

Linguistic landscape and indigenous languages in multilingual Ghana

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Understanding the patterns of linguistic choices, multilingualism, language dominance and the situation of marginalised languages is increasingly critical to addressing the convoluted language problems of the contemporary society. Both within and outside the purview of linguistic landscape studies, traditional offline-based scholarly explorations of these crucial areas to language and society abound. What is lacking is the extension of similar investigations to the online digital spaces (Yao 2021: 2; Rosendal et al. 2022: 183). This study is a response to the existing gap by investigating the choice of semiotic resources, multilingualism and language dominance in the online WhatsApp space as utilised by the intellectual class of Ghanaian universities. The analysis is a mixed method. Findings reveal acute marginalisation of indigenous African languages, including those of Ghana in landslide favour of English. This creates a cause for concern about the future language vitality of the indigenous languages since the vibrantly emerged online social media communication spaces are intractably superseding the oral based, face-to-face communication in the contemporary technology driven world. At the same time, the context collapse (or borderless) nature of online social media makes such channels strategic fora that can be leveraged for the promotion of marginalised languages. A course of action is recommended for the promotion of indigenous languages in the online spaces. Finally, this study reifies theorisations of online-offline space interconnectedness in linguistic landscape studies (Bolander & Locher 2020; Blommaert & Maly 2019).

Key words: Linguistic landscaping, online linguistic landscaping, WhatsApp, intelligentsia, Ghana

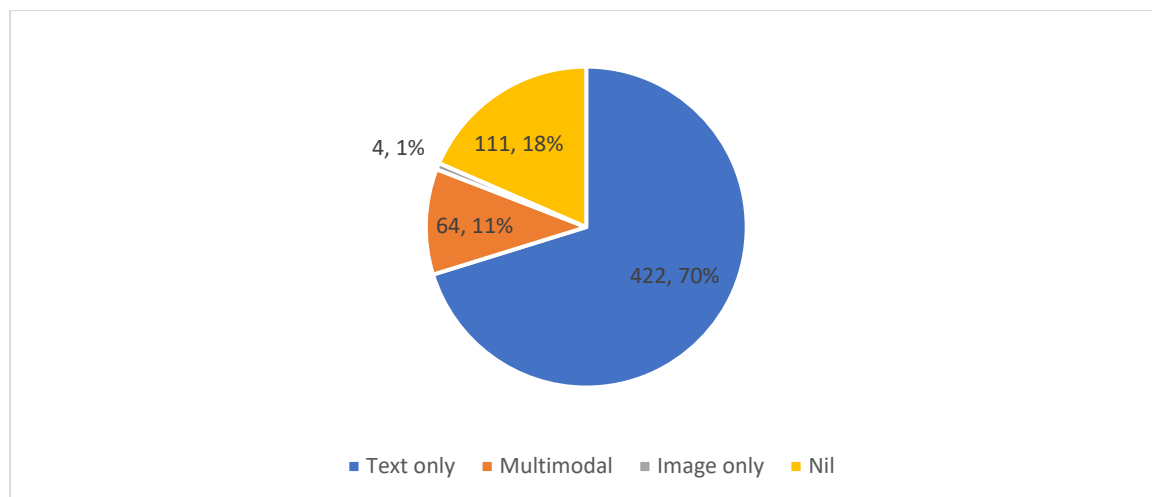


Figure 1: Aggregate distribution of choice of semiotic resources for both Junior and senior academic members

Table 1: Distribution of specific languages used: Aggregate for junior and senior academic members¹

Specific Languages															
Frequency	Eng	L	T	Fr	H	K	Ks	Ew	Dg	A	Code Mixed				
											T & Eng	Eng & Fp	Eng & A	L & Eng	P & Eng
	459	9	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1
Total	486														

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¹ Abbreviations for the language names in Table 1: English = Eng, Twi = T, Latin = L, French = Fr, Hindi = H, Korean = K, Kasem = Ks, Ewe = Ew, Dangme = Dg and Arabic = A.