

The Role of Linguistic Landscapes for Acquiring English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This paper explored the role of the linguistic landscape (LL) in supporting the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within Kenya's multilingual context. LL refers to the visible display of language in public spaces, including signs, advertisements, posters, symbols, and notices. Language acquisition is defined as the process through which learners gained the ability to comprehend and communicate in a new language. Multilingual context refers to a setting or environment in which multiple languages are used or coexist within a particular community, institution, or society. Language proficiency is understood as the ability to use a language effectively and accurately for communication. The paper employed Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasised the importance of comprehensible input for successful language learning, to analyse how the LL impacted EFL acquisition. A concurrent data analysis approach was adopted: quantitative data were collected through questionnaire and analysed using SPSS Version 20; qualitative data were gathered through interview and non-participant observations, followed by inductive coding and thematic interpretation. The study was conducted in three purposively selected language institutes in Nairobi—Consolata Language Centre (CLC), the Language School of Kenya (LSK), and the Kenyan Institute of Foreign Languages and Professional Studies (KIFLAPS)—involving 30 learners and two instructors from each. Findings revealed that the LL in these institutes were rich in visual stimuli, such as electronic devices, printed materials, and visual aids, which created an engaging and supportive learning environment. The paper concluded that well-designed LL enhanced EFL acquisition by supporting vocabulary development, reading, and speaking skills, and by embedding language learning in real-life contexts.

Key terms: English as a foreign language, language acquisition, language proficiency, linguistic landscape, multilingual context.

INTRODUCTION

There is a shortage of studies that quantitatively and qualitatively measure acquisition gains for example: vocabulary, comprehension and motivation attributable to LL exposure thereby creating inadequate empirical evidence on acquisition outcomes. This scholarship gap relates to the under-exploration of LL's role in the acquisition of EFL within specific institutional contexts in Kenya. Therefore, this paper aimed to fill this gap in the academia. The acquisition of EFL in Kenya is both crucial and complex, bearing significant implications for educational attainment and socioeconomic advancement. As a former British colony, Kenya has embedded English deeply within its educational system and broader societal structures. It serves as an official language and the principal medium of instruction from upper primary through to higher education. Proficiency in English is frequently associated with improved access to education, enhanced career prospects, and greater social mobility. As such, mastery of the language is widely regarded as essential for both individual success and national development.

However, the effectiveness of EFL acquisition is shaped by various factors, particularly the linguistic environment in which learning occurs. This paper focused on the role of the LL within Kenyan language institutes. The LL refers to the visible and audible use of language in public and institutional spaces, including signs, texts, symbols, and spoken interactions (Sharma, 2023). In educational settings, it encompasses classroom displays, instructional materials, signage, and communicative practices, all of which influence the language learning experience. Rather than serving merely as a backdrop, the LL actively contributes to or impedes learning, depending on how effectively it supports learners' needs and institutional objectives (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). In EFL contexts, it should therefore be deliberately structured to facilitate acquisition.

Kenya's rich multilingual context—with over 60 languages spoken alongside English and Kiswahili—offers a unique context for exploring this issue (Simiyu, 2019). While exposure to multiple languages can promote cognitive flexibility and linguistic sensitivity, the predominance of English in formal domains may create a disconnect between learners'

linguistic backgrounds and the language they are expected to master. This underscores the need for thoughtfully designed linguistic landscapes that make English accessible and contextually meaningful.

Despite the growing recognition of the LL as a valuable resource for language learning, research on its role in the acquisition of EFL in Kenya remained limited. Existing studies had examined LL in various contexts, emphasising their impact on language exposure and awareness. However, much of this research had focused on multilingual settings, policy implications, and symbolic representations, rather than the direct effect on EFL acquisition. This gap in empirical literature hindered the development of practical strategies for incorporating LL into EFL learning. Therefore, this study aimed to address this knowledge gap by investigating how the LL influenced EFL acquisition in selected language institutes in Kenya. The paper therefore presented the literature review, the theoretical framework, the methodology employed in the study, the findings, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Durk et al. (2021) explored the pedagogical potential of LL—public texts and signage—as tools for language education in the multilingual Basque Country, Spain. Focusing on Basque, Spanish, and English, the study engaged both primary and postgraduate students in observing and analysing signage in public spaces such as markets and schools. These activities facilitated language learning and heightened linguistic awareness, showcasing the LL as a dynamic educational resource. Learners applied classroom knowledge to real-world contexts and reflected critically on linguistic diversity and usage, underlining the LL's role in fostering metalinguistic reflection. This study resonates with the present research in Kenya, which investigates the sociolinguistic implications of LL for acquiring EFL. Both studies highlighted the value of signage as an informal learning tool, enhancing learners' understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and context. However, key differences emerge. While the Basque research was situated within a formally multilingual education system that celebrated linguistic diversity, the Kenyan context involved adult learners in non-formal institutions, where correct and flawed English signage

