and tested before it was administered to a sample of respondents from the shop owners in Amman. Sometimes, the researchers used the 'social network' model suggested by Milroy and Milroy (1978) to approach the subjects via a third party, as a friend of a friend. Three assistants who have access to the community helped the researchers distribute and collect the questionnaire. They distributed the questionnaire among their friends, co-workers' neighbors, all of whom are shop owners.

The questionnaire was written in two languages: Arabic and English, and the respondents had the option to fill out the questionnaire in the language they prefer; they mostly opted to fill out the Arabic version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three sections which were respondents' demographic and social data, shop naming background and factors behind language choice. The questionnaire also had a covering letter, explaining the aim of the questionnaire and the instructions to fill it out was attached to it.

The first section covered a variety of demographic variables such as gender, age, educational backgrounds, marital status, type of school respondents attend and work place and concentrated on information about shop naming background. The second section of the questionnaire included nine items seven of which were open-ended and two of them respondents had to choose one suitable response. The last section aimed at investigating the factors behind language choice for the respondents' businesses. It comprised eleven statements suggesting several factors supporting language choice.

Again, the respondents were asked to check off only one response according to their points of view. As in the previous section, the researchers made use of a five-point Likert type scale, in which each statement was followed by five options:

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Undecided
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

The researchers distributed one hundred copies of the questionnaire. However, only ninety copies were returned.

Findings Related to the First Question

What languages are used in shop signs in different areas in Amman?

This question concentrates on the languages used in shop signs in the selected areas. Results reported in Tables 1 and 2 show that a total of 680 signs were collected in the three areas as follows; two hundred and fifty signs were collected in Al-Wehdat Camp, two hundred and fifteen signs were collected in Sweifieh and two hundred and fifteen signs were collected in Jabal Al-Hussein.

Results also show that there are two main categories of shop signs regarding the languages used in them; namely, monolingual or bilingual signs each of which is divided into several subcategories as represented in the tables.

Results reported in Table 1 show that the 513 monolingual shop signs include Arabic, foreign, Arabic transliteration and foreign transliteration signs. For instance, Al-Wehdat Camp includes Arabic shop signs such as Markaz Zahrat Al-Ittihad, Al-Waseem Lilmalabis and Qahwat Al-Oukhwah. Mata'am Izwitna, A-Thawb Al-Falastini Lilmalabis and Maktabat Al-Istiklal in Sweifieh, and Saydalyat Raniin, Malabis Shams and Al-Maqha Al-Fakher in Jabal Al-Hussein.

Regarding foreign names, Al-Wehdat Camp includes many shops such as Oxygen, El Classico and Freeman Cafe. Also, Hair Care Center, Two Rings and Family Needs exemplify such signs in Sweifieh, and Lavoro, Le Possible and Umbrella in Jabal Al-Hussein. Furthermore, among the Arabic transliterated signs. Al-Wehdat Camp includes Holiday Shoes, Lavender Link, Soft Wear. Sweifieh includes a scanty number of this kind of signs

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of monolingual shop signs in the three areas.

Sign	Arabic		Foreign		Arabic transliteration		foreign transliteration		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Area										
Al-Wehdat Camp	112	45	41	16	26	10	7	3	186	74
Sweifieh	41	19	119	55	7	3	4	2	171	79
Jabal Al-Hussein	59	27	77	37	13	6	7	3	156	73
Total of monolingual shop signs out of 680									513	

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of bilingual shop signs in the three areas

Sign	Foreign and translation		Foreign and Arabic transliteration		Mixed (Arabic and foreign)		Total	
	No.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Area								
Al-Wehdat Camp	45	18	6	3	13	5	64	26
Sweifieh	22	10	21	10	1	1	44	21
Jabal Al-Hussein	24	11	32	15	3	1	59	27
Total of bilingual shop signs out of 680							167	

Table 3. The language used in business names.

Question	Arabic		English		French		Other		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
1. The language used in naming the respondents' businesses	36	40	52	58	2	2	0	0	90	100

like Lamita and Wow, whereas Jabal Al-Hussein includes Orange, Nice and Royal.

