

# AFRICAN LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES: FOCUS ON ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** English is the official or co-official language in 21 African nations. Out of these the linguistic landscape analysis here focuses on two countries, that is Namibia and Tanzania. In the latter case, the national language Swahili enjoys de facto the same status as English which, however, for the number of competent speakers is a minority language in this East African country, Namibia and elsewhere in Africa. The paper deals mainly with the English use in various domains, as evidenced in billboard texts, shop signs, on murals, buildings and more. It describes the top-down (originating from central institutions) or bottom up (grassroots) approach to shaping the linguistic landscape in public. From this perspective the paper demonstrates the high prestige of English.

**Key words:** Namibia, Tanzania, English language use, official status, linguistic landscape markers

## 1. Introduction

Three years ago, Pütz & Mundt (2019: 9) assessed that “research on LL in Africa has largely been under represented. Sub-Saharan Africa especially is a large and heterogeneous part of a continent with ... multifaceted landscapes in urban areas”. In this context, quite a few papers were listed that address this issue in Africa. Obviously, given the size of the African continent, ethno-linguistic complexity, complemented by language politics as well as language policy, are of crucial importance for the description of linguistic landscapes (LL) in the African states, especially in the sub-Saharan region. The prominent

position of the languages of the former colonial powers, i.e. English, French, Portuguese and some Spanish, plays an essential role here.

As far as English is concerned, it is widespread as an official language in many sub-Saharan countries. This status is partly shared with other languages, such as in Kenya, among others, English is co-official, as stipulated in the constitution. In Rwanda, English shares its function with four other languages (i.e., the national language [ikinya]Rwanda, French, and [Ki]Swahili). Based on Legère (2021: 178), the following overview summarizes country-specific status details (Table 1).

*Table 1*  
**Status of English as the (co-)official language**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Language status</b>
Malawi	English <i>de facto</i> official language
Namibia, Zambia	English official
Zimbabwe	English / Shona / Ndebele and more co-official
Botswana	English / Tswana official
Cameroon	English / French official
Eswatini (Swaziland)	English / Swati official
Kenya, Uganda	English / Swahili official
Lesotho	English / Sotho official
RSA	English / Afrikaans / 9 national languages official
Rwanda	English / French / Rwanda / Swahili official
Tanzania	English / Swahili <i>de facto</i> official

Furthermore, English is official in the following eight other African states (Table 2).

*Table 2*  
**Status of English as the (co-)official language**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Language status</b>
Gambia, Ghana, Liberia	English <i>de facto</i> official
Nigeria	English official
Sierra Leone, South Sudan	English official
Mauritius	English / French <i>de facto</i> official
Seychelles	English / French / Seychellois Creole <i>de facto</i> official

The sources for this overview are mainly the constitutions of the countries or, as in the case of Tanzania, other official documents.

With regard to the topic of this paper — linguistic landscapes — sub-Saharan Africa lends itself to investigations and descriptions of a general and country-specific nature. A comprehensive treatment dealing with the linguistic situation of all countries above against the LL background is impossible for various reasons. Therefore, the focus here will be on two African countries with which the author has been closely connected through his own work (e.g. teaching, research projects, partnership and the like). These are, on the one hand, Namibia (population 2,678,191, July 2021, CIA World Factbook 2021). In this publication’s “people-and-society” part, there is the estimate “English (official) 2.3%”. Compare also “Ethnologue: Languages of Namibia” (Eberhard et al. 2020) which reproduces dubious Crystal (2003) figures of 350,200 Namibians being English users. Based on EMIS (2020: 24–25), in 2019 English is for 7616 learners the Home Language, whereas 58,900 learners are exposed to English as the medium of instruction (MoI) in Lower Primary grades 1–3.

On the other hand, for Tanzania CIA (2021) stated that in July 2021 there were 62,092,761 Tanzanians. In the country, Swahili dominates as the national language (spoken by about 95% of the

population). For English reliable statistical data is missing, but it is estimated that about 5% are rather competent English speakers. With regard to LL, both languages (given the national versus international prestige) might be close to being equal in urban downtown areas. Further CIA (2021) notes, that English is the official and primary language of commerce, administration, and higher education.

There are several versions of the LL subject matter. The one by Laundry & Bourhis (1997) quoted by Gorter (2006: 2) is as follows:

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.

In contrast, a MURBLL (2015) in his summary of the topic “What are linguistic landscapes?” at “Map of the urban linguistic landscapes” includes a number of further details that are interesting for LL studies:

No matter where you are in the world today, language is everywhere you look. It’s used in shop signs, products in the supermarket, the names of buildings, menus, graffiti, airports, public transport, shopping centres, notices, advertising posters and hoardings.

In addition, MURBLL (2015) emphasizes:

There is general agreement that language use in the linguistic landscape falls into one of two categories, top-down (public signs, created by the state and local government bodies) and bottom-up language use (created by shop owners, private businesses, etc.)...

