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# **A TALE OF FOUR TOWNS AND ENGLISH**

The Role of English in the Linguistic Landscape of  
Sweden

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**Title:** *A Tale of Four Towns and English – The Role of English in the Linguistic Landscape of Sweden*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to expand the corpus of linguistic landscape (LL) in Sweden. However, unlike previous studies, which have typically focused on the main cities, this study explores the central parts of four different research locations in Sweden – Alingsås, Höllviken, Svedala, and Hönö – all of which are characterized by a relatively small and homogenous population (as compared to larger cities). The study identifies a high incidence of bottom-up signs in English, specifically relating to local establishments. Moreover, the study notes that English is especially visible in service-related domains; more particularly, beauty, gastronomy, and clothing, findings confirmed by previous research. Finally, the study provides a qualitative view on how the position and salience of English on multilingual signs relates to which function it performs in the LL, proposing a textual classification of signs into primary and secondary texts. The discussion shows that English, when appearing as the more prominent language in terms of code preference, generally takes on an emblematic or metaphorical function. Meanwhile, when appearing as the less prominent language, English tends to perform a referential or situational function.

**Keywords:** Linguistic landscape, English as a global language, Top-down and bottom-up signs, Types of establishment, Primary text, Secondary text, Code preference, Functions of signs

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## 1. Introduction

Although the language of public signs had been studied previously, the field examined in the present study gained momentum in 1997. This year, Landry and Bourhis published their seminal paper on ethnolinguistic vitality in Quebec, coining the concept of linguistic landscape (henceforth, referred to as LL). In the study, LL is defined as "the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Landry and Bourhis 1997:23). However, their primary interest was not in the mapping and counting signs but in the target group's perceptions of them, in order to be able to discuss the relationship between language policy and language interests.

While the study of LL provides an opportunity of assessing bilingualism and multilingualism around the world, the language of signs is also an obvious indicator of globalization and, particularly, the spread of English. Commonly, LL researchers (cf. Backhaus 2007, among others) have concerned themselves with global metropolises, given their broad representation of different ethnolinguistic groups and the myriad of public and commercial establishments available. Bolton (2012:32) states that the study of LL can help us to "understand the rapidly changing urban landscapes, and the increasingly multilingual worlds, in which we live or we experience through travel". The spread of English, a quintessential global lingua franca, should therefore be a logical object of study.

Furthermore, English in the LL is initiated both by multinational corporations, such as global fast food and coffee chains, present in virtually every corner of the world, characterized by familiar English-language brand names and slogans, as well as by local actors with their own motivation for the use of English; namely, to capitalize on the symbolic prestige associated with the language. As a language recognized everywhere in the world, English in the LL takes on both a referential function as a lingua franca and an emblematic function, used stylistically.

In Sweden, English occupies a prominent position. Theoretically, the spread of global English is frequently discussed in terms of Kachru's three concentric circles<sup>1</sup>. Sweden is argued to belong to the *Expanding Circle*, since English has no official status here but is taught as a foreign language. Nevertheless, apart from being a compulsory school subject, the influence of English is apparent in social media, popular culture, as well as in the spheres of business and academia. According to Melander (2001:17), "it is obvious that within certain areas Swedish is

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<sup>1</sup> Kachru's three concentric circles include the *Inner Circle*, the *Outer Circle* and the *Expanding Circle* (cf. Crystal 2003:60-61), respectively.

losing ground to English”. This concern caused him to predict a situation of diglossia in Sweden, with English taking on a ‘de facto’ superior role in certain higher status domains. Indeed, that English also occupies a prominent position in the LL of Sweden can be taken for granted. Hult (2003:52), for example, observes that “while one is strolling down the streets... the eye is drawn to English words and expressions on storefronts and signs”.

However, so far, research into Swedish LLs has been fairly scarce and has predominantly been carried out in the main cities, which, to a higher degree, tend to be affected by the presence of international corporate chains, giving little insight into how local LL authors make use of English. The present study, therefore, aims to contribute to close this gap by investigating the prevalence and functions of English in the LL of four Swedish urban areas outside of the main cities.

Next, previous studies on LL are brought up in Section 2, while essential theoretical concepts are discussed in Section 3. Furthermore, in Section 4, the aim of the present investigation is presented along with the material and method used. In Section 5, the results of the study are listed together with an accompanying discussion. Finally, the study is concluded in Section 6.

## 2. Previous studies

To provide context to the LL investigation in the present study, previous research carried out in a similar fashion is presented below, focusing on the LL of shop signs. According to Crystal (2003:94), the use of English on, for example, shop signs posters, billboards and posters is an obvious sign of the global spread of the language. The investigation of shop signs has been a relatively widespread approach since the inception of the field, cf. McArthur (2000), Griffin (2002), Schlick (2002), and Dimova (2007), as a high incidence of English in the LL is generally argued to mirror the size of a city and its role in “commerce, diplomacy, foreign trade and tourism” (Dimova 2007:19).

