

Anglicism in Urban Writings: The Case of Commercial Signs in the City of Batna

الإنجليزية في الكتابات الحضرية: حالة اللوحات التجارية في مدينة باتنة

Dr/ SOUAD BENHARRA

سعاد بن حارة

University Mustapha Benboulaid-Batna2

Laboratory LDIEFLE

s.benharra@univ-batna2.dz

Received in: 20/12/2024

Accepted in: 04/11/2025

Abstract

This contribution, which falls within the field of urban sociolinguistics, aims to reveal the influence of English on the written landscape of the city of Batna. We have sought to address our research question regarding the impact of the English language on urban writings, particularly with respect to commercial signs in the city of Batna, which is considered a space characterized by notable linguistic heterogeneity. This allowed us to clarify the role of Anglicisms in signage, taking into account their significance within multilingualism.

Through our study, which focuses on the graphic environment of the city, we attempted to understand the sociolinguistic functioning of English in the urban space through the writings on commercial signs. Additionally, we highlighted its role in influencing consumer receptiveness, considering it a marker that reflects digital advancement and socio-economic development.

Key words: Urban sociolinguistics; Urban Writings; Commercial Signs; City; English.

الملخص:

تسعى هذه المساهمة التي تندرج في مجال السوسيولسانيات الحضرية إلى كشف تأثير اللغة الإنجليزية على الكتابات في مدينة باتنة. لقد حاولنا الإجابة على إشكالتنا، وهي تأثير اللغة الإنجليزية على الكتابات الحضرية، خاصة فيما يتعلق باللافتات التجارية في مدينة باتنة التي تعتبر فضاءً يحتوي على تنوع لغوي ملحوظ. وقد أتاح لنا ذلك توضيح دور الأنغليسية في هذه اللافتات مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار أهميتها في التعدد اللغوي.

من خلال دراستنا التي تندرج في البيئة البصرية للمدينة، حاولنا تصميم الفهم السوسيولساني للغة الإنجليزية في الفضاء الحضري من خلال الكتابات على اللافتات التجارية، مع تسليط الضوء على دورها في استقبال المستهلكين، باعتبارها علامة تعكس النمو الرقمي والتطور الاجتماعي والاقتصادي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السوسيولسانيات الحضرية؛ الكتابات الحضرية؛ اللافتات التجارية؛ المدينة؛ الإنجليزية.

Introduction:

Anglicism in Algeria is a growing phenomenon that reflects the dynamics of globalization and internationalization. Commercial signs, in particular, demonstrate how English is strategically used to attract a diverse clientele and convey an image of modernity and sophistication. Furthermore, Anglicism in Algeria reflects the country's openness to global influences while striving to balance its cultural and linguistic heritage.

In recent years, there has been a significant spread of English in Algeria. This phenomenon is particularly evident in urban writings, especially through commercial signs.

In this context, we ask the following question: To what extent has English influenced the written landscape of the city of Batna, particularly concerning commercial signs?

To address this question, we hypothesize that the penetration of English, as a facilitating element in individuals' professional lives, could be considered a tool for accelerating and contributing to socio-economic progress.

Our study falls within the scope of urban sociolinguistics. To carry it out, we will analyze the commercial signs in the city of Batna, regarded as a space characterized by unique linguistic heterogeneity.

1. Definition of a Commercial Sign:

A commercial sign is a specific form of communication designed to capture the attention of consumers.

In commercial law: "a sign is an external distinctive mark affixed to the facade of an establishment, enabling the identification and geographical location of a business or enterprise, and fostering customer loyalty. It may consist of a logo, a sign, or any other symbol" (BEM, 2018) (free translation) .

Commercial signs are essential indicators that can reveal the sociocultural identity of a city by reflecting the linguistic choices of merchants. Today, commercial signs play a pivotal role, especially with the transition to a market economy, where their primary aim is to attract consumers' attention.

The development of these signs has evolved alongside the growth of urban areas.

2. Historical Overview of Commercial Signs:

Commercial signs have long been considered landmarks, enabling merchants to identify themselves to their audience. Historically, merchants illustrated their trades using wooden, stone, or iron panels.

In ancient and medieval societies, signs were often symbols or icons representing the trade or products being sold. For example, a bundle of hay symbolized a miller, while a pair of scissors represented a tailor.