predominates in a more unidirectional linguistic environment. Nonetheless, Durk et al.'s emphasis on experiential learning and multilingual engagement enriches the Kenyan study's conceptual framework, affirming the LL's value as a cognitive and pedagogical aid.

A key distinction between the two studies lies in their linguistic and educational contexts: the Basque study was conducted within a formal multilingual education system that used signage to promote both language acquisition and cultural diversity, while the Kenyan study focused on adult EFL learners in non-formal language institutes, where the LL predominantly featured English texts of varying accuracy. Despite these differences, Durk et al.'s findings offered valuable insights for the Kenyan context, particularly in demonstrating how engagement with signage enhances language awareness and facilitates the application of classroom knowledge to real-life situations. Both studies underscored the cognitive and pedagogical value of the LL, with learners in Kenya similarly reflecting critically on language norms when exposed to accurate or flawed English texts. This highlighted the LL not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active agent in language learning, encouraging metalinguistic reflection and supporting the development of grammar, vocabulary, and contextual language use.

Han and Wu (2020) examined the intersection of language policy, LL, and public perceptions in Guangzhou, China. Adopting a spatial framework—comprising spatial practice, conceived space, and lived space—they analysed how language policies shape signage and influence multilingual usage involving Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. The study highlighted the reciprocal relationship between top-down planning and public linguistic behaviour, presenting LLs as reflective of official ideologies and everyday practices. Though culturally and geographically distinct, the Guangzhou study aligns with Kenyan research in recognising LLs as impactful learning environments beyond formal instruction. In both cases, public signage exposes learners to real-world language use, reinforcing classroom learning. However, while clear language hierarchies and policy frameworks structured Guangzhou's LLs, Kenya's LL is more fluid and market-driven, shaped by

socioeconomic factors rather than formal regulation. The Guangzhou case also illustrated how language visibility shaped public perceptions and usage—an area that could enrich the Kenyan study by further exploring policy contexts and identity formation.

However, the Guangzhou and Kenyan studies differed notably in focus, context, and scope. The Guangzhou study, by Han and Wu, examined how top-down language policies influenced LL and public language use within a regulated multilingual environment, highlighting the structured roles of Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. In contrast, the Kenyan study focused on the functional role of English signage in supporting EFL acquisition, with minimal emphasis on policy and greater attention to learners' interaction with public texts. Kenya's more fluid multilingual context positions English as both an official language and a target for acquisition, unlike the policy-driven hierarchy in Guangzhou.

While Han and Wu adopted a broad socio-political lens, addressing identity and attitudes, the Kenyan study maintained a pedagogical focus on how English signage near language institutes supports learners' proficiency and motivation. Nonetheless, the Guangzhou study provided conceptual insights relevant to the Kenyan context, particularly regarding how policy affects language visibility and public engagement. It also underscored the value of learner-centred approaches, suggesting that understanding how EFL learners perceive and respond to signage in their environment could deepen analysis of the LL's educational impact in Kenya.

Lu et al. (2020) explored the LL of Hongcun, a traditional Chinese village, focusing on how tourism influenced the use of language on public signage. Using questionnaires, interviews, and image records, the study revealed the dominance of standardised Chinese characters, the visible use of English for tourism, and the dual impact of policy and commercial motivations on signage. Though distinct in context, the Hongcun and Kenyan studies underscored the LL's role in shaping interactions, perceptions, and language learning. In both settings, the LL served as a medium for engaging with languages beyond the local context. In Hongcun, signage catered to tourists, reflecting the

interaction between local culture and global language demands.

Similarly, in Kenya, English in the environment around language institutes reinforced English acquisition among learners by extending exposure beyond the classroom. In both cases, public language use facilitated access to external languages, influencing acquisition and communicative competence. However, key differences existed. The Hongcun study emphasised tourism's cultural and economic impacts on language practices, with less focus on language learning. In contrast, the Kenyan research specifically examined the educational function of the LL, showing how English in public spaces enhanced learners' proficiency. Furthermore, while Hongcun's LL reflected a shift in local identity due to tourism, Kenya's landscape was an intentional educational tool promoting language skills within a multilingual society.