In this respect, MURBLL (2015) presents a modified version of a table by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006: 14) which illustrates the targets of the top-down versus a bottom-up approach as follows (Table 3).

Table 3

**Top-down versus a bottom-up approaches to linguistic landscape**

Category	Type of item
Top-down	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public institutions: religious, governmental, municipal — cultural and educational, medical</li> <li>2. Public signs of general interest</li> <li>3. Public announcements</li> <li>4. Signs of street names</li> </ol>
Bottom-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shop signs: e.g. clothing, food, jewellery</li> <li>2. Private business signs: offices, factories, agencies</li> <li>3. Private announcements: “wanted” ads, sale or rentals of flats or cars</li> </ol>

Suffice it to refer here also to the Barcelona “Universal declaration of linguistic rights” (Follow-Up Committee 1998: 30), article 50:

All language communities have the right for their language to occupy a pre-eminent place in advertising, signs, external signposting, and *in the image of the country as a whole* (emphasis author).

There are certainly still other criteria and items that should be considered in addition to the above priorities and study profile. These include stamps, banknotes, also newspapers, which are typical for the cityscape, for example, in Tanzania and elsewhere. Similarly, acoustic and virtual signals could be added. In this respect, a look at the “Linguistic Landscape” journal as well as e.g. Pütz & Mundt (2019) is recommended.

## 2. Namibia’s linguistic landscape

### 2.1. A concise historical overview

Namibia had been a German colony since 1884. In World War I, the Germans in German Southwest Africa were defeated as early as 1915,

mainly by British-South African troops. Subsequently, then Southwest Africa became a mandate of the League of Nations in 1920, after World War II a UN trusteeship territory that was administered by South Africa. After 1960, a variant of the South African Bantustan administration was introduced in Southwest Africa. The position of Afrikaans as the official language was increasingly strengthened by the South African administration which was staffed primarily by Afrikaans speaking Boers. English was the second official language, but this language did not gain significant currency. This was the situation even at the time of Namibia's independence in 1990 which is discussed for example in Legère (1990).

The Namibian liberation movement SWAPO primarily promoted the use of English in exile outside Southwest Africa. A milestone in this context was the "Seminar on English as the Official Language for Namibia" in Lusaka / Zambia 5–8 May 1980, organized by the Namibia Institute of the United Nations, see Duggal (ed.) (1981). This is subsequently reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (after independence) which stipulates in article 3(1) that "the official language of Namibia shall be English" (Namibian Constitution 1990: article 3). In those days, according to the 1991 Census, English was spoken by 0.8% of the Namibian population, or 10,941 people, out of a total of 1,409,920 Namibians.

The promotion and use of English as Namibia's official language country-wide in place of Afrikaans (in 1991 the latter had 133,320 speakers = 9.5% of the Namibian population) has been covered in a number of publications by the author of this paper (such as Legère & Fitchat (eds.) 2002). For an actual overview of the Namibian linguistic situation see Leclerc (2020).

As addressed above, LL documents itself, on the one hand, as the result of a top-down naming process, or, on the other hand, in names originating at the grassroots which are being coined both individually or by committed groups. However, the general importance of English and its nationwide prestige as the official language as well as the dominant medium in formal domains (e.g. schools, tertiary education,

media, business, banks and more) shape also grassroots/bottom up initiatives. In the latter case, the grassroots examples reflect the impact of English in LL, while prominent national languages are underrepresented in informal domains.

As a historical LL recap, various documents from the transition period to independence 1989 to 1990, specifically those which are related to the first general election in Namibia are reproduced here. This draws on material which has been available since September 2021 in an image gallery at the Institute of African Studies, University of Vienna.

The interim period is represented, for example, by T-shirts with imprints that deal with the then general election, such as (1).

- (1) a. FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS
- b. IT'S YOUR CHOICE FOR NAMIBIA
- c. VOTE SWAPO FOR INDEPENDENCE
- d. NPF
- e. NAMIBIA 21 MARCH 1990 [slogan surrounded by logos of contesting parties such as SWAPO, DTA, FCN, etc.]
- f. My stem is my geheim.  
‘My vote is my secret.’ (in Afrikaans)

Posters (2).

- (2) a. HOW TO VOTE [plus six drawings where the voting process is explained]
- b. UNTAG SUPERVISES AND CONTROLS THE VOTING (COUNTING) PROCESS [at the bottom]
- (3) HOW TO VOTE [the same poster translated into Khoekhoegowab]

Banners in Afrikaans (4).

- (4) UNTAG NAMIBIA VRYE EN REGVERD VERKIESINGS  
‘UNTAG Namibia Free and fair elections’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNTAG is acronym of United Nations Transition Assistance Group.

Further a colourful mural, text (5).

## (5) SAM YOU are the Father of NAMIBIA (meaning: Sam [Nujoma]...)<sup>2</sup>

An insight into the situation especially in Windhoek on the occasion of the independence celebrations and its LL is given by Saayman & Venter (1990).