Hult (2009) conducts LL fieldwork in Malmö, Sweden, focusing on two separate areas in the city. In the area of Centrum, he notes that English is present on 38 percent of the storefronts, a logical observation due to the commercial nature of the area, featuring “national and international retail stores catering to tourists as well as people from all over the city” (Hult 2009:97). Meanwhile, English is subjected to competition in the immigrant-dense area of Södra Innerstaden.

Furthermore, in another study of the LL in Malmö, Brito (2016) examines several neighbourhoods across the city, including the residential area of Västra Hamnen, where the proportion of immigrant residents is below the city average. A former industrial area, it now functions as a symbol of gentrification. Consequently, she does record exclusively European languages, noting a preference for English. Moreover, Brito (2016:81) observes that the “symbolic use of language was used, presumably as a marketing strategy, to index aspirations of desire”. Also, in Uppsala, Sweden, McArthur (2000:36) finds English to be present on 36 percent of the investigated signs.

Moving on to European global centres, Griffin (2004) focuses on the prevalence of English in Rome, Italy, conducting a comparative investigation collecting data from 17 different streets across six districts in the city. He concludes, among other things, that English does not appear in longer sentences, arguing that the physical cityscape “lends itself to brevity, no matter the language” (Griffin 2004:7). In other words, whether one aims to convey information to non-Italian speakers or create a trendy cosmopolitan image, keeping the use of English short and simple is the safest.

Moreover, during a study of Istanbul, Turkey, Selvi (2016:35) notes that “cosmetic stores, restaurants, cafés and electronics retail stores were more prone to the use of English” while “stores selling durable consumer goods, pharmacies, car dealerships, gas stations, mechanics, museums, libraries, driving schools, bookstores, publishing houses, law offices, insurance agencies and NGOs almost had no place for English language occurrences” (ibid.).

In addition, when it comes to investigations carried out in smaller towns, a comparative analysis of the LL of towns across several countries – Italy, Slovenia, and Austria – is offered by Schlick (2002). She finds the prevalence of English to be most apparent in shops related to jewellery, electronics, money, and cosmetics. English is however challenged by French in the domain of food.

Also, Dimova (2007), examining the LL of storefronts in Veles, Macedonia, notes that 100 percent of Internet cafes, 88 percent of bars, 48 percent of boutiques, 33 percent of restaurants, and 20 to 25 percent of hairdressing salons, bakeries and grocery stores use English, while it is missing from signs found at butchers and pharmacies. In addition, Dimova (2007:19) observes that “fashion shops also tend to adopt Anglicized names...”. Although the LL consists of several international chains with signs in English, Dimova (2007:24) notes that “a large

number of Englishized names were originally created in Macedonia”. Similar to Schlick (2002), her findings indicate a positive attitude towards English among local establishments.

### 3. Theoretical framework

#### 3.1 Overview of the field of LL

Digitalization has arguably facilitated the development of the field of LL. Photographing a selection of signs in a specific area with the help of a digital or mobile camera constitutes a relatively straightforward approach. Consequently, studies can now be found in all parts of world, including countries such as Mexico, South Africa, Japan and Indonesia, as well as in “remote” locations such as Greenland and the Arctic Circle. Studies are by no means restricted to outdoor environments. Rather, fieldwork has also been carried out in, for example libraries and museums.

Moreover, researchers frequently combine interdisciplinary approaches, including cultural geography, pedagogy, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, architecture, law and economics (Järlehed 2011:1), while further strategies include the collection of interview data from respondents, for example tourists (cf. Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau 2009).

What is more, in recent years, studies have been conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively. Different approaches provide different benefits. A quantitative approach gives insight into the “distribution of items, uses of languages, categories of designs and texts that unveil the relative impact of different structuring principles” (Shohamy *et al.* 2010:344). A qualitative approach, meanwhile, provides “content analyses of LL items revealing the values they stand for, perceptions of potential clients, how coercion or its rejection may be practiced in the LL and the kind of reasoning beneath tactics and strategies of getting 'close' to the public” (ibid.).