In Algeria, during French colonization (1830–1962), French became the administrative and commercial language. Commercial signs were predominantly in French, reflecting the dominance of the colonial language. The European architectural styles and colonial-era designs heavily influenced the aesthetics of commercial signage, with materials such as wrought iron and carved wood being commonly used.

Following independence in 1962, Algeria adopted a policy of Arabization to assert its national identity. As a result, Arabic became the primary language for commercial signs.

With globalization and increased economic openness, English began to appear on commercial signs. English is often used to attract consumers, particularly in sectors such as technology, fashion, and modern services.

Commercial signs mirror sociocultural trends, linguistic preferences, and economic influences. They contribute significantly to shaping urban identity. A well-designed sign can attract customers, increase a business's visibility, and enhance economic success. As such, the linguistic and aesthetic choices of commercial signs are often strategic, helping businesses stand out in competitive markets.

3. Operational Concepts

3.1 .Multilingualism

"Multilingualism is the condition of being able to use multiple languages, often with the ability to switch between them according to social and cultural contexts." (Fishman 1999, 402). Multilingualism refers to situations involving the interaction of multiple languages or language varieties, present in both verbal repertoires and social communication (Juillard, 2007). An individual is considered multilingual when they are proficient in at least two languages and can switch between them during verbal exchanges.

Multilingualism fosters access to other cultures, promoting openness and cultural exchange.

3.2 .Anglicism

Anglicism is the borrowing of words, phrases, or structures from English into another language. "An anglicism is any word, phrase, or construction that originates in English and is borrowed into another language, often resulting from cultural contact or global influences." (Trask 1999, 7). In addition, "anglicism refers to the use of English words or expressions in another language, either as direct borrowing or as a calque" (Baker 1992, 86).

It can manifest as semantic, lexical, or linguistic calques. Anglicisms often reflect the growing influence of English on other languages, providing insights into global sociocultural and economic dynamics driven by globalization.

Types of anglicisms:

- Lexical Anglicism: A word borrowed directly from English, e.g., "business" (affaires).
- Semantic Anglicism: A word that exists in the borrowing language but adopts its -English meaning, e.g., "supporter" for tolerate ("to support").
- Syntactic Anglicism: Structures that alter grammatical syntax, e.g., "Je vais appliquer pour ce job" ("I am going to apply for this job") instead of "Je vais postuler à ce poste".
- Orthographic Anglicism: Words directly integrated with English spelling, e.g., "email" (courriel).
- Calque: Literal translations of English expressions, e.g., "faire du sens" ("to make sense") instead of "avoir du sens".

3.3 .Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that examines the influence of society on language. "It explores various phenomena, including language functions, usage in society, language proficiency, and discourse analysis. Initially, its goal was to describe the varieties of language within a linguistic community in relation to social structures " (Baylon 1991, 35). (free translation).

Today, sociolinguistics encompasses the study of language within its sociocultural context, "emphasizing cultural identity and interactions among individuals and groups" (Blanchet, 2000: 72) (free translation).

3.4 .Urban Sociolinguistics

Urban sociolinguistics extends sociolinguistic research to urban contexts, "integrating social, linguistic, spatial, and political dimensions" (Deshayes & Vetier, 2017). (free translation). (free translation).

This field examines the emergence of new linguistic systems influenced by the specific organization of cities and studies language practices in urban contexts. "Urban sociolinguistics involves the analysis of language use in urban areas, focusing on social structures, group identities, and the dynamic relationship between language, place, and society" (Trudgill 2000, 107).

It emphasizes the role of urban space as a vital dimension in shaping social interactions and incorporates the structural and functional characteristics of urban environments into its analyses.

"Urban sociolinguistics acknowledges the multiplicity of spaces within cities, attributing meaning and value to linguistic and discursive practices that articulate these spaces" (Bulot & Veschambre) (free translation).

3.5 .The City

A city is a geographical space where diverse linguistic practices emerge from linguistic, social, and cultural divergence. It is described as a structural unit "formed by relationships, conflicts, convergences, or divergences" (Calvet 1994, 128) (free translation).

Cities are multicultural hubs where complex and diverse linguistic practices coexist. They are described "as spaces of communication, constantly reinventing themselves through writing and imagery to express identity and difference" (Vincent 1998, 26) (free translation).