The Hongcun and Kenyan studies differed significantly in focus, context, and purpose. The Hongcun study explored how tourism shaped the LL, with a particular emphasis on the introduction of English and other foreign languages through signage aimed at tourists, reflecting cultural and economic influences rather than language acquisition. In contrast, the Kenyan study focused specifically on how English signage in public spaces supported EFL acquisition among adult learners in language institutes. While Hongcun's linguistic landscape was shaped by external tourism pressures in a predominantly Chinese-speaking context, Kenya's multilingual environment featured English as a long-established medium in education and formal communication. The Kenyan LL functioned as an educational tool, integrated into learners' daily experiences to reinforce classroom instruction.

Additionally, while Hongcun's signage reflected shifting cultural identities due to globalisation and commercialisation, Kenya's LL served as a strategic means of promoting English proficiency and social mobility. Despite these contrasts, the Hongcun study offered valuable insights into how public signage introduces foreign languages into everyday life, influencing language perceptions and use—an idea that enriched the Kenyan study's analysis of learner engagement with English in public spaces. Both studies underscored the role of the LL in shaping

language attitudes and fostering immersion, whether for economic interaction or educational development.

Studying Switzerland, Wartmann and Purves (2018) employed the ecosystem services framework to analyse how LL provided tangible and intangible benefits to English learners. While differing in theoretical grounding and cultural context, this study aligned with Kenyan research on recognising public language use as a significant factor in language acquisition. In Switzerland, English signage contributed to learners' cognitive, social, and cultural development, much like in Kenya, where public exposure to English supported formal instruction and broader engagement. Despite the absence of a formal theoretical model in the Kenyan study, it benefitted from the Swiss study's insights into how public signage fosters immersion, practical language use, and sociocultural integration.

Notably, while Switzerland's multilingual environment positioned English as a global language among others, Kenya's context saw English as both an international and institutional language, deeply embedded in education and professional life. In conclusion, while the three studies differed in focus, context, and methodology, they collectively affirmed the LL's pivotal role in shaping language learning experiences. The Kenyan study, in particular, drew upon insights from both the Hongcun and Swiss contexts to better understand how English in public spaces contributes to language acquisition and learners' cognitive and cultural development.

The Swiss and Kenyan studies differed markedly in theoretical orientation, cultural context, and the perceived role of the LL. The Swiss study applied the ecosystem services framework to assess the tangible and intangible benefits of public signage for English acquisition within a multilingual context, where English coexisted with national languages like German, French, and Italian. In contrast, the Kenyan study, conducted in a setting where English holds a dominant educational role alongside Kiswahili and indigenous languages, focused on the practical effects of English signage on EFL learners without a formal theoretical model. While the Swiss research viewed the LL as a broader cognitive and social ecosystem, the Kenyan study treated it as a direct pedagogical aid reinforcing

classroom instruction. Nevertheless, the Swiss study provided valuable insights, particularly on how immersive exposure to English in public spaces enhances language acquisition, engagement, and cultural awareness. These concepts were applied in the Kenyan context to highlight how constant interaction with English in public texts supports learners' proficiency, cognitive development, and integration into a multilingual society.

The study by Li et al. (2020) explored the role of the LL in English learning by comparing middle schools and universities in Shenzhen. Drawing on Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory (1971), the research examined how English signage's visibility, form, and content in educational settings influenced students' language acquisition. It assessed how LL serve as informal learning tools and as a means of fostering interest, expanding vocabulary, and connecting English learning to everyday life. The study concluded that integrating LL into educational spaces enhances learning by promoting a practice-oriented, teacher-led, and student-centred approach. This study shared notable similarities with research on the LL for Acquiring EFL at Selected Language Institutes in Kenya. Both studies emphasised the pedagogical value of the LL, recognising public signage as a crucial tool for reinforcing language learning beyond the classroom. In both Shenzhen and Kenya, repeated exposure to English in public spaces immersed learners in authentic language contexts, complementing formal instruction and promoting practical language engagement.