Furthermore, one of the most debated topics in LL research is the issue of defining what constitutes a sign. Backhaus (2007:66) views the sign as “any piece of text within a spatially definable frame”, including everything from small handwritten stickers to huge commercial billboards. An alternative approach, however, is suggested by Cenoz & Gorter (2006) who see the establishment as the unit of analysis; in other words, all signs that belong to the same establishment are considered to be one and the same sign. They argue that each text “belongs to a larger whole instead of being clearly separate” (Cenoz & Gorter 2006:71). In addition, some studies disagree whether analysis should be limited to static objects or whether signs on

mobile vehicles, such as buses and trucks, or the print on T-shirts or shopping bags should be included as well. As Huebner (2009:71-72) points out, divergences in methodology may cause difficulties when it comes to making valid comparisons between different studies. Nevertheless, researchers need to be explicit in their choice of methodology.

Finally, the social and cultural motivations underlying the choice of language on signs cause researchers to consider additional multimodal features such as font, size, colour, and layout to decode meanings and implications and, not least, analyse the structure and hierarchy behind languages.

### 3.2 Top-down and bottom-up signs

Yet another recurring theme in LL research is the theoretical distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs, respectively. Top-down signs are described as “LL elements used and exhibited by institutional agencies which in one way or another act under the control of local or central policies” (Ben-Rafael *et al.* 2006:10). Bottom-up signs, on the other hand, are “those utilised by individual, associative or corporative actors who enjoy autonomy of action within legal limits” (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, top-down signs can illustrate how political decision-making favours one language over another, such as in the case of the Toubon Law in France, mandating the use of the national language in, for example, official government publications, advertisements and workplaces throughout the country (Takhtarova *et al.* 2015:455). The relationship between the terms is especially delicate in countries with multiple official or semi-official languages. Since bottom-up signs are “designed much more freely according to individual strategies” (Ben-Rafael *et al.* 2006:10), one might argue these are more likely to reflect the multilingual composition of a particular area.

Next, Ben-Rafael *et al.* (2006) provides a framework for interpreting which establishments fit into each distinction, identifying top-down signs as “those issued by national and public bureaucracies – public institutions, signs on public sites, public announcement and street names” (Ben-Rafael *et al.* 2006:14). More specifically, this includes, for example, pedagogical and religious institutions, as well as municipal and government buildings. Bottom-up signs, on the other hand, are “those that were issued by individual social actors – shop owners and companies – like names of shops, signs on businesses and personal announcements” (*ibid.*).



Here, store signs, offices, factories, agencies, as well as private announcements are fit into the definition.

However, some studies argue that the distinction oversimplifies “the issue of authorship” (Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau 2009:388). Spolsky (2009:28), for one, argues that “both [private] and [government] signs can be government regulated, while government signs can be under more or less control...”. Huebner (2009:74) claims that the distinction “fails to capture the notion of agency”. For example, multinational corporations may indeed exert forms of top-down influence. Huebner (*ibid.*) points out that actors such as Kentucky Fried Chicken or Seven Eleven often have a greater influence on language choice and language use than governments.

### 3.3 Connotation of signs

According to Backhaus (2007:55), “the visibility or non-visibility of a language in public is a message of and in itself”. Scollon & Scollon (2003) distinguish between the indexical and the symbolic meaning of signs. For example, in areas populated mainly by immigrants (cf. Hult 2009), a restaurant sign in, say, Arabic may index the presence of a predominantly Arabic-speaking population residing there. At the same, a restaurant sign in Italian in the same area may rather be seen as an attempt to capitalize on the symbolic prestige associated with Italian gastronomy, while the sign’s communicative purpose is not given equal importance.

Similarly, one might draw a parallel to the way languages such as Italian and French are discussed in studies on advertising (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2000, Piller 2001). The use of these languages is often motivated by “ethno-cultural stereotypes” (Gerritsen *et al.* 2007:296), for example in relation to gastronomy. Thus, in these cases, it is “unimportant whether the advertiser understands the foreign word in the advertisement, as long as it calls up the cultural stereotype of the country with which the language is associated” (Kelly-Holmes 2000:1).

English, however, given its role as a global lingua franca, works on a “higher level” both as a language of wider communication and a language of symbolic prestige (while not necessary creating associations to Anglophone countries or culture). This role of English is discussed by Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau (2009), who note that English tends to take on a prominent position in the LL of the resort of S’Arenal, Mallorca. Curiously, German-speaking tourists are the most common at the resort, while Spanish functions as the national language.

### 3.4 Function of signs

Vandenbroucke (2016), examining socio-economically stratified LLs in Amsterdam and Brussels, points out that content communicated in the LL can take on either a symbolic or emblematic or a referential function. Specifically, the purpose of the referential function is to communicate an ideational, comprehensible message, for example opening hours in the case of shop signs. The emblematic function, however, is applied as a vehicle of association, in order to attract customers and increase profit. For example, Vandenbroucke (2016:98) notes that the emblematic use of English is mostly visible on larger facades, with the purpose of indexing the symbolic power of English.