When it comes to foreign transliterated signs, a very scanty number was noticed. Al-Wehdat Camp includes signs such as Al-theqa, Angham and Al-Ghadeer, whereas Sweifieh includes, Deeritna, Al-Majid and

Saraya, and Jabal Al-Hussein includes Lamasat, Sahriya and Al-Jazeera.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows that the highest percentage of Arabic signs is used in Al-Wehdat Camp with 45%. On the other hand, 27% of Arabic signs are used in Jabal Al-Hussein and 19% in Sweifieh.

Table 4. The meaning of business names.

Question	Meaningful		Meaningless		DK		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
3. The meaning of the respondents' business name is	28	52	23	43	3	5	54	100

*DK: Don't Know.

Table 5. Business names and official records names.

Question	Yes		No		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
4. The respondents' business name is similar to that in the official records.	73	81	17	19	90	100

Table 6. Business name change.

Question	Yes		No		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
5. Has the respondent's business undergone a name change	12	13	78	87	90	100

Regarding foreign signs (mostly English), the majority of shop signs in Sweifieh, 55%, use foreign signs. However, 37% of them in Jabal Al-Hussein use foreign signs and 16% in Al-Wehdat Camp. When dealing with Arabic transliteration, 10% of shop signs in Al-Wehdat Camp are transliterated in Arabic, whereas 6% in Jabal Al-Hussein and only 3% in Sweifieh. Regarding foreign transliteration, it is conspicuous that it recorded the lowest percentages in the selected areas. Consequently, 3% is noticed in Al-Wehdat and the same is in Jabal Al-Hussein and 2% in Sweifieh.

Results reported in Table 2 below show that the 167 bilingual shop signs are divided into several subcategories such as 'foreign and translation', 'foreign and Arabic transliteration' and 'mixed signs' (i.e. Arabic and foreign). Also, results show that the highest percentage in using foreign signs along with their translations, 18%, is noticed in Al-Wehdat Camp, whereas 11% in Jabal Al-Hussein and 10% in Sweifieh.

Regarding foreign signs accompanied with their Arabic transliterations, 15% of them are used in Jabal Al-Hussein and 10% in Sweifieh. Yet, only 3% are used in Al-Wehdat Camp. Similarly, only 5% of mixed signs, which include both Arabic and foreign, are used in Al-

Wehdat Camp, whereas only 1% in Sweifieh and Jabal Al-Hussein.

As Table 4 above shows, when the respondents were asked about whether their business names have Arabic meanings, 52% indicated that they have Arabic meanings. On the other hand, 43% indicated that there is no Arabic meaning or equivalent and 5% reported that they do not know. This shows that there are different reasons behind choosing the name of the business.

Results shown in Table 5 below indicate that 81% reported that they use the same names in their business signs as are recorded officially. Yet, 19% of them have a different name in license certificate. Some respondents use different names in license certificate from those used in their signs. This could be due to the naming procedures used officially. Officially, business owners are supposed to name their businesses in accordance with their names. Yet, when they tend to undergo name change, they have to pay official fees and also the new name must be unique. That is, none had this certain name before.

Likewise, Table 6 indicates that the vast majority of respondents, 87%, reported having the same name since the date of establishment. However, 13 % reported that they have changed the names of their businesses.

Table 7. The date of business establishment.

Question	1980-1990		1991-2000		2001-2012		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
6. The date of establishing the respondent's business	12	13	15	17	63	70	90	100

Table 8. The relation between business name and products.

Question	Yes		No		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
7. The relation between the name of the respondent's business and products they provide	51	57	39	43	90	100

Table 9. The role of the area in name choice.

Question	Yes		No		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
8. The area in which the respondent's business is located has a role in adopting the name of their business	52	58	38	42	90	100

Results shown in Table 7 indicate that whereas the vast majority of businesses, as reported by 70% of the respondents, were set up after the year 2000, 17% of them were established between 1991 and 2000. Only 13% reported that they established their businesses between 1980 and 1990. Such results reflect the modernity of these shops. In addition, these results might be due to the high percentage of young respondents.

Results shown in Table 8 show that 57%, used business names that have a relation with the products or services they provide for their customers. Nevertheless, 43% of them reported their business names are not related to the products or services they provide.