### **2.2. Official, formal and grassroots approach**

From the current perspective, as suggested in the table above, the top-down approach shall be followed in this section. This is logical because, according to the official position of English, the central institutions are responsible for the implementation of the language policy the results of which are portrayed in LL. Here is a Wikipedia summary:

The Government of Namibia consists of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary branches. The Cabinet is the executive organ of government, implementing the laws of the country. It consists of the President, the Prime Minister and his deputy, as well as the Ministers.<sup>3</sup>

It goes without saying that all central official institutions at the top of the state present themselves to the public with their names in English in various ways. In so doing, they shape in particular the capital Windhoek's LL. Here are some examples:

- Ministry of Environment and Tourism Namibia,<sup>4</sup>
- Ministry of Finance — Fiscus building (Officials in front of ~).<sup>5</sup>

The Namibian executive branch documents itself in numerous subordinate institutions at the regional level. There are more Ministry of Finance buildings for example at the Coast as follows (6).

## (6) INLAND REVENUE WALVIS BAY<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Link: <https://osf.io/mvdyz/> — Independence.

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government\\_of\\_Namibia#:~:text=The%20Government%20of%20Namibia%20consists,as%20well%20as%20the%20Ministers.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Namibia#:~:text=The%20Government%20of%20Namibia%20consists,as%20well%20as%20the%20Ministers.)

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.mefn.gov.na/> — the Ministry main building is no. 7.

<sup>5</sup> <https://mof.gov.na/photo-gallery>

<sup>6</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/MoFNamibia/photos/a.272205166618446/880562285782728/?type=3&source=57&\\_tn\\_=EH-R](https://m.facebook.com/MoFNamibia/photos/a.272205166618446/880562285782728/?type=3&source=57&_tn_=EH-R)

The same is for the judicial branch, which is referred to here with a link to the Supreme Court in Windhoek,<sup>7</sup> as well as a photo of the Southern Namibia Magistrate Court in Mariental.<sup>8</sup>

Coming back to the executive branch, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education are responsible for the country's university centres, other Namibian educational institutions, institutes, schools and more. The logo of the University of Namibia can be found in Windhoek as well as country-wide in front of ten other places.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding schools, since 1995 author's field work in the Kavango West Region (Northern Namibia) has focused also on their role in shaping LL.<sup>10</sup> Starting with a school in Bunya westwards of the regional headquarter Rundu, i.e. (7), next mural of the Mbambo Junior Secondary School Rundu plus the logo (8).

- (7) Bunya Combined School — Physically EDUCATE Mentally  
(8) DR ALPO MBAMBA JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL —  
EDUCATION LIBERATES THE MIND

In addition, at this school's wall segments more murals that addressed health topics both in English and in Kwangali<sup>11</sup> were traced, for example (9)–(11).

- (9) Health — Aids “I CARE, DO YOU? — A FRIEND WITH HIV/AIDS IS STILL MY FRIEND” [plus three people picture]

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<sup>7</sup> <https://i1.wp.com/opiniojuris.org/wp-content/uploads/Supreme-Court-of-Namibia.jpg?w=812>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.namibian.com.na/public/uploads/images/609e854ecea5/MarientalMagistrate.jpg>

<sup>9</sup> For details <https://www.unam.edu.na/campuses>

<sup>10</sup> See link <https://osf.io/236sa/>, the entries are arranged alphabetically.

<sup>11</sup> Widely spoken westwards from Rundu to Nkurenkuru plus Cuangular in Angola across the Kavango river. In fact, Kwangali (autonym *Rukwangali*) is the most prominent regional language. In Legère (2022) the initial part of this book chapter presents an overview of the distribution and the widespread use of Kwangali in the Kavango West Region both at the grassroots and in some formal domains (e.g. radio, lower primary medium of instruction, after grade 3 subject up to the high school level).

- (10) Health — malaria, Kwangali texts:
- RARA MESIRE VATURA MUTJI*  
‘Sleep under the malaria net [and] use medicine’
  - O ligamene ko malaria*  
‘Protect yourself against malaria.’
- (11) Health — TB — Kwangali [text plus drawing of a nurse and learners].

Other LL examples document grassroots initiatives that demonstrate the use of English at shop and service signs, business and sales ads, and more (12)–(17).

- Barber shop “BRAZA KDJ — BARBER SHOP — BOAS VINDAS” [plus pictures of barber instruments]
- Battery charger “WELL COM TO CHARGE BATTERY AND WELDER”, similar text in Kwangali, at the bottom “PO BOX 2052 KEHEMU”<sup>12</sup>
- Bricks “BRICK 4 SALE — N\$ 3.00 — CELL... — BUY MORE GET SOME FREE”
- Service complex, left “PICK A PHONE...” [mobile phone picture plus number]  
next “BONITO — HAIR -STUDIO — SAFARI, right “PHOTO STUDIO”
- Mini-shop “KAWONGO MINI SHOP (P.O. Box ... plus phone number) — TANGO (phone company) RECHARGE AVAILABLE HERE” (top left ad “TOP SCORE”, right “Bakpro”)
- Shebeen “BACK OF THE MOON”.