Moreover, Hult (2009) makes a functional distinction between metaphorical and situational language choices. Resembling Vandenbroucke's emblematic function, the metaphorical function reflects "stylistic choices that are associated with a given language", while situational language choice is aimed at instrumental communicative discourse (Hult 2009:98). For example, during his fieldwork in central Malmö, Hult notes that the national language (i.e. Swedish) is primarily used in a situational manner for utility purposes, while English is used metaphorically. As a concrete example of this distinction, Hult (2009:99) provides an illustration of a shop sign found at a supermarket named *Sun Shine Livs*. In the first part of the name (*Sun Shine*), the use of English is metaphorical, since the expression alone is not enough for the LL audience to decipher what is offered at the store. This, in turn, is followed by the situational use of the Swedish phrase 'livs'.

### 3.5 Structure of signs

Another important point of discussion concerns the arrangement of different languages on multilingual signs. Scollon & Scollon (2003) propose the concept of code preference, based on Kreuss and Van Leeuwen's (1996) system of visual grammar. In short, they argue that the favoured *code* is always placed on the top, on the left or in the centre of the sign, while the marginalized *code* is placed on the bottom, on the right, or in the margins (Scollon & Scollon 2003:120). However, Backhaus (2007:105) argues that the relative font size of each represented language trumps the perspective of placement.

Finally, Sebba (2007) provides a theoretical framework for analysing the textual structure of multilingual signs, making a distinction between language combinations that are either parallel or complementary. Use of parallel multilingualism indicates that identical information

is given in two or more languages. At the same time, in complementary texts, while two or more languages are used, the content of each part of the message is different. In other words, only a speaker of all languages visible on signs exhibiting complementary multilingualism can understand the entire message. According to Sebba (2007; cited in Edelman 2010:21), parallel texts are often directed at monolingual speakers, for example in the form of opening hours or other factual information. Meanwhile, complementary multilingual texts presuppose multilingual readers, typically featuring the combination of two or more languages used instrumentally and/or metaphorically in the LL.

## 4. Aim, material and method

### 4.1 Aim

The present study has found inspiration in the work of Laitinen (2014). Prior to his study of the LL of selected parts of rural Finland, he emphasizes the need to accumulate “systematic data of English in signage from various parts of the country, not only from urban centres” (Laitinen 2014:56). The aim of the present study, thus, is to contribute to the corpus of LL in Sweden by examining English in LLs of four urban areas (in the study, they are continuously referred to as *research locations*) outside of the main cities. The selected locations are, in turn, Alingsås, Höllviken, Svedala, and Hönö, all of which are characterized by a relatively small population. Additional background to each research location is provided in Section 4.4.

The study tries to provide insight into the following three research questions:

- How prevalent is the use of English across the four selected research locations?
- How does the presence of English differ between the various types of establishment that appear in the LL?
- How does the position and salience of English on multilingual signs relate to which function it performs in the LL?

The first question aims to investigate the prevalence of English in the LL of each research location. More specifically, attention will be paid to how the use of English differ between top-down and bottom-up signs and whether its frequency relates the population size of the investigated locations.

The second question attempts to identify which types of establishment appear in the LL and how they differ in their use of English. That is, signs will be classified as belonging to either international or national chains, or local establishments. Also, signs will be classified according to which domain (e.g. clothing or gastronomy) they belong. The results will be discussed in relation to relevant previous research (cf. Section 2).

The third and final question aims to provide a qualitative discussion of how English may perform different functions depending on its position and salience on multilingual signs. In other words, the study attempts to find out whether LL authors make use of different strategies to capitalize on the prestige of English. To answer this question, the different primary and secondary texts (cf. Section 4.2) that together make up a sign will be examined closely, as relevant theoretical concepts will feature in the discussion.

#### 4.2 Counting the signs

Potentially the most crucial methodological question regards the counting of signs. The present study follows the methodological approach outlined by Cenoz & Gorter (2006:71), who argue that “each establishment but not each sign” serves as the unit of analysis. More specifically, “...when a [bank] or a [shop] had its name on the front but also a number of advertising posters on the windows it was considered one sign (or one unit)” (ibid.). See Section 3.1 for a discussion of competing methodologies.

Hence, since establishments constitute the unit of analysis, the identity of the sign author must be straightforward in order for a sign to be counted in the study. Neither representations of graffiti nor non-stationary signs are part of the investigation, given their ephemeral presence in the LL. Furthermore, the present study acknowledges the relevance of one of Hult’s (2009:96) conditions; namely, that signs must be “visible at street level with the naked eye”. Indeed, Rodríguez (2009:8) points out that “small letters defy the principle of communicability in public spaces”.