The results reported in Table 10 indicate that 46% of the respondents reported that their customers belong to the middle class, whereas 30% referred to their customers as of the high class and 27% responded that their customers belong to the lower class according to their annual income.

FINDINGS

Findings related to the second question.

What are the factors behind language choice in shop signs?

This question concentrates on the factors that influence language choice in business names. Results indicate a

Such a result may reflect the shop owners' tendency to link their business names to the quality of the products or services they provide. On the other hand, those who indicate no relation between business names and products may ascribe their business names to their family names or even names of certain places.

Results reported in Table 9 show that a large number of respondents, 58%, reported that the area in which their business is located plays an important role in adopting such a name. However, 42% reported that the area where their business is located does not play a role in their decision when they chose the name of their business

diversity of factors affecting language choice when naming a business.

Results shown in Table 11 indicate the importance of attitudes in language choice. This is evident as the majority of respondents, 65%, indicated that positive attitudes towards foreign names play a vital role in language choice. Yet, 23% disagreed and 12% were "undecided". On the other hand, attitudes towards Arab names, attach slight importance to language choice. This is due to the fact that only 5% of the respondents agreed with that and 15% remained "neutral". Nevertheless, the vast majority, 80%, reported disagreement.

When asked if foreign names play a role in prejudicing against Arab products, the majority of respondents, 73%, disagreed, and 10% were "undecided". Yet, only 17% agreed that the use of foreign names reflects negative attitudes towards Arab products.

Table 10. Customers' socioeconomic class.

Question	High class		Middle class		Lower class		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
6. The date of establishing the respondent's business	27	30	41	46	22	27	90	100

Again, the results show that the positive commercial outcomes generated by using foreign names have a crucial role in language choice. This is evident as the majority of respondents, 70%, agreed that foreign names might generate positive commercial outcomes, whereas 15% disagreed with the statement only 15% were "undecided".

Moreover, results show that foreign names are more interesting. For most of the foreign names sound more interesting as 67% agreed with the statement and 23% disagreed and 10% were "undecided". Again, regarding the role of uniqueness and prestige of using foreign names in language choice, 73% agreed that the use of foreign names is more unique and prestigious than Arab ones, whereas 22% disagreed and only 5% were "undecided".

Regarding the role of foreign culture in language choice, the respondents confirmed its importance. This is clear when asked whether the use of foreign names reflects the global impact of foreign culture, the majority of respondents, 67%, agreed with this statement, whereas 15% disagreed and 18% were "undecided".

DISCUSSION

Results reported in Table 1 concerning language choice show that shop signs in the selected areas are multilingual where many languages are involved such as the native language of the country, which is Arabic (e.g. Matcam cizwitna), English (e.g. Freeman Cafe), French (e.g. Le Possible), Spanish (e.g. El Classico) and Italian (e.g. Lavoro). In comparison with other foreign languages, English is mostly used as only six non-English shop signs are noticed in the survey. These results disagree with the findings of Zughoul (2007) in that although the community is monolingual and unicultural, the use of English signs in streets is a phenomenal. On the other hand, these results subscribe to those of Zughoul (2007) in that foreign shop signs are increasingly noticed. Similarly, they are in line with Schlick (2003) who concluded that English is the language most dominant in store signs. This result could be due to the powerful status of English as it is the lingua franca and the language of media and international correspondence. Also, English is the language taught in all educational levels in Jordan. Results also show that the surveyed shop signs are primarily divided into two

Regarding the role of the integration of Jordan into the International Trade Organization with respect to language choice (namely, international English) 32% agreed that it is motivating to use foreign names, whereas 22% disagreed and 46% were "undecided".

Again, results indicate the importance of the type of goods provided in language choice as when asked if the type of goods they sell plays a role in language choice, the majority of respondents, 71%, agreed, while 24% disagreed and 5% were "undecided".

The educational level of customers is not very significant in language choice. This is because 44% of the respondents agreed that it plays a role in the language choice of the business name, whereas 41% disagreed and 15% were "undecided".