For other LL details (e.g. more shebeens as well as shop names) that are not discussed here see <https://osf.io/wej5x/>.

A comprehensive overview of Rundu’s cityscape is produced in the second part of <https://www.unam.edu.na/virtualtour/rundu/> from Rundu Plaza onward starting with various shop names such as “Uniform Manufacturing Unit”, “Cell and Leather World”, “Exclusive

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<sup>12</sup> A Rundu suburb.

Garden Exterior Funiture” (!), onwards with Eugene Kakukuru Road, where names like “Shoprite” (=supermarket), “Teichmann lorry”, and “NamWater” can be traced as well as the sign bord “Ngandu Safari Lodge 23 km”, further Independence Avenue with the sign board “Happy Boyz Salon” and later “DJRKELLZ Bar and Salon”, Tandeveka Open Market (the neighbourhood is traditional), initial “MN Meat Cut” (below in Kwangali *Wizeni Keteto Nyama* ‘come to the meat market’), The Traffic Circle displaying for example a Spar billboard which announces “Guaranteed to be as good as the best — Spar products”.

The UNAM campus Ongwediva-Oshakati similarly invites to a virtual visit via the link.<sup>13</sup> Ongwediva-Oshakati2 comes with a rather complex naming range such as a billboard of something called “Eshisha Media Network — Aweh Prime, Aweh Super, Aweh o-Yeah, Aweh Go, Aweh Gig” as well as two petrol stations (“Engen” and “Shell”). Ongwediva-Oshakati4 offers a “Shoprite” flag parade, a “KFC” restaurant, “Big DADDY”, “Hungry Lion”, “Dunns”, “Ackermans”, “Shoprite PEP”, “Mr Price”, “Motovac-First in auto parts”, and more. Similar to Rundu, shebeen and other names were also traced in Oshakati — Ondangwa area. Some photos are included.<sup>14</sup>

The magic of Namibian road signs, place names and more that is relevant for a LL overview countrywide can be felt with a large collection of attractive photos that, apart from the Namibian part also includes samples from e.g. Zimbabwe as well as overseas USA.<sup>15</sup> There is also the sign post “Swakopmund — C14 Walvis Bay > vs. < C14 Walvis Bay (airport) and Windhoek” as well as the road cross sign “Windhoek — Walvis Bay”.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unam.edu.na/virtualtour/oshakati>.

<sup>14</sup> Link: <https://osf.io/t4ysb/>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?q&tbo=isch&ictx=1&tbs=rimg:CdXIB0aXmuGQIgjV5QdGl5rhkCoSCdXIB0aXmuGQEIQUCG-DW1Gv&hl=de&sa=%20X&ved=0CAEQiRxqFwoTCLi7gom2i#imgrc=F66OU-DvlatZuM>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-road-cross-signs-view-from-car-c14-windhoek-c14-walvis-bay-32906966.html>

Some street names in Windhoek and in other towns have been changed after Independence. Some ten years ago in Windhoek Olympia, “Reginald Walker Street” became “Hamutenya Wanahepo Ndadi” Street next to “Hidipo Hamutenya” Street, both names of Namibian freedom fighters. There are more examples of LL in Windhoek Olympia which demonstrate the widespread use of English in public.<sup>17</sup>

It is certainly understandable that in view of the prominent position of English as the official language of Namibia and, unfortunately, the lack of initiatives for the use of Namibian languages in public, English predominates even at the grass roots level, as demonstrated above with LL examples from Rundu area and Oshakati.

### **3. Tanzania’s linguistic landscape**

#### **3.1. A concise historical overview**

Since 1918 the continental part of Tanzania (then called Tanganyika, meaning Tanga and its hinterland — Swahili *nyika*) — a German colony from 1890 to 1918 — was administered by Great Britain until 1961. Tanganyika became independent in December 1961. Tanzania (*Tanganyika and Zanzibar*) are the result of the April 1964 unification of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. The latter was earlier a British Protectorate, in December 1963 independent, after the January 1964 Revolution the People’s Republic of Zanzibar and Pemba.

From 1967 onwards, the Tanzanian socialism ideology, *Ujamaa*, conceived by then President JK Nyerere, was implemented in the country. This was accompanied by a one-party system. In view of the failure of this social model, from about 1990 Tanzania moved to a multi-party system. The Tanzanian political situation is stable, the economic development in recent years noteworthy.