However, key differences emerged in their scope and focus. The Shenzhen study compared LL across two formal education levels—middle schools and universities—highlighting how English complexity increased with learners' proficiency. In contrast, the Kenyan study focused on language institutes dedicated to EFL learning, irrespective of learners' academic backgrounds. The primary concern was how public English usage in the surrounding environment enhanced learners' engagement and acquisition of the language. While Shenzhen's research offered a comparative analysis of educational stages, the Kenyan study provided a broader investigation into the role of the LL in specialised language learning settings. Nonetheless, insights from the Shenzhen

study—particularly the alignment of language complexity with learner proficiency—were invaluable. They underscored the need to tailor LL to learners' developmental stages, a perspective applicable to the Kenyan context. Ultimately, the Shenzhen study contributed significantly to understanding how LL can be structured to support English language acquisition effectively. Its emphasis on educational level, signage complexity, and environmental exposure offered a valuable framework for enhancing the design of LL in Kenya's language learning institutions.

The Shenzhen study offered valuable insights applicable to the Kenyan context, particularly in demonstrating how the form and content of LL influence language acquisition. By analysing the variation in English complexity across middle schools and universities, the study showed how public signage evolved in line with learners' proficiency levels—simpler instructional language in schools and more advanced academic English in universities.

This finding informed the Kenyan study by emphasising the need to align the LL with the language development stages of EFL learners in language institutes. Additionally, the Shenzhen study highlighted how public signage reinforced classroom learning by providing continued exposure to English beyond formal instruction, a concept that mirrored the Kenyan experience. It also illustrated how the LL reflects the academic environment, suggesting that signage should correspond to learners' educational contexts. Overall, the Shenzhen study contributed significantly to understanding how tailored LL can support EFL acquisition, reinforcing the importance of proficiency-appropriate content and consistent language exposure in educational settings.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981), which posits that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to *comprehensible input*—language that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency, yet still understandable. Krashen maintains that language is acquired subconsciously through meaningful exposure in low-anxiety, communicative environments, rather than through explicit grammar instruction or correction. He also highlighted that input should be

both linguistically rich and contextually grounded to support natural internalisation of language structures.

Applied to the LL, this theory suggested that environmental texts—such as signs, posters, labels, and digital displays—can serve as sources of comprehensible input if they are well-designed to support language learning. Features such as visual aids, bilingual signage, and simplified language structures enhance learners' ability to understand and absorb the language in context.

At the Consolata Language Centre, Language School of Kenya, and the Kenyan Institute of Foreign Languages and Professional Studies, this principle was reflected in the use of instructional posters, digital language resources, and supportive classroom signage. These elements created an immersive environment where learners could repeatedly engage with English in context, reinforcing vocabulary, syntax, and communicative functions without direct instruction. Thus, the LL in these institutes aligned with Krashen's concept of comprehensible input, supporting incidental learning and aiding the overall process of EFL acquisition.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was employed in this study. Data collection involved direct observation of the LL within selected language institutes, interviews with educators, a questionnaire administered to learners, and an analysis of the LL elements within the chosen institutions. The qualitative and quantitative components assessed the effectiveness of various linguistic features in supporting language acquisition. This methodological framework enabled a holistic analysis of how the LL interacts with other factors influencing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition outcomes.

The study was conducted at three purposefully selected language institutes in Nairobi, Kenya: CLC, LSK, and KIFLAPS. These institutions were chosen due to their active role in English language instruction and their recognised impact on EFL acquisition in the country. Examining these centres provided meaningful insights into the LL surrounding English language learning in Kenya and its broader implications.

Purposive sampling was used to select 90 learners from the three language institutes. This was based on a sample size of 30 per cent of a population of fewer than 1,000, according to Kathuri and Pals (1993). This method offered key benefits, including diverse learner profiles, comparing findings across institutions, and an enriched analysis of the relationship between the LL and EFL acquisition experiences.

Additionally, the study purposively selected available elements of the LL, including indoor and outdoor items such as posters, notices (educational, safety, public, and event-related), and advertisements found within and around the institutions. Accordingly, four elements were obtained from KIFLAPS and LSK, while five were collected from CLC, totalling 13 elements used to generate the required data from respondents. These elements were selected for their visibility and relevance to learners and instructors. Other features of the LL, such as road signs, street names, and graffiti, were excluded—not due to irrelevance but to maintain consistency and a focused scope within the study.

The unit of analysis comprised both the LL elements present in the selected institutions and the individual responses from participants. Data were obtained through a questionnaire administered to the students, which included statements such as: The LL supports the development of my English language communication skills in speaking, reading, and writing; the LL enhances my vocabulary acquisition and usage of the English language; the LL in the language institute has a positive impact on my motivation to learn and improve my English language skills. Interviews were conducted with the instructors using questions such as: How does the LL contribute to students' English language acquisition experience? How does the LL support the development of EFL communication skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—among the students?