Results related to the customers' socio-economic class role, the respondents indicated that there is a vital role of such criterion in language choice. This is evident when the majority, 75%, agreed that the customers' socio-economic class has a role in deciding the business name. Yet, 15% disagreed and 10% were "undecided".

main categories, namely, monolingual signs and bilingual signs. It is worth mentioning that both kinds of signs are written in Arabic and/or Roman alphabets.

Monolingual Signs

Monolingual signs are also divided into several subcategories, namely; Arabic, Foreign, Arabic transliteration and foreign transliteration. Each of the aforementioned subcategories involves only one alphabetical system either Arabic or Roman alphabets.

Arabic Signs

It is normal to face such signs as Jordan is an Arab country whose mother tongue is the Arabic language. Arabic is used officially and in everyday speech. It is also the language of instruction at school. Although results reported in Table 1 show that most shop signs in Al-Wehdat Camp are monolingual Arabic signs, a small number of this kind of signs is used in Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh. This could be ascribed to the socio-economic class of the customers in the selected areas. Since Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh are viewed as high

class areas, shop owners tend to use foreign names to show that the goods they sell and services they provide are international brands with high quality. Such signs show consistent linguistic and orthographic systems and are characterized by their Arabic form and content. They include native Arabic lexis, having no loan or borrowed words. In addition they are written in Arabic alphabet.

Foreign Signs

Similarly, the foreign signs show consistent linguistic and orthographic systems and are characterized by their foreign form and content. They include foreign lexis (mostly English), having no Arabic words. In addition they are written in Roman alphabets.

Results in Table 1 show that this kind of signs is scanty in Al-Wehdat Camp. Yet, most of the signs in Sweifieh and Jabal al-Hussein are foreign ones. Such results could be explained in terms of the socio-economic class of customers in these areas which are low and mid in Al-Wehdat and high socio-economic class in Sweifieh and Jabal Al-Hussein. Another explanation could be the fact that the people in Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh tend to use foreign signs as an indication of modernity, prestige and showing off.

Arabic Transliteration

Few shop signs use foreign lexis written in Arabic alphabets. This kind of signs, as reported in Table 1 represents the scantiness in the use of Arabic transliteration of foreign lexis in the three areas. This might be due to the fact that people tend to render the labeling of their shops easier and more accessible and attractive to all people.

Foreign Transliteration

Foreign transliterated shop signs use Arabic lexis written in foreign alphabet. This kind of signs, as reported in Table 1, represents the scantiness in the use of Arabic transliteration of foreign lexis in the three areas. This might be due to the fact that people tend to render the labeling of their shops easier and more accessible and attractive to all people.

Bilingual Signs

Bilingual signs are divided into three subcategories: foreign and translation, foreign and Arabic transliteration and mixed (Arabic and foreign). Each of these subcategories is characterized by certain features regarding form and content. Such features are explained underneath each of the following subcategories:

Foreign Names and Translation

This kind of signs involves co-existence of the two

languages used in the same sign. These signs use foreign lexis written in Roman alphabets and their Arabic translations written in Arabic alphabets (e.g. Elegant Man \ Ar-rajul Al-?aneeq).

Results reported in Table 2 show that although foreign signs with their translations are rarely used in the selected areas, Al-Wehdat Camp has the most frequent use of them when compared with other areas. This could be justified due to the fact that these signs take a larger size in the sign. Also, the type of business may affect such language choice.

Foreign Names and Arabic Transliteration

Another type of bilingual signs is the foreign sign with its Arabic transliteration. This kind involves using foreign lexis written in the Roman alphabets accompanied with the transliterated forms of the same lexis in Arabic alphabets (e.g. City of Angels).

Results reported in Table 2 show that signs are rarely used in Al-Wehdat Camp. In spite of the fact that this kind is not so popular in Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh, these two areas have more signs of this kind than Al-Wehdat Camp. Also, results reported in Table 2 show that the spread of foreign signs along with Arabic transliteration is almost the same as the use of foreign signs along with translation in Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh. This result could be explained due to the fact that shop owners prefer to have simple and well-organized signs.

