

THE RESEMIOTISATION AND INTERTEXTUALITY OF MULTIMODAL DISCOURSES IN LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLES IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

Using resemiotisation and intertextuality as analytical tools in the broader theoretical contexts of linguistic landscapes and semiotic studies, this article accounts for the diverse and heavily saturated multimodal discourses emplaced on public service vehicles in Lusaka, Zambia (South-Central Africa). As its locus, the study wishes to unearth the textual and sociocultural sources of emplaced discourses privileging local materialities, agency, and voice. To this end, the article reveals that the multimodal discourses on public service vehicles bring religion into the spotlight, particularly Christianity, as a sociocultural reality of social actors. It is shown that the emplaced multimodal discourses are inescapably related to other texts and narratives predominantly associated with Zambia's christian religious underpinnings. In this way, the article concludes that resemiotisation and intertextuality are at play in the textual trajectory of discourses seen on public service vehicles in Lusaka, Zambia.

Keywords: Mobilescapes, Textual, Sociocultural, Resemiotisation, Public Service Vehicles

Introduction

While many studies have responded to the call and have expanded the breadth and length of linguistic landscapes (henceforth LL) (cf. Peck and Banda 2014; Blommaert and Huang 2010; Stroud and Mpendukana 2009, Banda and Jimaima 2015), there is still a sense in which insistence has been on the built environment and fixed signs in a particular locality. Therefore, the present study transgresses dominant narratives of earlier LL theorisations to chart a new territory and contribute to a growing body of literature on mobile LL, specifically concentrating on Public Service Vehicles (PSV) and the discourses emplaced on them. Rather than fixed signs in place, the study draws attention to texts or discourses and semiotic materialities (we use these terms interchangeably) consumed in multiple localities owing to the mobility of the public service buses in the various routes they service in Zambia's capital, Lusaka. In this regard, local materialities, agency, and voice are privileged to overcome many shortcomings witnessed in quantitative approaches of the earlier LL studies.

By drawing on the LL of PSV's in Lusaka Zambia, the researchers refer to the dynamic and fluid nature of meaning-making instances in mobile contexts exploring how language and other semiotic materialities are displayed, encountered, and used in environments char-

acterised by movement. The prime interest of the article is to unearth the possible textual and sociocultural sources of emplaced discourses beyond their immediate environment. For ease of presentation, the next section contextualises the article in the multilingual landscapes of Zambia by highlighting the language situation and historicising the PSV's transport system in Zambia's capital city, Lusaka, where the study was conducted. A review of literature on resemiotisation, intertextuality and semiotic landscapes will then follow. After this, the article will present the methodology employed and the findings. A summary and conclusion will then be provided.

Contextualising the Study in the Multilingual Landscapes of Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked country in the central part of Southern Africa. The country's name can be traced to one of its main rivers, the Zambezi River, one of Africa's largest/longest rivers. Zambia is generally considered a *de facto* Christian nation with an estimated population of eighteen million. It has been revealed that 95.5 per cent of the population subscribes to Christianity while 2 per cent of the population orients to Islam whose membership is primarily concentrated in Lusaka apart from Eastern and Copperbelt Provinces. As will become apparent, the presence of these two religions and their percentage distribution implicates what comes to bear in the LL of Public Service Vehicles. Zambia's population is multicultural and multi-ethnic, with evidence of about 72 languages, dialects, and ethnic groups, which can be collapsed into between 20 and 26 language clusters (Nkolola-Wakumelo 2013; Kula 2006; Simungala *et al.* 2022a; Banda *et al.* 2019).

Lusaka district, the capital city of Zambia and the research site for this investigation, is a highly urbanised city comprising a multifaceted LL. It is characterised by a high incidence of individual multilingualism and a very fluid linguistic repertoire (Mambwe, 2014, Simungala *et al.*, 2022b). Thus, in many parts of Lusaka, Town Nyanja is used as a first language, while within the city, it is widely used as a *lingua franca*, whereas Bemba only serves as a *lingua franca* in some areas. Such a context poses a challenge in choosing and selecting a functional language that would cater to all speech communities as multiple languages compete and contest for space. Thus, people use a *lingua franca* (Bemba or Nyanja) coupled with other semiotic resources in their meaning-making instances. In the wake of globalisation and the onset of information technology, it is erroneous to ignore the influences on mobility and linguistic interaction of the population.