#### **3.2. Language policy — English versus Swahili**

In Tanzania, Swahili has long been the supra-ethnic medium of communication. The other 130 (plus-minus) languages spoken in the

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<sup>17</sup> See WHK-Foto-collection: <https://osf.io/p2n9z/>

country are hardly used beyond their own speech community. Their use is declining more and more, as the young generation mainly speaks Swahili.

English was the sole official language in Tanganyika until 1961. However, reports and submissions could also be sent to the British administration in Swahili. After independence, the government of the young nation under the leadership of President Nyerere were committed to raise the status of Swahili in the official and those formal domains, which were equally subject to the central administration. In the People's Republic of Zanzibar, Swahili had been the official language of the young state since January 1964.

Nyerere's policy understanding has led to the formation of the Mainland National Swahili Council (BAKITA) in 1967, Zanzibar — BAKIZA 1983. The latter is, among other things, responsible for maintaining the linguistic standard as well as for corpus and especially terminology development to this day. In line with the 1967 political orientation towards *Ujamaa*, various official statements aimed at empowering Swahili in official domains were made. In this respect, BAKITA was tasked to be in charge of facilitating grassroots' communication in government institutions, police, courts, but also in post offices, banks and more. A priority was the process of compiling Swahili word lists which were translations of English terms that government staff and public servants were in need of. Moreover, there were official directives in 1970 and 1974 (see Tanzania 1974) for strengthening the use of Swahili among government staff members both verbally and in writing. This all stimulated the far reaching use of Swahili in place of English at the official level, that is, in the ministries and other central institutions, state apparatus downwards, in the judiciary and beyond in subordinate formal domains. In August 1974 the names of buildings and offices, posts in Ministries and other institutions were changed. At the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), for example, the then Swahilization campaign led to the renaming of e.g. faculties (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences > *Kitivo cha Fani na Sayansi za Jamii*, photos included below [4f] and [4g]), departments

(Botany Department > *Idara ya Elimu Mimea*), offices (Bursar > *Mhasibu*), staff categories and more.

The function of English as a co-official language was in no way endangered. Accordingly, as before, laws were stipulated in English. In this respect, President Nyerere said in 1984 that English is the Swahili of the world. But in reality, in particular in view of the lack of qualified English teachers, linguistic competence increasingly declined, as assessed by colleagues at the University of Dar es Salaam, including the author of this paper. Recognising this linguistic deficit which in fact shows the language policy failure in primary and secondary schools, in 1992 the establishment of private English medium schools was authorised. However, the number of private schools using English as the language of instruction (EMI) is limited. Most of them are not very efficient for the often inadequate linguistic qualification of the teachers and the high school fees which mostly middle class parents can afford. Rugemalira (2005) commented on this in general and as an EMI school director. See also Bwenge (2013: 180–181) who further reproduces the text and the photo of “Warning: Speak in English. Kiswahili is prohibited & punishable” that he discovered 2005 at the gate of the F.K. Secondary School, Dar es Salaam (Bwenge 2013: 185).

From a current perspective the prestige of English is high. In a hierarchy of languages in Tanzania, English occupies the top position, Swahili comes second, and the other languages are least valued, although the Cultural Policy document (Tanzania 1997) recognizes their existence and value. This was not the case before, when these languages were blamed for being the symbol of tribalism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For a recent summary of the Tanzanian language policy see <https://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/tanzanie.htm> (last updated November 2021); even Zanzibar is included as a separate entry, link: <https://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/EtatsNsouverains/ Zanzibar.htm>

### **3.3. Billboards, building and street names, shop signs and other – The Dar es Salaam cityscape and beyond**

The following is a selection of text in English (sometimes plus Swahili) especially in Dar es Salaam which illustrate the role of both languages from a LL perspective.<sup>19</sup> The entries in the folder are numbered as 1–13.

1 shows the signboard of the President's Office, Ethics Secretariat (marked in red) in Swahili (top), i.e. *Oftsi ya Rais, Sekretarieti ya Maadili ya Viongozi wa Umma* and English.

2a is the picture of the SUV number plate “RC Urban West”, where RC is the acronym of “Regional Commissioner” who is in charge of (Zanzibar) Urban West. This short English text is rather strange for being used in Zanzibar’s 100% Swahili speaking neighbourhood.

2b also from Zanzibar (the birthplace of Freddy Mercury) in front of the “Freddy Mercury museum” in Shangani.

3 is a sign board in Swahili of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration Dept., headquarters.

4a and 4b are two LL photos that document the main entrance area of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The 2014 poster (4a) displayed on a “nameless” building focuses on a Public Lecture by Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, then German Minister of Foreign Affairs. 4b comes with “The Mwalimu Nyerere Conference, October 10-11-2019” announcement. It is interesting to note here the Cranford Pratt Building name. C. Pratt was the first Principal of the University College of Tanganyika 1961 to 1964. This name is of a recent nature, as for many years this building has just been known as the Admin Block.