Furthermore, the present study also draws on the work of Nikolaou (2017), who, applying the methodology proposed by Cenoz & Gorter (2006), makes a further textual classification of each encountered sign. More specifically, he makes a distinction between primary texts and secondary texts, respectively.

Primary texts usually consist of a store or business name, for example in the form of a proper name, and “other text”, which, according to Nikolaou (2017:166), refers to the

information given about store type and is usually made up of nominal phrases. Secondary texts, moreover, include “product information, special offers, and opening hours” (ibid.). Also, as primary texts are generally more conspicuous, this division may facilitate a qualitative discussion of the position and salience of English in the LL. Next, Figure 1 illustrates a visual interpretation of this division.

Sign	Primary text	Proper or brand name, frequently name of establishment
		Other text, frequently shop type
	Secondary text	Information about sales, opening hours, additional information, etc.

**Figure 1:** The interpretation of a sign in the present study, based on the works of Nikolaou (2017) and Cenoz & Gorter (2006), respectively.

### 4.3 Coding the signs

The distinction between top-down and bottom-up signs is largely based on the framework that Ben-Rafael *et al.* (2006:14) propose. However, in order to keep with the method, some adjustments were necessary. Private announcements have not been included in this investigation, as these are (usually) authored by private persons. In addition, the study does not include signs containing street names and similar, as these appear exclusively in Swedish. The analysis of street name signs appears to be more relevant to studies focusing on official multilingualism.

Furthermore, all counted signs have been classified according to type of establishment. Firstly, it has been decided whether they belong to chains (i.e. a series of establishments found on multiple locations) or are part of local establishments. Chains can be either international (i.e. international headquarters) or national (i.e. domestic headquarters). If an establishment is not part of a chain, it is considered local; that is, it can only be found on the specific research location. Local establishments are expected to have more freedom in the choice of language, while national and international chains are more likely to be regulated by (top-down) company policies (cf. Huebner 2009:74).

Secondly, all signs have been classified according to which domain they belong. For this purpose, a coding scheme was developed containing 10 variables listed in Table 1, representing official and private domains encountered in the LL. The choice of domains is largely based on the list of categories proposed by Rodríguez (2009:9-10).

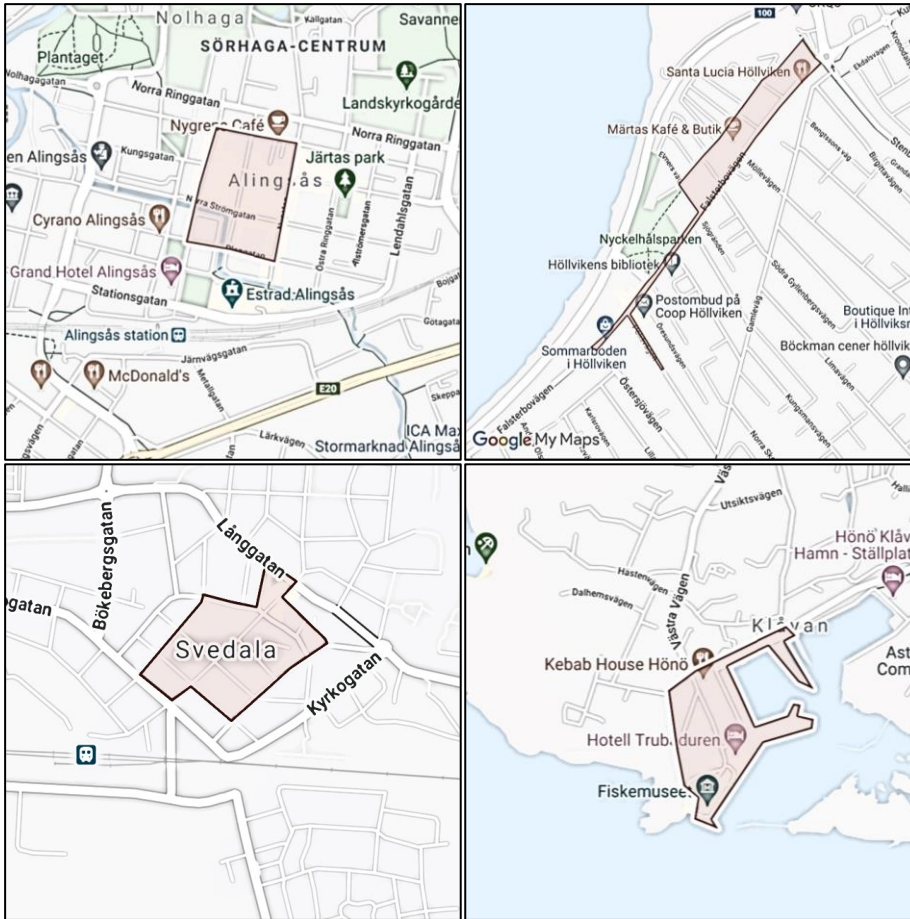
**Table 1:** Domains investigated in the present study.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Types of business</b>
Beauty	Hairdressers, gyms, beauty salons, perfume stores, etc.
Clothing	Shoe stores, clothing stores, jewellery stores, dry cleaners, etc.
Education	Driving schools, schools, etc.
Financial	Banks, exchange offices, etc.
Food	Supermarkets, butcher's shops, fish shops, fruit shops, bakeries, liquor stores, kiosks, etc.
Gastronomy	Bars, cafeterias, restaurants, etc.
Health	Clinics, medical centres, hospitals, dentist offices, pharmacies, etc.
Home and Leisure	Party supplies stores, travel agencies, gift stores, flower shops, photo stores, pet stores, furniture, tools, sports stores, etc.
Legal	Law firms, real estate agencies, etc.
Other	