The mobility of people into the city has contributed to a diverse communicative repertoire from which speakers draw linguistic resources in their daily interactions, and this has led to the materialisation of different forms of communication by different social groups, including minibuses drivers and conductors (Mambwe, 2014; Wakumelo, 2010; Simungala *et al.* 2023). Bus drivers and conductors use a distinct form of discourse in their daily interactions. In her study, Wakumelo (2010) reformulates, categorises, and places the linguistic repertoire of call boys and minibuses drivers as a sociolect of identity. This opens up a productive field for assessing the performativity of identities beyond the spoken language among social actors within the broader context of the transport sector in Zambia. Their discourse arises from common interests shared (social, economic, and religious) amongst themselves and the need to express their views (Wakumelo, 2010). This has resulted in a

new standpoint of the LL of public transport in Lusaka, which has seen communication miscellany as social actors develop communicative strategies by using a linguistic repertoire at their disposal for visual and communicative effects.

Public Service Vehicles (henceforth PSVs) in Lusaka are plastered with written discourses not only in a semiotic sense but also in a material sense, which can be described as semiotic assemblages (Jimaima & Banda 2019). The signage/inscriptions (henceforth materialities) emplaced on the buses take the form of images, written words, and stickers on windows, bus rear, mudguards, and windscreen. The discourses seem to have become indispensable. In this regard, the present study seeks to speak to the textual and sociocultural aspects that lie behind the semiotic materialities by privileging agency and voice. Being mindful that sociologists frame discourse as a productive force since it shapes peoples' thoughts, ideas, beliefs, values, and behaviour (Cole, 2018), the study wishes to establish the extent to which materialities are discursively circulated, (re-) deployed and projected as motivated discourses open to place and meaning-making. In the section that follows, the study turns to conceptual matters.

Semiotic Landscapes, Resemiotisation and Intertextuality

Landry and Bourhis (1997), in their seminal paper on LL and ethnolinguistic vitality, have been instructive concerning the visibility and salience of languages. They underscored that “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (Landry and Bourhis 1997:25). Languages are represented and displayed; at times for functional reasons, for general information and cautionary function and at others for symbolic purposes or promotional objectives” (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009). The symbolic purpose refers to the value and status of a language relative to other languages, while the functional purpose refers to how language is used in the public domain to achieve specific ends, and this is the interest of the study (Simungala and Jimaima 2023). The dynamic field of LL studies language in the environment and attempts to understand the motives, uses, ideologies, language varieties and contestations of multiple forms of ‘languages’ as they are displayed in public spaces (Ben-Rafael, 2009).

The meanings of signs are derived from the time, the place, and the way they are placed (Scollon and Scollon, 2003), which largely depends on the understanding of their sociocultural, geographical, or physical context. For this reason, in recent times, LL studies have expanded the scenery to circumvent the limitation imposed by the quantitative approach to meaning-making. Therefore, in reformulating LL to broaden its meaning and scope, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) argue that the field of study should be called Semiotic Landscapes (henceforth SL) rather than LL to account for the multimodal nature of the complex meaning-making instances of our times. This stems from a background where the whole sufficiency of language has been questioned (Kress 2010, Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, Jewitt 2009, Banda and Jimaima 2015). As will become apparent, a semiotic perspective in LL is more insightful because it unravels all possibilities of meaning-making in space. Stroud and Mpendukana's (2009) injection of material ethnography pushes the shift from LL to

SL, because the signs cannot be looked upon without considering the elements behind their production. Consequently, the voices and narratives of bus drivers and conductors, who produce the semiotic materialities on PSVs, are indispensable.

In attending to the emplaced discourses, which we sometimes refer to as semiotic materialities on PSVs, the study turns to resemiotisation. Iedema (2003), observes that “resemiotisation is meant to provide the analytical means for (1) tracing how semiotics are translated from one into the other as social processes unfold, as well as for (2) asking why these semiotics (rather than others) are mobilised to do certain things at certain times” (Iedema, 2003: 29). Through resemiotisation, materials can be created and recreated in different forms and practices. This means that once a semiotic resource is deployed for meaning-making, it can then be redeployed for use in various media to occasion meaning. Therefore, social actors do not merely replicate semiotic materialities in different contexts, but materialities are made to carry different meanings suiting the actor’s needs (Thabela (2011). Essentially, resemiotisation is about how “meaning-making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next” (Iedema, 2003: 41). This will become apparent as the study shows the translation of religious materialities from one form to the other and from one context to another.