4c is the photo of a SUV spare tire cover (STC) with an English-Swahili text — (UDSM) “50 years 1961-2011, Advancing Knowledge, Creating Futures”. In this context, it is pointed out here again that most SUV spare tire covers contain a short and not so short text being either the equivalent of a billboard or producing a logo, slogan, instruction

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<sup>19</sup> <https://osf.io/6huj8/>, Source App4.

and more. It is a convenient and attractive way of addressing problems that are (or could be) relevant for others who drive behind such a particular SUV. For other STC samples see the entries 4j, 6d and 6e, 14b as well as photos on page 18.

The current LL of UDSM is the result of changes away from the Swahili names introduced in 1974 (see above). Approx. 20 years ago, the English naming policy was reactivated. This development is reflected in 4d “College of Arts and Social Sciences” and its signpost 4e, although in an annex area a wooden plate in Swahili 4f which dates back to the 1970s was still found in 2019.

4g shows that only the Institute of Kiswahili Studies (better known as TUKI which stands for “Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili”) goes for a bilingual version.

4h is a building contractors’ board in English, at the bottom is a short Swahili command, that is “JI(H)ADHARI UKIMWI BADO UNAUA” ‘Take care, AIDS still kills’.

More English text samples as follows.

5 shows Nyerere International Airport Terminal 3.

6 presents “CDRB Bank, UDSM Branch” — a service list which includes “FOREIGN EXCHANGE”, “ONLINE BANKING” and more.

7 shows “National Bank of Commerce” billboard text praising the NBC Master Card.

More street billboards in English.

8 shows “Century Insurance” slogan is “When you need it most”.

9 shows two billboards, left — “COME TOGETHER” right Airtel (phone provider) — “switch to airtel today & call Kenya for only 2.50 TSh”.

10a shows Dar es Salaam downtown — a variety of shop names and service providers.

10b shows in green company sign post in Swahili “Zana Bora Limited”, below “Kilimo Kwanza”, ‘Perfect Equipment, Agriculture first’.

11a shows Mwenge, Nujoma Road — Service billboard, headline in Swahili “Tunachimba Visima vya Maji” ‘We drill water boreholes’ plus various service details in English.

11b shows Mwenge, Nujoma Road — Service billboard “101 PHOTO STUDIOS LTD” and details of services offered.

11c shows Mwenge, University Road — Barber shop, (no longer existing), hair styling and beauty services for men, left, and women, right.

As for 11a–c, shop staff was requested to explain in Swahili, what is offered. This request was much too demanding, because nobody contacted could do so. As a consequence the interviewer was requested to speak to the owner.

11d shows Mwenge — StarTimes billboard (Free decoder), including terms of reference in Swahili, “Lipia miezi 6, King’amuzi bure” ‘Pay for 6 months, Decoder free of charge’.

It is interesting to note here the Swahili preference for addressing potential users / customers. In so doing, customer friendly information is made available in the language everybody is competent in. Such an approach is typical in particular for the mobile phone companies which contribute substantially to corpus development in the field of Swahili telecommunication terminology and beyond.

12 a–b has to do with the media domain, as reflected in the billboard which advertises “The African” newspaper (12a), and the newspapers on display for sale (12b) mostly in Swahili, some in English. In fact, Tanzania’s LL is shaped by the multitude of Swahili newspapers. This street vending is not only common in Tanzania, but for example also widespread in Kenya (English medium prints being prominent), Namibia and other African countries.

On 13, the lorry’s text is bilingual, starting with right hand side “Flavoured yoghurt *katika ladha tofauti*” ‘in various flavours’, going on next with “Dairy products are made of 100% fresh, top quality pasteurised cows’ milk”, left bottom again Swahili “Tumia bidhaa halisi...” ‘Use appropriate products...’.

Pages 16–18 of the Appendix 4 (link :<https://osf.io/6huj8/>) present an actual photo collection (September 26, 2021) of billboards and shop names that illustrate LL in the neighbourhood of the Mlimani City shopping centre the English text of which is self-explanatory.

### 3.4. LL up-country, along the roads, etc. — the grassroots approach<sup>20</sup>

Given the prestige of English in Tanzania, it is not unusual that, similar to the cityscape, in some informal domains at the grassroots level outside Dar es Salaam this language is used as a token of attracting customers.

In the following examples the texts on the photos shot along the road from Moshi to Dar es Salaam shed light on the kind of business which is advertised as well as the character and English style of the message.

Initially two bars are listed, that is (a) the “SLOPE IN BAR” which is close to “SHALO M STATIONARY”, “GENT’S RAW FOOD”, and (b) “THE STORM BAR”.

Typical widespread examples are related to barber shops. Here is a selection of catch words that are extracted from the folder’s “Barb” files such as “Hair Cutz Salon”, “Digital Hair Cutting Salon”, “ELEGANCE Hair dressin’ Salon”, “PARADISE HAIR CUTT Saloon” (in addition “Tunachaji simu aina zote” ‘We charge phones all types’), “UP HILL Cut SALOON”, in addition “Huduma tunazotoa” ‘Services that we offer’ referring both to hair styling as well as mobile phones, plus plate announcing PASSPORT — EXPRESS, STILL PICTURE AND VIDEO SHOOTING.