Mixed (Arabic and Foreign)

Mixed signs are the signs that contain two words or more. These signs include both Arabic and foreign words, written in Arabic alphabets (e.g. Al-mahaba link). Results reported in Table 2 show that this kind of signs is almost alien in the three areas. However, of all these, Al-Wehdat Camp has the highest occurrence of such signs when compared with Jabal Al-Hussein and Sweifieh. This might be due to the tendency of people to use monolingual signs for their shops.

All in all, results reported in Table 2 show that shop signs in the selected areas involve a diversity of languages including Arabic and English whether in monolingual or bilingual signs. Results also show that the monolingual signs in these areas are used more than the bilingual ones.

Results elicited from the respondents of the sociolinguistic questionnaire, as shown in Tables 3-10, show the multilingual nature of shop signs in the selected areas where Arabic, English and French are used. This could be a result of the recent dates of establishment of these shops as the majority of them were established after 2001. The foreign signs are, to some extent, meaningful as it is reported that such wordings have

Table 11. Factors behind the choice of shop sign language.

No.	Statement	SA %	A %	UN %	D %	SD %	Total %
1.	Attitudes towards foreign names are positive.	20	45	12	13	10	100
2.	Attitudes towards Arab names are negative.	0	5	15	38	42	100
3.	The use of foreign names shows prejudice against Arab products.	10	7	10	35	38	100
4.	Foreign shop names might generate positive commercial outcomes.	48	22	15	10	5	100
5.	Foreign names sound more interesting.	52	15	10	18	5	100
6.	The use of foreign names sounds as being unique and prestigious.	45	28	5	17	5	100
7.	The use of foreign names reflects the global impact of foreign culture.	32	35	18	10	5	100
8.	The integration of Jordan into the International Trade Organization motivates the use of foreign business names.	12	20	46	15	7	100
9.	The type of goods I sell plays a role in deciding the type of name.	54	17	5	22	2	100
10.	The educational level of my customers plays a role in the choice of my business name.	22	22	21	20	15	100
11.	The socioeconomic class of my customers plays a role in your decision about the choice of my business name.	45	30	10	12	3	100

Key: SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, UN: Undecided, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree.

Arabic equivalents and are mostly related to the nature of products or services provided in these shops.

Moreover, most of these signs are officially recorded and few of them have undergone name change. This reflects the democratic climate of language choice in the country. It is also evident that the areas, where the shops are located, determine language choice. In these areas, customers belonging to different socio-economic classes go for shopping. This result is in line with McArthur's (2000), who asserted that the multilingual nature of the society determines the use of foreign names in shop signs.

Discussion of Findings Related to the Second Question

This section contains an elaborated description of the factors affecting language choice in shop signs. Results reported in Table 11 show that there is a diversity of factors determining the language used in shop signs. The major factors are:

A. Attitudinal and linguistic factors B. Commercial and other factors

A. Attitudinal and linguistic factors

Positive attitudes towards foreign names are of great importance in language choice. Such attitudes are

reflected as the respondents indicated that foreign names are considered more interesting, unique and prestigious than Arabic names and the use of these names is not considered a discrimination against Arabic ones. This result agrees with Abd-el-Jawad (1986) who maintained that names have significant meanings that may imply the name givers' attitudes and beliefs. Also, it agrees with Simonson (1997) and Campbell (2004) who suggested that 'need' and 'prestige' are key factors in adopting foreign names.

B. Commercial and other Factors

As the main purpose of establishing businesses is gaining commercial benefits, people do their best to render their shops more attractive to customers. Consequently, positive commercial outcomes play an essential role in language choice. This result subscribes to the findings of Louw and Lamb (2000) and Palumbo and Herbig (2000) in that a successful brand has a recognizable name which signals specific attributes to the consumer.

Moreover, shop owners attempt to link their shop names with the products they sell or services they provide. Therefore, the type of goods plays a significant role in deciding the language used in shop signs. This result agrees with Charmasson (1998) who maintained

that brand name determines the identity of the business.

Furthermore, the global impact of foreign cultures has a role in language choice. This can be explained due to the fact that openness to the world has helped communities share cultures. Thus, people become keen to be in contact with foreign cultures. This result agrees with Simonson (1997) who maintained that “foreign influences are strong in business because the access to different cultures is increasingly present in daily life”. (p. 105).