A concurrent data analysis approach was employed: quantitative data were collected using questionnaires and analysed with SPSS Version 20. Descriptive analysis using tables with percentages was employed to summarise and organise the data, providing a clear description of participants' responses regarding the LL at the selected language institutes. Qualitative data

were gathered through interviews and subsequently analysed using a bottom-up approach, whereby codes and themes emerged from the data itself without reliance on pre-existing theories or frameworks. This approach validated and complemented the quantitative findings, enabling a more thorough interpretation of the research outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explored the student respondents' perceptions regarding the contribution of the LL to their acquisition of EFL within the selected language institutes. The LL encompasses various elements, such as signage, billboards, posters, and notices, which support and facilitate language acquisition. Table 1 summarised the students' responses to statements that assess the contribution of the linguistic landscape to their EFL acquisition.

Table 1: Contribution of Linguistic Landscape for Acquiring EFL

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. D
The linguistic landscape in the language institute positively impacts my motivation to learn and improve my English language skills.	0%	6%	38%	40%	17%	3.67	0.822
The linguistic landscape enhances my vocabulary acquisition and usage of the English language.	4%	5%	7%	51%	34%	4.07	0.961
The linguistic landscape increases my exposure to authentic English language usage, facilitating better comprehension and fluency.	5%	8%	15%	45%	27%	3.81	1.075
The linguistic landscape supports the development of my English language communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)	5%	2%	8%	48%	37%	4.09	0.983
The linguistic landscape at the language institute facilitates my ability to apply English language skills in real-life situations outside the classroom.	0%	6%	12%	51%	32%	4.08	0.82
The linguistic landscape enhances my English language acquisition experience, making it more engaging and interactive.	5%	2%	19%	41%	33%	3.95	1.022
The linguistic landscape influences my cultural understanding and sensitivity when using English.	4%	7%	15%	47%	27%	3.87	1.009
The linguistic landscape significantly influences my progress and success in English language acquisition.	2%	6%	8%	48%	35%	4.08	0.941
Average						3.953	0.954

The data in Table 1 indicated that a significant 85 per cent of students acknowledged the positive impact of the LL on their EFL acquisition. Students agreed that it contributed to developing their communication skills,

with an average mean of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.983. Similarly, 85 per cent also recognised the role of the LL in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, with a mean of 4.07 and a standard

deviation of 0.961. The highest scores reflected its influence on the development of communication skills ($M=4.09$), its contribution to successful progress in English acquisition ($M=4.08$), and its ability to facilitate the transfer of language skills to real-life situations ($M=4.08$). However, the lowest mean score of 3.67 suggested a weaker perceived effect on student motivation, with a standard deviation of 0.822. These findings show that the LL is an essential resource for learners, supporting various aspects of language development.

Krashen's theory of comprehensible input is strongly reflected in these findings, as it posits that language acquisition occurs when learners encounter input slightly above their current proficiency level but still understandable ($i+1$). Through authentic and context-rich language exposure, the LL provides students with a steady stream of comprehensible input. The high agreement among students regarding its contribution to communication skills (85%) and vocabulary acquisition ($M=4.07$) aligns with Krashen's concept, as learners engage with real-world language that challenges them without overwhelming their understanding. Additionally, the LL's role in helping students transfer English skills to real-world contexts supports Krashen's theory that meaningful, contextualised input enhances language acquisition. While the lower score for motivation suggests the need for further support beyond just comprehensible input, the findings essentially validated the theory, indicating that the LL offers a powerful tool for facilitating language learning.

The qualitative findings from in-depth interviews with instructors provided valuable acumens that complemented the quantitative data, emphasising the significant contribution of the LL for acquiring EFL in learning experience, language development, and motivation and engagement. Instructor001 from CLC noted that it enables students to learn quickly, relate to information, and transfer it effectively, illustrating its role in facilitating comprehension and application of language. Instructor005 from LSK observed that students understand better when they can relate the target language to their existing knowledge, while Instructor009 from KIFLAPS stated that it helps students become more familiar with English. These insights demonstrate how the LL enhances learning by

providing accessible, real-life language input that connects with learners' prior knowledge and encourages intuitive understanding.