The next category is the naming of (mini-)buses. Thus, the first mini-bus is called “THE EXPANDABLES” and below “PROFESSOR Wenger” (the then British football coach), further the bus name “SHILLINGI” ‘Shilling’(2 times) and VIP Class, also called “The pride of PANGANI”. Further, lorries, number one’s name is “NEW SENETOR”, lorry 2 “MKATE NO. 1, QUALITY BREAD”, a logo with English text left, and right bakery products “SCONES, SIMSIM BREAD, BOX BREAD”.

The findings that are referred to above have to do with business names and services. The objective is the need of formulating imaginary

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<sup>20</sup> The link in this section is <https://osf.io/cbjzp/>.

qualitative standards through the use of English. In both cases, a minimum of lexis is used, which probably follows a uniform scheme. Not uncommon are unintentional misspellings due to lack of English proficiency. In contrast, there is a wide use of the national language Swahili, which enlightens potential buyers about the essential advantages of a product on the market.

Nonetheless English still plays a rather important role in Tanzania, both on the Mainland and in Zanzibar. In the latter case, this language prevails in the tourist centers, so in the north (Nungwi) as noted during a visit in December 2019. In the case of Namibia, languages other than English are rarely used.

#### **4. Linguistic landscape, English competence and proficiency**

As already mentioned several times, the contradiction in terms of prestige and scope of English application in the official, formal and informal domains of communication in writing as well as verbally is obvious. This is well known in Namibia as well as in Tanzania. Given the apparent lack of a prominent English speaking community (for figures see the relevant sections above), the education system has an important function to play in creating a broader base of competent English speakers. This requires a well-structured form of teaching English as a foreign language (as a subject — EaS) which is adjusted to the different school levels up to university. This applies equally to the use of English as the medium of instruction (MoI). Related to this is also the training of qualified teachers, which is an obvious problem both in Namibia and Tanzania. Judging by the results, there are significant problems, since the English language proficiency results in both countries are far from being optimal.

In this context, attention should be drawn to the following key points of a British Council position paper summarized by Simpson (2017), such as on page 3:

A move to EMI (English medium education — K.L.) in or just after lower primary, commonly found in ... Sub-Saharan Africa, yields to shallow a foundation of English to sustain learning across the curriculum from the upper primary years upwards...

Fluency in English is best served through strengthening the teaching of EaS. Therefore EMI at primary school level is not always beneficial nor is it a policy or practice we support.

Well, just Namibia is an example of EMI from grade 4 upwards and a lower primary EaS that leaves much to be desired for the English proficiency and competence of teachers that were met earlier during field research both in rural and urban primary schools in North Namibia.<sup>21</sup>

It is symptomatic to read the following assessment in the “New Era” newspaper (published by the Namibian government) after almost 30 years of the use of English as the official language of Namibia and the widespread promotion of this language in education:

According to Namibian employers, about 50% of young graduates tend to lack the basic skills of writing, basic school mathematics, reasoning, communication, and general knowledge. “Graduates think they are management material, but many cannot even speak English very well...” (quoted in Legère 2021: 185).

Suffice it to note here that after 1990 much has been done to stimulate the widespread learning of the English language. In this respect, a landmark was the Ongwediva Conference (Ministry of Education and Culture 1993). Chamberlain from the British Council submitted thereafter a series of Conclusions and Recommendations (see Ministry of Education and Culture 1993: 31–34), addressing the difficulties faced by teachers and students alike with regard to the low quality and efficiency of EaS and EMI. Since then, this problem has been pointed out time and again such as in Trewby & Fitchat (2001) or Legère (2008) and via regular contacts with education officials.

In Tanzania the Swahili MOI approach in primary schools is different compared to Namibia, but the inadequate quality of EaS (from

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<sup>21</sup> For a 2000 overview see Legère et al. (2000).

grade 1, until about 1990 from grade 3) is evident everywhere and especially in secondary schools. For most learners, the exposure to English as MoI in Form 1 is highly problematic. As a consequence students are again taught in the classroom in Swahili to facilitate the comprehension of the subject matter. For more about language policy in education see various papers such as Yahya-Othman in Trewby & Fitchat (2001), Legère (2010), as well as personal communications by UDSM staff members for the recent past.