Another analytical tool drawn upon in this study is intertextuality. According to Kristeva (1986), individual texts are inescapably related to others in a matrix of irreducible plural and provisional meanings. As will become apparent with the data provided, intertextuality argues that any text is the absorption and transformation of another within a particular social context and should be examined within the social interaction it produces. Thus, everything that can be said has been said before, and thus, people reuse and manipulate existing texts, images, and other semiotic materialities. In this way, resemiotisation and intertextuality have a very close relationship because they complement each other analytically (Thabela, 2011). The environment is believed to be “marked by duplication, interpretation of texts, and the circulation and recirculation of images and words in multiple forms and formats” (Roux, 2015:50).

In this regard, the emplaced discourses on PSVs under investigation have intertextual references. This is because social actors tend to use popular Bible verses, symbols, proverbs, quotes, and images (Mambwe, 2014; Roux, 2015). Emplaced semiotic materialities express the authors’ social values and religious ideologies (Roux, 2015; El-Nasher and Nayef, 2016). Looking at intertextuality from this perspective means that the discourses found on PSVs and the other discursive modalities of semiotic materialities emplaced on these vehicles are never alone, because their interpretation is based on other materialities in space. In what follows, the research approach is discussed.

The Research Approach and the data

The study employed an ethnographic research design to explore the multimodal texts emplaced on PSVs. The study was conducted in Lusaka, a town in the Lusaka Province of Zambia and was part of a larger Masters study looking at a semiotic analysis of materialities emplaced on public service vehicles (Tembo 2020). Lusaka’s central business district has

four main local bus stations: Kulima Tower, City Market, Lumumba, and Millennium bus stations. These locations were selected because they had the largest population of minibus drivers and conductors. The study purposefully sampled 40 buses with emplaced discourses, which included 40 bus drivers and 40 conductors. The data was based on interviews, photography, and observations for a month. The interviews were conducted in Nyanja, Bemba, and English and were recorded with the researcher's voice recorder. The main aim of the interviews was to get first-hand information on how the social actors rework semiotic materialities to give their intended purpose. The study relied on photography and visual analysis. In this regard, the narratives from the interviews were complemented by photographs of materialities on the public service vehicles. The data yielded a total of 412 digital images consisting of written text and pictorial materialities. Table 1 below summarises the statistical evidence of the textual and sociocultural sources of the emplaced discourses.

Table 1. *Statistics of Textual and Sociocultural Sources*

Source	Number of Signage	Percentage %
Animism	15	4
Religion	207	50
Expressions	87	21
Popular Culture	46	11
Family and Peers	57	14
Total	412	100

The discourses spotted on the buses highlight the diverse, heavily saturated religious aspects in space. Results show that half of the materialities emplaced on the PSVs were religious expressions. As shown in Table 1 above, these accounted for 207 (50%) materialities out of 412 emplaced discourses. A discussion illuminating the dynamics and intricacies of the religious emplaced semiotic materialities is presented in what follows.

Christianised Spaces: A Replication and Duplication of Discourses

In Table 1, the researchers noticed that PSVs were replete with various discourses. In particular, their attention was drawn to religion, which accounts for the highest number of signs at 207. Consequently, they saw religion as a sociocultural reality of the social actors which inhabited these spaces. Figure 1 below corroborates this view as we observe social actors' association with Christianity owing to the materialities of the scriptures from the Christian holy book, the Bible.



Figure 1: Bible verses

As shown in Figure 1 above, the emplaced discourses divulge the social actors' culture as it relates and extends to attitudes, values, behaviours, norms, objects, activities, and other characteristics (Zhang and Gelb, 1996). Thus, the Christianisation of space affirms what is already known about the country- that Zambia is a Christian nation. The declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation dates back to the birth of a multiparty system. Gilford (1998), historicises that Christianity was central to the change of regime in Zambia in 1991 after its new President, Frederick Chiluba, declared Zambia a 'Christian Nation'. While this is all history, recent to the study in October 2015, the then Zambian president, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, broke the ground for a new National House of Prayer, a building project meant to reaffirm the country's status as Africa's only self-proclaimed "Christian nation" (Haynes 2021). As guided by Roux (2015), the discourses relating to Christianity on PSVs are a replication and duplication from the broader narrative of the discourses surrounding the declaration of Zambia because a Christian nation because space is "marked by duplication, interpretation of texts and the circulation and recirculation of images, word in multiple form and formats" (Roux, 2015:50). Consequently, the discourses emplaced on these vehicles are never alone as their interpretation is based on other materialities in space.