These perspectives affirmed Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition occurs through exposure to comprehensible input slightly beyond learners' current proficiency. The LL offers such input in authentic contexts, promoting gradual acquisition and practical application. This is consistent with findings from Andriyanti (2019), who highlighted the value of authentic language exposure, and Han and Wu (2020), who noted the benefits of contextually relevant input in improving comprehension. The LL's contribution to rapid learning, information transfer, and increased familiarity with English underscores its effectiveness as a language acquisition tool, creating a supportive, immersive environment that enhances comprehension and practical usage.

The instructors also highlighted the LL's role in supporting language learning by addressing multilingual complexities and promoting critical literacy. Instructor 002 from CLC noted its impact on students' learning through managing multilingualism and fostering language learning as a vital literacy practice. Instructor005 from the Language School of Kenya observed that the LL breaks the monotony of traditional classroom methods, making learning more engaging, while Instructor009 from KIFLAPS described it as "active," indicating its ability to promote learner participation.

These insights aligned with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition occurs when learners engage with slightly challenging yet comprehensible input. The LL provides such input through real-world exposure, enabling learners to navigate multilingual settings and interact with meaningful content. Instructor 002's remarks highlight how this exposure enriches learning in complex linguistic environments. Instructor005's comment on breaking classroom monotony reinforces Krashen's emphasis on naturalistic, engaging input, while Instructor009's view of active learning supports the notion that interaction is essential for acquisition. From the researcher's perspective, these findings underscore the LL's effectiveness in promoting EFL

learning by creating an immersive, dynamic environment rooted in learners' linguistic realities. This aligns with the studies of Choi et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2020), which advocate for diverse and engaging learning contexts. By addressing multilingualism and supporting critical literacy, the LL avails authentic, contextualised language exposure that enhances understanding and application—validating Krashen's Input Hypothesis and demonstrating its relevance in EFL contexts.

The instructors' responses portrayed the LL's role in developing language skills such as reading, speaking, and critical thinking. Instructor001 from CLC explained that engaging with complex LL content enhances students' reading abilities and fosters critical reading through assimilation. Similarly, Instructor002 noted that exposure to complex language structures within the landscape promotes the development of advanced reading skills and comprehension. These insights align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which suggests that language acquisition is most effective when learners are exposed to input slightly beyond their current level yet still understandable. The instructors' remarks underscore how the LL is a source of such input, challenging students with complex yet accessible language that promotes assimilation and critical engagement. This context-rich exposure supports the natural development of reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills.

From the researcher's perspective, the analysis confirms the LL's role in enhancing advanced reading and critical thinking, consistent with the Input Hypothesis. Instructor001 emphasised how students benefit from real-world engagement with complex texts, while Instructor002 reinforced this by pointing to the development of cognitive and linguistic skills through challenging material. These findings illustrate how meaningful exposure in authentic contexts aids language acquisition and critical literacy. This perspective is supported by Han and Wu (2020), who noted the LL's capacity to cultivate advanced language skills through engagement with complex content, and by Andriyanti (2019), who highlighted its role in creating stimulating reading environments. In sum, the LL is a valuable tool for language acquisition, offering learners authentic and challenging input that supports

both linguistic competence and critical thinking, particularly in EFL contexts.

The instructors provided concrete examples of how the LL supports the development of students' speaking skills. Instructor001 from CLC described a speaking lesson on restaurant orders and requests, where students role-played as clients and service staff using authentic menus. This activity led to improved use of restaurant-related language. Instructor 002 conducted a similar exercise, noting enhanced student proficiency in making and responding to service-related requests. These examples illustrate Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language slightly above their current level but still comprehensible. Using real-life materials like restaurant menus provided students with accessible yet challenging language input in meaningful contexts. Role-playing helped students process and apply functional language in authentic scenarios, reinforcing Krashen's emphasis on engaging and context-rich learning experiences.

From a researcher's viewpoint, the examples showed how integrating LL elements into lessons promotes communicative competence. The students improved their language accuracy and gained confidence through active participation in realistic scenarios. Instructor009 from KIFLAPS echoed this by emphasising the value of active speaking practice in language development. These findings support Li et al.'s (2020) argument that authentic communicative activities are essential for developing speaking skills. Similarly, Sharma (2023) noted that real-life linguistic input role-plays enhance communicative competence through immersive learning—the LL functions as both a teaching tool and a source of contextual language input. Educators create engaging environments that mirror real-life interactions by incorporating linguistic landscape elements into classroom practice. This approach strengthens students' speaking proficiency and prepares them for practical language use. The LL's capacity to deliver authentic input and encourage meaningful practice affirms its value in language education. Aligned with the Input Hypothesis, it promotes holistic language development and offers rich potential for broader application in diverse learning contexts.