A similar approach to the coding of different types of establishments is undertaken by Edelman (2010:108) in her study of the LL in Amsterdam and Friesland, Netherlands. She observes that national chains tend to choose Dutch rather than English. At the same time, local establishments tend to use roughly the same amount of English as international chains.

#### 4.4 Research locations

For practical reasons, the number of research locations in the present study is limited to four urban areas across two different Swedish counties. These include Alingsås and Höno (Öckerö Municipality) in Västra Götaland County as well as Höllviken (Vellinge Municipality) and Svedala in Skåne County. As previously mentioned, research locations with a relatively small population (as compared to larger cities) have been selected to meet the aim of the study; namely, to examine English in the LL of Sweden outside of the main cities. Next, consider Figure 2 for detailed maps of each survey area.



**Figure 2:** Maps of survey areas, including (clockwise from the top left) Alingsås, Höllviken, Höno, and Svedala.

On each location, a starting point in the centre was chosen, for example a square or a travel centre. A surrounding area of roughly six hectares was selected for fieldwork, carried out through photographing each sign with a mobile phone camera. Afterwards, the data was entered into a *Microsoft Excel* spreadsheet for coding.

Note that each research location forms part of an urban area as defined by the Statistics Sweden (SCB)<sup>2</sup>. Consider Table 2 for statistics on the population of each research location, as well as the municipal population and the percentage of municipal residents born abroad.

<sup>2</sup> All population data have been obtained from [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se).

**Table 2:** List of research locations by population and percentage of immigrants

<b>Research location</b>	<b>Population urban area Dec 31, 2018</b>	<b>Municipal population Dec 31, 2019</b>	<b>%Born abroad Dec 31, 2019</b>
Alingsås	27,266	41,420	12.0%
Höllviken	15,522	36,628	9.3%
Svedala	12,470	22,229	11.6%
Hönö	9,134	12,916	7.1%
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>10,327,589</b>	<b>19.6%</b>

As is seen in Table 2, Alingsås, the largest urban area in terms of population, has less than 30,000 inhabitants, while Hönö, the smallest urban area in terms in population, has less than 10,000 inhabitants. That is, while the locations indeed differ in population, they lag far behind the main cities (e.g. Malmö and Uppsala, as mentioned in this study). Meanwhile, the percentage of immigrants residing in the respective municipalities ranges from 7.1 to 12 percent, which is below the national average. Hence, the research locations are related not only by the relatively small number of inhabitants but also by a fairly homogeneous population. Below, some additional background to each research location is provided.

- **Alingsås**, located 40 minutes northeast of Gothenburg, is a town known for offering a wide range of cafés, having adopted the slogan “The Capital of Fika”. In addition, its town centre features a variety of public and private establishments.
- **Höllviken**, located south of Malmö, was developed as a summer resort during the early 1900s. Today, however, Höllviken functions as an affluent suburb of Malmö, while offering its inhabitants and visitors several beaches and museums.
- **Svedala**, located immediately southeast of Malmö, is the seat of a municipality which features a golf course of international repute, castles and forests. The location itself functions as a suburb of Malmö, while still offering a commercial centre with a variety of shops and restaurants.
- **Hönö**, situated on the eponymous island immediately west of Gothenburg. Despite being the smallest of the research locations, it offers rocky beaches, hiking trails and a commercial centre. The regional tourist organization market Hönö as ’En pärla på västkusten’ (“A pearl on the west coast”).