Due to the historical embedding of Christianity in Zambia, social actors seem to have embraced the declaration, and this could potentially and partly explain the heavily saturated Christian discourses on the buses. It is important to underscore that Christians follow Jesus Christ and uphold his teachings in the holy book, the Bible, which is understood to be inspired by God. Therefore, Figure 1 demonstrates that drivers and minibus conductors subscribe to Christianity, because this is observable in how they get inspiration from Bible verses and religious sayings, which are cited for their encouragement and the encouragement of others. In this regard, it is noted that the Christianisation of space is a sociocultural reality of social actors as their profession of the Christian faith is beyond word of mouth but includes all emblems, such as verses from their holy scriptures. Using the analytical tool of resemiotisation (Iedema, 2003), which is concerned with how the borrowed text is reworked to suit the purpose of the public transport operators. The study agrees with Graham (2000: 35) who states that: "Authors of text

do not create texts from their original minds but rather compile them from pre-existing texts.” Thus, social actors resemiotise religious images and emplace them onto their buses. From this, the sign makers’ intention is known as those intended to encourage others with holy scriptures.

As the emplaced discourses are said to speak to the Christian dispositions of drivers and conductors, Jimaima (2016) points to the subjective sensibilities of such materialities. He refers to the narratives of the drivers interviewed as subjective, given that what gets to be heard is their side of the story, because there is no way of substantiating their claims. Consequently, this also brings into the spotlight the idea that travelers will also have their subjective sensibilities and tastes as they consume the materialities on PSVs. It then becomes important to turn to Malinowski who problematises authorship using the LL of Chinatown. He notes and describes “the author of signs as a complex, dispersed entity who is only somewhat in control of the meanings that are read from his or her written utterances” (Malinowski 2009: 108).

From this perspective, it becomes clear that while the study has argued for the christianisation of space owing to the discourses and materialities emplaced on PSVs, what travellers see and subsequently consume may not be the intent of the sign makers because they have no control. Jimaima (2016), adds that the authorial aspects of the LL may not always represent the owner’s intent because some of the signage might have been emplaced by the previous owner. In this regard, it may be that a driver inherited a bus, and thus, he may or may not have an association with what has been emplaced. It is important to add that the emplaced materialities and discourses like any materiality in place enjoy anthropomorphic power of agency, because they take up their own life and narrate their own stories (Appadurai 1996; Jimaima and Banda 2019), such that what the sign makers intended, concerning Christianisation of space, may not be what consumers read off on the PSV’s.



Figure 2: Trendy Messages

From the Bible to a Marketing Context: The Textual Trajectory of Discourses

While the materialities above orient to the holy scriptures, it is possible that given the understanding of Zambia's declaration as a Christian nation, bus drivers may align themselves with sociocultural tenets for them to get business. In this regard, if the majority of travellers statistically orient to Christianity, it makes business sense for bus drivers and conductors to emplace Christian semiotic materialities. Therefore, bus drivers employ discourse creativity through the emplacement of religious materialities on PSVs even when they may not be staunch believers of Christ. Consequently, the LL emerges as a space of marketisation by which social actors lure potential consumer customers by appealing to their social and traditional affiliations. As the bus moves to the various destinations, they take on the role of a preacher to pass on religious messages and sound behavioural guidance tips, an act that is not just left for the church.



Figure 3: Wise Donkey

Figure 3 above is evidence of the importation of the biblical idealism of the “triumphant entry” of Jesus and the use of the donkey from the Bible. There is also an allusion to the Balaam Donkey, which refused to move at the sight of an angel. The contrast here is that this one (referring to the bus) always moves; avoids assumed obstacles (Numbers 22: 23). From the discourses in the narratives, it is apparent that the social actors as producers were well aware of the sources of the texts they decided to draw upon.