The instructors' responses highlighted the positive impact of the LL on students' motivation and engagement in language learning. They noted that it supports the development of language, discourse, and critical thinking skills by offering meaningful, socio-culturally relevant input. Instructor001 from CLC explained that interacting with the LL helped students expand their vocabulary and enhance discussion and thinking skills. At the same time, Instructor002 echoed this, stressing its motivational role and alignment with learners' sociocultural contexts. These insights align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input—language slightly above their current level but still accessible. The LL offers such input in a contextualised, authentic manner, aiding vocabulary growth and cognitive engagement. The familiarity of the texts enhances motivation, making learning more relevant and practical.

From a researcher's perspective, these observations illustrated how the LL acts as a linguistic and cultural bridge. Instructor001 highlighted that student connected more deeply with language materials grounded in their sociocultural environments, while Instructor002 noted that this relevance fostered critical thinking and vocabulary development. Instructor005 from the LSK added that the LL broke the monotony of traditional teaching, making lessons more dynamic and engaging. The analysis supports the Input Hypothesis by showing that authentic, context-rich language input promotes acquisition, motivation, and active participation. These findings were consistent with Wartmann and Purves (2018), who identified the LL as a stimulating learning environment, and Sharma (2023), who stressed the importance of sociocultural relevance in language instruction.

The instructors also demonstrated the LL's role in enhancing student engagement and language acquisition. Instructor001 and Instructor002 from CLC explained that it allowed learners to develop language skills, engage in critical discussions, and expand vocabulary within their sociocultural context. This relevance motivated students by creating meaningful connections with the learning material. Instructor009 from KIFLAPS succinctly reinforced this with "Active,"

underscoring the LL's role in fostering participation. These insights align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition is most effective when learners are exposed to language slightly above their current level yet still comprehensible. The LL presents such input through authentic and context-rich materials, prompting vocabulary growth and critical thinking. Students engage more deeply when learning is embedded in familiar contexts, and the materials are relevant and engaging.

Research by Li et al. (2020), Han and Wu (2020), and others supports this view, showing that integrating sociocultural contexts into learning encourages active engagement and language development. The instructors' observations revealed that the LL enhances language skills and creates a stimulating learning environment that breaks away from traditional methods. The analysis further shows that authentic materials from the LL, such as restaurant menus used in classroom role-plays, enable learners to practise real-world communication. These tasks provide comprehensible input and reflect the importance of authenticity in language learning, as Krashen (1981) and other researchers noted. Repeated exposure to linguistic elements within the landscape reinforces vocabulary and structure acquisition. Instructor002's experience indicated that such repetition allows learners to internalise language naturally, supporting Krashen's claim that consistent, meaningful input leads to effective acquisition.

Discussion

The study's objective was to explore the role of the linguistic landscape in supporting EFL acquisition and improving language learning outcomes in Kenya. The findings revealed that the LL significantly enhances learning by facilitating faster language acquisition, improving comprehension, and fostering familiarity with English. Instructor 001 from CLC noted its role in helping students "learn fast and relate to information," reflecting its effectiveness in accelerating learning—an observation supported by Li et al. (2020), who underscored the value of authentic language exposure.

The LL also supported key communication skills, particularly reading, speaking, and critical thinking.

Instructor 006 from CLC highlighted that reading complex LL materials enabled students to develop essential reading and comprehension skills. This aligns with Wartmann and Purves (2018), who noted the LL's potential in promoting language skill development. Instructor 005 from the Language School of Kenya illustrated its practical value by using landscape-like images to help learners distinguish between 'river' and 'lake', affirming Sharma's (2023) emphasis on contextual learning.

The LL also enhanced motivation and learner engagement. Instructor 002 from CLC observed improvements in students' discussion and thinking skills, supported by Wartmann and Purves (2018), who stressed the need for motivating learning environments. Instructors from the Language School of Kenya and KIFLAPS further noted how it broke classroom monotony and encouraged active participation, which aligns with Lu et al. (2020) and Simiyu (2019).