## 5. Residual

In the introduction, attention was paid to the official status of English in 21 African countries. In this article here, so far, only 2 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, i.e. Namibia and Tanzania have been discussed in the data-driven overview above. However, mind the fact that there are various bibliographic references by Pütz & Mundt (2018) regarding LL, for example, in Gambia (Juffermans 2012) or South Africa (Stroud & Mpendukana 2009) as well as the Legère & Rosendal (2018) paper in the book that is partly reflected in the Tanzania overview above. More information about Africa focused LL research is also available as abstracts of the 37<sup>th</sup> International LAUD Symposium (Pütz & Reif (eds.) 2016; selected papers which are referred to above originate from this symposium). Last year, 1–3 September, the LL12 Conference the topic of which was “The Political Economy of Language and Space/Place 2021” took place in Gothenburg. Its almost 60 page long abstract overview included LL research data i.a. on Botswana, Mozambique (Maputo), Nigeria, and more (Järlehed et al. (eds.) 2021).

Further, in the LL context, Tove Rosendal’s excellent dissertation (Rosendal 2010) provides substantial insights with regard to the East African countries Rwanda and Uganda. Especially in section 6.2 “Linguistic Landscape” of the published version she deals, among other things, with the use of English (see Rosendal 2011: 216–232).

Thus, in Rwanda 40.2% of billboards and 24% of store names are written in English. The text of 39.6% of the billboards and 58.3% of

shop signs is in French which has been the official language of the country for many years along with the Rwanda language. The national language, Rwanda, although being spoken by almost all Rwandans, is only represented with less than 20% values.

In Uganda, English which has been the country's official language since colonial times, is used on 95% of billboards and 96% as shop signs. National languages such as Ganda and the now co-official Swahili language are hardly represented, according to Rosendal (2011: 227).<sup>22</sup>

An interesting study from Zimbabwe looks at the use of English in graffiti as a part of LL. For example, in the male toilets of the Midlands State University in Gweru, Mangeya (2020: 263) found these two short texts (18)–(19).

- (18) MDC OR ZANU, NDEX OR SHONA [a message which associates political parties with ethnic identities, MDC/NDEX is the Ndebele wing, Mugabe's ZANU the Shona speaking majority]
- (19) fuck Mugabe fuck mandex fuck mashona fuck u all u let us down [which condemns those who undermine the national unity]

Earlier Mangeya (2020: 261) listed also various English catchwords Zimbabwe style.

Among other case studies that are published in SAJAL (South African Journal of African Languages) is a paper on Zimbabwe's linguistic landscaping (Mamvura 2020) as evident in the country's toponymy which is shaped by a naming strategy that pays respect to outstanding traditional leaders. Another paper has to do with LL in officially bilingual Cameroun, where, however, English is less privileged than French (Nkamta & Ngwenya 2017). LL in the same country is dealt with in the exhaustive and extremely informative Pütz (2020) paper.

It is for sure that in view of the on-going changes in the complex sub-Saharan linguistic situation, on the one hand, the number of LL contributions which take into account the top down initiatives in support

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<sup>22</sup> For both countries see also App6-Residual, link: <https://osf.io/hke9g/>.

of the official languages will be expanding. Similarly, on the other hand, research data as well as publications that have to do with grassroots empowerment of African languages are being expected.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has dealt with LL problems in two African countries with particular reference to English both from the top-down as well as bottom-up perspective. The focus on Namibia and Tanzania is language policy driven in the sense that each country has its own position towards English. On the one hand, Namibia emphasizes country wide the use of English in official and formal domains. On the other hand, Tanzania is committed to strike a balance between two *de facto* official languages, which is the non-African language English versus the national language Swahili. Accordingly, the maintenance of the prestigious English language in some official and formal domains is as important for various reasons as the empowerment of Swahili. In each country, there are impacts at the basis level, since the grassroots and even African middle class English competence is inversely proportionate to the prestige of English. This language remains in these two countries and beyond in Africa a minority language, even in view of the positive LL results.

It is a pity that in most other so-called Anglophone countries, such as, for example, in Kenya or Cameroun, similar to Namibia, even prominent African languages are rarely used in the public space. As a consequence, much remains to be done in the sense of article 50 of the Barcelona Universal Declaration (Follow-Up Committee 1998), quoted above. For the future, African language empowerment in LL is still a challenge.

## Appendix

Links to quick files as photo documentation for the paper is provided:

0. General link: <https://osf.io/6huj8/>
1. Independence (Namibia), link: <https://osf.io/mvdyz/>.

2. Namibia — Rundu and Kavango area, link: <https://osf.io/236sa/>, the entries are arranged alphabetically.
- 2a. Namibia — Rundu and Kavango area. Shebeen names, link: <https://osf.io/wej5x/>.
- 2b. (after page 9 of 2a). Namibia — Rundu and Kavango area. Shop names, link: <https://osf.io/wej5x/>.
3. Oshakati and Ondangwa area — Shebeen and other names, link: <https://osf.io/t4ysb/>.
4. Tanzania: Dar es Salaam and more, link: <https://osf.io/6huj8>.
5. Tanzania: TZ-upcountry (on the road), link: <https://osf.io/cbjzp/>, the entries are arranged alphabetically.
6. Other countries: Residual, link: <https://osf.io/hke9g/>.

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