Cities are characterized by linguistic heterogeneity and multiplicity, serving as "both territories and populations, material frameworks, and nodes of social relationships" (Grafmeyer & Authier 2015, 8) (free translation). Historical, social, and cultural factors further transform cities into spaces of linguistic pluralism.

3.6 .The Wilaya of Batna: Geographical and Linguistic Aspects

The city of Batna was established by decree on September 12, 1848, signed by Napoleon III. It serves as the capital of the Aurès region, located in northeastern Algeria, covering an area of 12,038 km² and comprising 53 communes. (As of December 28, 2023, Barika became a delegated Wilaya under the new administrative division).

Batna's population was estimated at 1,307,000 by the end of 2017. Geographically, it is bordered by the Wilayas of Sétif, Mila, and Oum-El-Bouaghi to the north, Khenchela to the east, M'sila to the west, and Biskra and Barika to the south.

The City of Batna: Linguistic and Urban Dynamics

The city of Batna is recognized as the nerve center of the region, composed of distinct urban areas. Among them, the downtown Batna area, located to the north, constitutes a strategic space. This center is home to two major historical monuments:

The Church of Batna, which reflects the city's religious and architectural heritage.

And the Regional Theater, located near the market square, a place for cultural and commercial gatherings.

The iconic neighborhoods include: Le Stand, Le Camp and La Gare

These areas embody historical, social, and economic aspects unique to the city.

Batna is a city marked by intense linguistic contact, creating a diverse and complex linguistic landscape. The city's linguistic repertoire includes several languages, each serving a specific function:

Tamazight (Chaoui): Representing the ancestral language of the region, it reflects the local Amazigh identity.

Algerian Dialectal Arabic: Used in everyday interactions, it is the vernacular language of the population.

Classical or Standard Arabic: The language of administration, education, and formal communication.

French: A legacy of colonization, it remains influential in the educational, scientific, and commercial spheres.

English: Its growing importance is driven by economic and technological factors.

In recent years, English has gained increasing prominence:

In Education, it is introduced in primary schools starting in September 2022.

It is adopted as the main language of university instruction from the 2023-2024 academic year. Also, English is seen as a driver of economic development and a gateway to global technological innovations.

This context illustrates how the city of Batna fits into a global dynamic while maintaining its rich linguistic and cultural heritage.

4 .Methodology of Corpus Collection

The city is an economic hub where languages coexist due to commercial exchanges. Commercial signs lead us to explore various linguistic practices within the city as part of commercial behavior. This will allow us to clarify the role of anglicism in signage while considering its significance in multilingualism.

Our corpus consists of 100 commercial signs (schools, shops, stores, and clinics) that we collected in the city of Batna. However, we selected only 40 signs due to the similarities observed between the different signs, particularly regarding the linguistic content. Our analysis is based on both descriptive and analytical methods.

The following table shows the language and linguistic content of each commercial sign.

Commercial Sign	Language	Linguistic Content
	English	Bloom
	English	Joy /Batna
	English	Imagine center
	French	Le printemps
	French – Anglais	Boutique Miss Djana

	English	Miss Elegant
	English	Lady lingerie
	English	Djo Shoes
	English	Bata shoes
	English	Tacos House
	English	Miss Radja

==== Anglicism in Urban Writings: The Case of Commercial Signs in the City of Batna

	English -arab	Festival city
	English	Bill jewelry
	English	Embassy Education
	French	Le Grec
	English	Mr. Yummy Fresh and tasty
	English	Pinky pyjama Batna

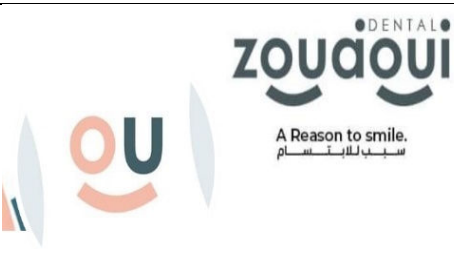
	English	speedy Food restaurent since 2001
 El Chaba store	Arab	الشابة
 Merci cadeaux batna	French	Merci cadeaux
 Cosmetic Iline Beauty	English	Cosmetic Iline beauty
	English	Batna beauty
 عطر السلطنة	Arab	 عطر السلطنة

==== Anglicism in Urban Writings: The Case of Commercial Signs in the City of Batna

 Besma Shoes		English	Besma shoes
		English	Princess shoes
		English	Djouri shoes
		English	Sweety shoes
		English	Mr. Price
		English	Princesse Sabrina