## 4.5 Methodological issues

Nikolaou (2017:166) acknowledges that LL studies should pay attention to the difficulties of assigning proper names to a particular language. During the fieldwork of the present study, several examples of proper and brand names were spotted. However, unlike several other studies, they have been included in the corpus. As Edelman (2009), who devotes a full article to this issue, discusses, not to include the category of proper names would result in an incomplete picture of the LL's multilingual composition.

Also, English influence on Swedish vocabulary created some additional coding difficulties. The Swedish Academy's dictionary (SAOL) regularly incorporates English loan words into the Swedish lexicon. That is, sometimes the boundaries between Swedish and English words are not entirely clear. For example, the corpus of the present study contains words such as *take away*, *drop in*, or even *look*, all of which feature as entries in the SAOL. Nonetheless, since the aim of the study is to map the role of English in Swedish LL, these words have been treated similarly to proper names. That is, for as long as possible, they are categorized according to original language. After all, it could be argued that the presence of such words is also evidence of the symbolic prestige of English.

## 5. Results and discussion

The results and accompanying discussion are presented in three different sections. First, a quantitative investigation of English's prominence across the four research locations and the various types of establishment which appear in the LL is offered. This, in turn, is followed by a qualitative discussion of how the function of English relates to its position and salience on signs.

### 5.1 Prevalence of English

The first research question was aimed at investigating the prevalence of English in the LL of the four research locations, as well as how its use differs between top-down and bottom-up signs and how the frequency of English relates to population size. Now, consider Table 3 for an overview of the total number of signs and the number of signs in English across each research location, as well as the number of top-down and bottom-up signs.

**Table 3:** Overview of signs in the LL (number of signs in English given within parentheses).

Research location	Signs	Top-down	Bottom-up
Alingsås	85 (41)	5 (1)	80 (40)
Höllviken	68 (24)	4 (0)	64 (24)
Svedala	58 (16)	7 (0)	51 (16)
Hönö	26 (11)	2 (1)	24 (10)
<b>Total</b>	<b>237 (92)</b>	<b>18 (2)</b>	<b>219 (90)</b>

As is shown in Table 3, a total of 237 establishments were encountered during the investigation. Indeed, a consistent relationship emerges between the number of signs and the population size of each research location. As previously mentioned, all survey areas are situated in the central parts of each investigated urban area and are equal in size (roughly six hectares). Still, the number of signs encountered in Alingsås is more than three times greater than the number of signs encountered in Hönö.

Moreover, following Ben-Rafael *et al's* (2006) framework, only 18 of the signs in the study could be assigned the category top-down. On the one hand, this observation testifies to the commercial nature of the LL and the apparent lack of, for example, municipal or pedagogical institutions. However, a reiteration of Huebner's (2009:74) discussion of top-down influence on bottom-up establishments is also necessary. Consider, for example, the secondary text presented in Figure 3, illustrating the brand name and slogan of an international sport chain found in Alingsås.



**Figure 3:** Secondary text in Alingsås (home and leisure).

In the example in Figure 3, the slogan *Sport to the people* is only relevant in terms of language representation; however, not in terms of agency. Rather, this example illustrates what Spolsky (2009:38) refers to as “simply reproductions of ones made worldwide”. That is, this example fails to illustrate how local LL authors view English, while still being an obvious indicator of its global influence and therefore quantified in the study.

Furthermore, 39 percent of all signs feature English to some extent. In Alingsås, however, the representation of English in the LL is remarkably high, noted on 48 percent of the signs. This number stands out when compared to, for example, McArthur’s (2000) report from Uppsala, Sweden’s fourth largest city, and Hult’s (2009) investigation of an area in Malmö, Sweden’s third largest city, recording English on 36 and 38 percent, respectively, of the total number of signs. However, a proper comparison is difficult to make, as their investigations were carried out as early as 2000 and 2009. Should new studies be carried out on the same locations, findings might differ.

Though, an interesting parallel can be drawn with the work of Brito (2016), who, following the methodology proposed by Cenoz & Gorter (2006), finds English to be visible on 38 percent of the signs in Västra hamnen, Malmö, the one of four areas in her study most closely resembling the research locations in the present study in terms of the percentage of foreign-born residents.

## 5.2 Types of establishment

The second research question was aimed at determining which types of establishment appear in the LL and how they differ in their use of English. The motivation for this part of the study comes from Spolsky’s (2009:31) claim that one should “distinguish global from local signs”. In Table 4, signs are listed according to whether they belong to international or national chains or local establishments. Moreover, in Table 5, signs are listed according to which domain they belong.