Yet, while they import these discourses into a space that is not spiritual in a sense as this is purely a commercial space of transportation, the discourses are crafted anew. Thus, even when the drivers retain the source of the text like the Bible, the sign producers add

new meanings by the addition of the word ‘wise’. This is because the sign makers, in this case, the drivers are at liberty to draw upon any source of materials as they own space and thus are responsible for what they emplace on their buses. Social actors here also show knowledge of their sources of materials which they make use of in a different space.

By virtue of the donkey being used by the Lord Jesus at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the donkey ceases to be ordinary as it is now, as a result of the association with Jesus Christ, a wise donkey. This entails and shows how meanings change through resemiotisation and intertextuality as semiotic materialities assume new meanings because of the new spaces the materialities traverse. The bedrock of intertextuality, as can be seen and used in this interpretation, is that in production, semiotic materialities which may have language and other semiotic materialities must be appropriated from a previous context and adapted to the present expressive intention by the producer. This is consistent with Orr (2010) who interprets intertextuality as text standing in relation to other text to produce meaning.

In Figures shown above above, it can be seen that the emplacement is all about trending messages, or what Hult (2009) calls a story behind every object in any linguistic landscape. Roux (2015), reveals that some actors may not even be religious but that they creatively draw on trending religious expressions from the internet. The researchers, thus conclude that Public transport operators can combine language and images to create messages whether for self or others. This is effectively done through manipulation of borrowed texts, the drivers and conductors resemiotise various modalities to enhance creativity and originality. Through the discourses co-deployed with other semiotic materialities, actors are seen to have been motivated through their interaction within their space by their cultural orientation because Zambia is a Christian nation. Therefore, the role of resemiotisation in the textual trajectory from biblical context to the automobile is seen at this moment.

Conclusion

Leaning on Zhang and Gelb (1996), the article has demonstrated that the emplaced discourses divulges and speak to the broader sociocultural orientation of social actors as it relates and extends to attitudes, values, behaviours, and norms, objects, activities, and other characteristics. By taking this view, the study has brought into the spotlight the Christianisation of space whose roots are heavily embedded in the broader narrative of Zambia as a Christian nation. Thus, it is not surprising to see drivers and conductors’ efforts to Christianise their buses by way of producing and subsequently emplacing discourses that speak to Christianity. It is no wonder Roux (2015) sees space (and we would add, spaces of PSVs) as “marked by duplication, interpretation of texts and the circulation and recirculation of images, and words in multiple form and formats” (Roux, 2015:50). In this way, individual texts of materialities on PSVs are inescapably related to other texts and narratives that are predominantly associated with Zambia as a Christian nation. Thus, with this evidence, the researchers agree with Kristeva (1986) that any text is the absorption and transformation of another within a particular social context and should, for that reason be examined within the social interaction it is produced.

By taking the view that everything that can be said has been said before, the researchers have argued that bus conductors and drivers reuse and manipulate existing texts, im-

ages, and other semiotic materialities as they craft what to emplace on their automobiles. Put in another way, the producers of the semiotic materialities in question borrow existing texts and reuse them for their meaning-making instances. This view is well informed by Iedema (2003), whose theorisation on resemiotisation and multimodality has aptly demonstrated the movement of texts from one context to another. In this regard, the researchers view is that a biblical text is borrowed and reworked to suit the purpose of the public transport operators. In this connection, The reseachers agree with Graham (2000: 35) when he observes that: “Authors of text do not create texts from their original minds but rather compile them from pre-existing texts.” Thus, social actors resemiotise religious images and emplace them onto their buses for marketisation through an act of discourse creativity even when they may not be staunch believers of Christ.

The spaces of PSVs emerges as space of marketisation by which social actors lure their potential customers by appealing to their social and traditional affiliation. In this regard, the emplacement of Christian semiotic materialities proves to be a good practice for bus drivers and conductors because they align with sociocultural tenets in their quest get business since the majority of travelers are statistically oriented to Christianity. Essentially, the change of context occasions the change in motivation and orientation. However, while the researchers agree with the overall Christianisation of space as read off by the sign makers’ interest, they are quick to note that LL of PSVs are spaces and places of both objective and subjective sensibilities and tastes. This is because the emplaced materialities and discourses, like any materiality in place, enjoy anthropomorphic power of agency, as they take up their own life and narrate their own stories (Appadurai 1996; Jimaima and Banda 2019), such that what the bus drivers and conductors intended may not be what consumers read off on the PSVs.

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