 Boutique the kop Batna	English	The Kop
	English	Little Boat
	Arab	دار السلطانة
 Chaimy collection	English	Chaimy collection
 Boutique la Perincesse	French	La princesses

==== Anglicism in Urban Writings: The Case of Commercial Signs in the City of Batna

 Excellence School Batna / إكسلانس سكول باتنة	English	Excellence school
	French	Ecole Elbail
	English	Smile Dental Clinic
	Arabe English	- Basmet Elhayat Dental clinic بسمّة الحياة
	English Arab	Zouaoui Dental A reason to smile سبب الابتسامة

 عيادة صناع البسمة لجراحة الاسنان smile makers clinic	English - Arab	Smile makers clinic عيادة صناع البسمة لجراحة الاسنان
---	----------------	--

5 .Analysis and Interpretation of Results

After establishing the conceptual foundations underlying this study, it is now time to reveal the methodological approach adopted to achieve its objectives. Our analytical approach is based on observing and describing the linguistic content of commercial signs in the city of Batna. Specifically, we aim to identify and describe the languages used in the signs within our corpus.

5.1 .Typology of Signs

Based on the collected data, we identified two main typologies of signs:

- Monolingual Signs: These use a single language, such as:

Bloom" (English), Le Grec" (French).

- Bilingual Signs: These employ two languages to attract a broader audience, such as: "Boutique Miss Djana" (French-English), "Zouaoui Dental/A reason to smile /سبب الابتسامة (English-Arabic)

Bilingual signage facilitates better understanding of the services offered, promotions, and important information. Customers feel more comfortable and are less likely to encounter language barriers. Additionally, the use of two different languages on the same commercial sign is a beneficial strategy that can improve accessibility, strengthen branding, optimize communication, and deliver significant economic advantages.

5.2. Languages Used in Different Signs

The analysis of commercial signs in the city of Batna reveals a notable linguistic diversity, reflecting a phenomenon of plurilingualism. The descriptive and analytical study of these signs highlights the most commonly used languages in urban writings, particularly in commercial signage.

The following table clearly illustrates the percentage distribution of each language.

Table 1: Languages Used in Commercial Signs

Language	%
English	75%
Arabic	10%
French	10%
English-Arabic	5%

5.3 .Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of commercial signs in Batna reveals several linguistic patterns and strategies, demonstrating the dynamics of language use in the urban context **Predominance of English(%75)**

The majority of commercial signs use English, employing various structures:

Adjective + Noun: Festival City, Pinky Pyjama, Speedy Food, Little Boat.

Noun + Noun: Lady Lingerie, Tacos House, Bill Jewellery, Excellence School, Education Embassy, Chaimy Collection.

Miss + Name: Miss Djana, Miss Elegante, Miss Radja.

Princess + Shoes: Princess Shoes, Princess Sabrina.

Mr. + Name: Mr. Yummy, Mr. Price.

Noun/Adjective + Dental Clinic: Smile Dental Clinic, Smile Maker Dental Clinic.

Noun/Adjective + Shoes: Djouri Shoes, Besma Shoes, Princess Shoes, Sweety Shoes, Djo Shoes, Bata Shoes.

Noun + Beauty: Batna Beauty.

Adjective + Noun + Beauty: Cosmetic Iline Beauty.

These examples highlight English's flexibility in creating simple, memorable, and distinctive brand names, making it appealing for commercial purposes.

English-Arabic Bilingual Signs

Some signs combine English with Arabic translations or equivalents:

Smile Makers Clinic صنّاع البسمة لجراحة الأسنان

A reason to smile سبب الابتسامة

Using both languages in one sign enhances communication with a diverse audience. This bilingual approach caters to the linguistic needs of the local population while integrating global influences.

French Usage

French appears in 10% of signs, often reflecting the enduring influence of French culture in Algeria. Examples include: Le Printemps, Le Grec, Merci Cadeaux, La Princesse

Arabic Usage

Arabic is also present in 10% of the signs, symbolizing the region's cultural identity. Examples include: (Queen's Perfumes) عطور السلطانة - (Queen's House) دار السلطانة (The Young Woman) الشابة.

In some signs, Arabic is used alongside its Latin transcription, e.g., Excellence School إكسلانس سكول - enhancing accessibility and aiding pronunciation for non-Latin readers.