Concrete examples highlighted the practical use of the LL in EFL acquisition. Instructor 006 from CLC used restaurant menus for role-play activities, improving students' service language skills. Instructor 009 from KIFLAPS shared a case of students becoming more confident in practising and correcting their English use, reinforcing the value of authentic practice and learner autonomy, as Wartmann and Purves (2018) noted. Instructors also recommended using visual aids and technology to enrich the LL. Instructor 004 advocated for visually engaging materials, echoing Li et al. (2020), while Instructor 002 suggested integrating technological resources for a more authentic and stimulating learning experience, as Han and Wu (2020) supported.

The findings also disclosed that the LL significantly contributed to vocabulary and grammar development. Learners acquired new vocabulary in real-life contexts and internalised grammatical structures through repeated exposure to authentic language. These outcomes are consistent with the findings of Sharma (2023) and Han and Wu (2020), who highlighted the importance of contextualised input in language acquisition. Moreover, the presence of multiple languages in the LL enhanced learners' cross-linguistic awareness. By engaging with elements from different

linguistic backgrounds, students deepened their understanding of language structures, phonology, and semantics. This process also fostered metalinguistic awareness, encouraging students to reflect on language use, variation, and learning strategies. These findings supported the work of Li et al. (2020) who recognised the landscape's potential in promoting language awareness and multilingual understanding.

In conclusion, the study confirms the significant contribution of the LL to EFL acquisition in selected Kenyan language institutes. It accelerates learning, improves skill development, fosters motivation, and provides opportunities for meaningful language practice. These findings aligned with existing literature on the value of authentic, contextually relevant input and interactive learning, supported by integrating visual and technological resources (Han & Wu, 2020; Wartmann & Purves, 2018). The practical examples and success stories further demonstrate the landscape's effectiveness in enhancing EFL acquisition.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study revealed that the LL significantly enhanced EFL acquisition in selected Kenyan language institutes by accelerating learning and improving knowledge retention. It enabled students to connect meaningfully with content, fostering familiarity with English and supporting the development of key skills such as reading, speaking, and critical thinking. Exposure to real-life materials and complex sentence structures deepened comprehension and helped learners differentiate between similar concepts, such as "lake" and "river". This practical context encouraged language practice and active classroom participation, creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment that broke the monotony of traditional methods.

Beyond skill development, the linguistic landscape promoted motivation, interaction, and learner autonomy. It transformed learning into an interactive experience through visually engaging and relatable content. Role-playing with menus and signs improved functional vocabulary and allowed students to use English in real-world situations. Learners began to self-correct, collaborate, and engage more deeply with sociocultural materials, making language learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

The findings also exposed that the LL supported vocabulary acquisition and grammatical competence by presenting language in context. Learners encountered new words and structures in meaningful settings, facilitating understanding and internalisation. The presence of multiple languages promoted cross-linguistic awareness, allowing learners to recognise similarities and differences in phonology, semantics, and syntax. This exposure nurtured metalinguistic awareness as students reflected on language variation and their learning strategies. Such engagement broadened their linguistic perspective and improved their analytical and comparative abilities. In conclusion, the study found that the linguistic landscape was instrumental in enhancing language proficiency and fostering analytical thinking, learner autonomy, and cultural awareness.

Recommendations: Based on the study's findings and conclusion, several recommendations have been put forward to optimise the role of the linguistic landscape in enhancing the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within Kenya's language institutes: Language institutes should prioritise the inclusion of diverse and culturally relevant visual displays throughout their premises. These may comprise both digital and traditional visual aids such as interactive screens, posters, charts, and word walls. The incorporation of such elements can significantly boost students' engagement, understanding, and overall language development.

Language institutes are encouraged to invest in ongoing professional development for educators, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively employ the LL as a pedagogical resource. Training initiatives should focus on the integration of visual and digital materials into teaching practices to support EFL acquisition.

There should be a coordinated effort among language institutes, linguistic experts, and community stakeholders to develop a supportive LL. Collaborative engagement can ensure that the linguistic environment not only facilitates language acquisition but also fosters cultural awareness and social cohesion.

Linguists should advocate for the promotion of linguistic diversity and equity within the LL. This involves ensuring that the visual elements used within language institutes reflect the sociocultural backgrounds of learners, thereby cultivating an inclusive atmosphere that honours and values all languages and dialects.

Policymakers should support the increased use of technology in shaping the LL, including the implementation of interactive digital displays and language learning applications. This approach can help bridge the divide between conventional teaching methods and contemporary technological tools, offering learners a more dynamic and practical educational experience.

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