The educational and socio-economic classes of customers somehow play a role in language choice. This could be explained by the fact that people tend to link purchasing high quality goods with foreign names of brands and shops.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the overall results of both the survey of shop signs and the sociolinguistic questionnaire indicates that a variety of languages are used in shop signs in Jordan and the attitudes towards the use of languages other than Arabic are positive. As a matter of fact, this clarifies the bilingual and multilingual nature of shop signs in the country. The languages that are used in such signs are mostly Arabic and English. Furthermore, language choice is determined by several factors including attitudinal, linguistic, commercial and other factors. The proposed research questions could be answered in the light of the findings of the study as follows:

There is a diversity of languages that are used in shop signs in Amman. These languages include:

- Arabic is the native and official language of the country and the means of communication among all Jordanians regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.
- English is viewed as a foreign language in Jordan and also taught in all educational levels. The overwhelming majority of foreign shop signs are written in English.
- Other internationally well-known languages such as French, Italian and Spanish are also used.

Regarding the factors that affect language choice in shop signs, results reveal several factors, among which are the following:

- Positive attitudes towards foreign names are of great importance in language choice. There is a link between such attitudes and using foreign names as they are considered interesting, unique and prestigious and the use of these names is not considered downgrading the status of Arabic.
- Positive commercial outcomes play an essential role in language choice.

- The type of goods plays a significant role in deciding the language used in shop signs.
- The global impact of foreign cultures has a role in language choice.
- The educational and economic levels of customers are relatively important in language choice.

REFERENCES

- Abed-el-Jawad H (1986). A linguistic and sociocultural study of personal names in Jordan. *Anthropological Linguistics*.28(1): 80-94.
- Balmer J, Gray E (2003). Corporate brands: What are they? What of them? *European J. Marketing*. 37(7): 972-997.
- Berlage T, Fox T, Grunst G, Quast K (1996, June). Supporting ultrasound diagnosis using an animated 3D model of the heart. In *Multimedia Computing and Systems, 1996, Proceedings of the Third IEEE International Conference on* (pp. 34-39). IEEE.
- Campbell L (2004). *Historical linguistics: An introduction*. (2nd edition). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Charmasson H (1998). *The name is the game—How to name a company or product*, Dow Jones-Irwin, Homewood: IL.
- Griffin J (1997). Global English invades Poland. *English Today*. 13 (2), 34-41.
- Griffin J (2004). The presence of written English on the streets of Rome. *English Today*. 20(2): 3-7.
- Hussein R (1997). A sociolinguistic study of family names in Jordan. *Grazer Linguistische Studien*. 48, 25-41.
- Lou G, Lamb CW (2000). The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. *J. Product Brand Manag.* 9(6): 1-10.
- MacGregor L (2003). The language of shop signs in Tokyo. *English Today*. 19(1): 18–23.
- McArthur T (2000). Interanto: The global language of signs. *English Today*. 16(1): 33–43.
- Milroy J, Milroy L (1978). Belfast: Change and variation in an urban vernacular. In P. Trudgill (Ed). *Sociolinguistic patterns in British English*. (pp. 19-36). London: Arnold.
- Palumbo F, Herbig P (2000). The multicultural context of brand loyalty. *European J. Inno. Manag.* 3(3), 116-124.
- Qarqaz, M (2007). *A sociolinguistic study of shop names in Jordan*. (Unpublished MA thesis), Yarmouk University, Irbid: Jordan.
- Schlick M (2002). The English of shop signs in Europe. *English Today*. 18(2): 3–7.
- Schlick M (2003). The English of shop signs in Europe. *English Today*. 19(1): 3–17.
- Simonson A (1997). *A Estética do Marketing: Como criar e administrar sua marca, imagem e identidade*. São Paulo: Nobel.
- Stewart P, Fawcett R (2004). Shop signs in some small towns in northern Portugal. *English Today*. 20(1): 56-58.
- Walker R (2006, July 30). The brand underground. *New York Times*. p. 17.
- Zughoul M (2007). *Studies in contemporary Arabic / English sociolinguistics*. Irbid: Hamada Publishing House.