Multilingualism and Strategic Combinations

Signs such as Besmat Elhayat بسمّة الحياة - use Arabic with Latin transcription, reflecting a strategic approach to enhance accessibility and communication. This approach respects cultural heritage while accommodating diverse audiences.

So, the diversity of languages in Batna's commercial signs reflects the city's **sociocultural and economic dynamics**:

The dominance of English highlights globalization and modernization influences. French and Arabic signs emphasize cultural heritage and linguistic diversity.

Bilingual and trilingual signs (English/Arabic/French) demonstrate an adaptive strategy to attract diverse consumers, enhance communication, and foster a multilingual urban identity.

The prevalent use of English underscores its association with modernity, technology, and globalization, potentially attracting more consumers. Simultaneously, the multilingualism observed in the signs contributes to the city's dynamic urban identity, balancing global influences with local traditions.

Conclusion:

The evolution of commercial signage in Algeria, from ancient visual symbols to modern multilingual combinations, tells the story of a country in constant transformation. Each historical period has left its mark, shaping the language, design, and function of these signs. Today, commercial signs reflect a diverse society rich in cultural heritage and open to global influences.

The use of English in Algeria is expanding rapidly, driven by globalization, labor market demands, and technological advancements. Its growing adoption in

===== Anglicism in Urban Writings: The Case of Commercial Signs in the City of Batna

education and business illustrates a willingness to embrace the global stage while remaining competitive internationally. However, this integration must be managed in a way that respects and values local languages and cultures, ensuring a harmonious transition to an inclusive and beneficial multilingualism.

In conclusion, through our study, which delves into the graphic environment of the city, we sought to understand the sociolinguistic dynamics of urban space through the language used in commercial signs.

The presence of English in commercial signage in the city of Batna is a complex and strategic phenomenon. It reflects not only the sociocultural and economic dynamics of the region but also the adaptation of businesses to a diverse and globalized clientele. The use of English, French, and Arabic, along with their combinations, demonstrates a society in transition—open to global influences while remaining rooted in its cultural heritage. Multilingual signage plays a key role in shaping urban identity and ensuring the economic success of businesses.

The remarkable use of English as a linguistic strategy in commercial signage in Batna highlights its appeal as a tool to attract consumer attention, symbolizing digital advancement and socioeconomic development.

We hope that our research on Anglicism in urban writings has effectively addressed the initial questions posed and opened new avenues for further exploration in various fields.

List of sources and references:

- BAKER, M. In other words: A coursebook on translation. Routledge, 1992.
- BAYLON, C. Sociolinguistique. Société, langue et discours. Paris, Nathan, 1991.
- BLANCHET, P. Linguistique de terrain, Méthode et théorie, Une approche ethno-sociolinguistique. Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000.
- CALVET, L-J. Les voix de la ville : introduction à la sociolinguistique urbaine. Payot, 1994.
- FISHMAN, J. A. Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- GRAFMEYER, Y. et AUTHIER, J-Y. Sociologie urbaine, Paris : Armand Colin, 2015.
- TRASK, R. L. Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics. Routledge. 1999.
- TRUDGILL, P. Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society, Penguin Books, 2000.

-VINCENT, L. 1998.Des écrits dans la ville : sociolinguistique des écrits urbains : l'exemple de Grenoble, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998.

Sitographie

-BEM . Définition et protection juridiques de l'enseigne et du nom commercial. 03/01/2018. <https://www.legavox.fr/blog/maitre-anthony-bem/definition-protection-juridiques-enseigne-commercial-7657.htm>

-BULOT ,T. et VESCHAMBRE,V (s,d).Sociolinguistique urbaine et géographie sociale : articuler l'hétérogénéité des langues et la hiérarchisation des espaces p. 305-324

<https://books.openedition.org/pur/1924?lang=fr>

-DESHAYES, T. et VETIER , T Qu'est-ce que la sociolinguiste urbaine? 2017
https://www.academia.edu/51724094/Quest_ce_que_la_sociolinguistique_urbaine_

-JUILLARD, C. (2007). Le plurilinguisme, objet de la sociolinguistique descriptive. Dans Langage et société 2007/3-4 (n° 121-122), pages 235 à 245

<https://www.cairn.info/revue-langage-et-societe-2007-3-page-235.htm&wt.src=pdf#:~:text=Les%20avatars%20sociolinguistiques%20de%20ce,Ca lvet%201994.>