**Table 4:** Total number of signs and number of signs in English across local establishments and chains.

Type	Study		Alingsås		Höllviken		Svedala		Hönö	
	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng
Local establishment	189	73	61	29	56	19	46	14	26	11
National chain	44	15	20	8	12	5	12	2		
International chain	4	4	4	4						
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>11</b>

**Table 5:** Total number of signs and number of signs in English across domains.

Type	Study		Alingsås		Höllviken		Svedala		Hönö	
	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng	Tot	Eng
Gastronomy	59	24	21	8	18	7	12	6	8	3
Beauty	48	29	22	16	12	7	12	5	2	1
Other	32	9	6	1	10	4	8	1	8	3
Home and Leisure	26	5	9	3	10	1	5		2	1
Clothing	28	15	15	9	5	2	4	2	4	2
Legal	11		2		5		4			
Health	9	2	5	2	2		2			
Food	8	3	2		2	2	3	1	1	
Education	6		1		1		4			
Financial	5	4	2	2	1	1	2	1		
Municipal	4	1			1		2		1	1
Religious	1				1					
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>11</b>

The commercial (bottom-up) nature of the research locations was confirmed in Table 3. Table 4, however, gives an additional perspective on the characteristics of the LL, as 80 percent of the total number of signs belong to local establishments. Also, an absolute majority of all counted national and international chains have been spotted in Alingsås. This should come as no surprise given its population size. As expected, each sign belonging to an international chain features some representation of English, while 39 percent of local establishments use it. This is a relatively high number when compared to, for example, Hult's (2009) observations, spotting English on 38 percent of the *total* number of storefronts in the centre of Malmö.

As Table 5 shows, the tendency seems to be toward the use of English in, above all, service-related domains, namely beauty, gastronomy, and clothing. At the same time, English receives scant attention in official domains, specifically religious, pedagogical, educational and municipal institutions.

Moreover, many of the above observations are in concert with findings made by other researchers. Schlick (2002), focusing both on smaller and larger towns across Europe, notes

that English tends to appear in the LL of shops selling clothing, jewellery and cosmetics. Similarly, Selvi (2016) observes that cosmetic stores and restaurants in Istanbul tend to prefer English. Moreover, both Dimova (2007) and Selvi (2016) note that English is absent from pharmacies, one of the more “obvious” top-down establishments in their material. This pattern is recognized in the present study, as the presence of English in the domain of health is restricted to private medical institutions.

Furthermore, as for the domain of gastronomy, including both restaurants and cafés, English is visible on 41 percent of the signs. That the frequency of English per sign is lower than in, for example, the domain of beauty may come across as surprising, given the global influence of this domain. In this case, however, a reiteration of the concept of “ethno-cultural stereotypes” (cf. Section 3.3) might be in place. While English is a global lingua franca, signs providing associations to Anglophone countries are rare in the LL. Languages such as French, Italian, Thai, Japanese, and Chinese, however, are prominent on signs promoting their renowned gastronomies.

Be that as it may, the domain of gastronomy also features signs where English is used to signal internationalism and prestige. For example, consider Figure 4, illustrating two primary texts classified as belonging to this domain.



**Figure 4:** Primary texts in Hönö and Svedala (both gastronomy), respectively.

The first example in Figure 4 is taken from a Hönö restaurant offering kebab, a traditional Middle Eastern dish popular in Sweden. Here, the LL author has paired the English noun *house* with *kebab* to form the name of the establishment.

Similarly, the second example illustrates a primary text spotted at a sushi restaurant in Svedala. Here, the LL author stylistically makes use of the English possessive adjective *my* alongside the noun *sushi* to form the phrase which constitutes the name of the establishment.

### 5.3 The role of English

The aim of the third and final research question was to provide a qualitative discussion of how the position and salience of English on multilingual signs relates to its function in the LL, in contextualization with the theoretical concepts discussed in Section 3. In this section, attention will be paid to the hierarchical relationship between English and other languages on multilingual signs, as the arrangement of languages in primary and secondary texts<sup>3</sup> is examined.

#### 5.3.1 Primary texts

To introduce this sub-section, consider Table 6, where the various primary text language combinations in which English appear on each research location are presented.

**Table 6:** Language combinations involving English in primary texts.

Language combination	Study	Alingsås	Höllviken	Svedala	Hönö
Monolingual English	28	17	2	8	1
Swedish-English hybrids	40	16	12	2	10
English together with additional languages	15	5	7	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>

Interestingly, as seen in Table 6, in 66 percent of the texts investigated, English is used together with Swedish or another language. Next, consider Figure 5, which illustrates three concrete examples of how English may feature in primary texts.



**Figure 5:** Primary texts in Alingsås (clothing) and Svedala (beauty and gastronomy), respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Note that on several signs, English appears both in the primary and in the secondary text.

The examples in Figure 5 are all taken from bottom-up signs, more specifically local establishments in the domains of clothing, beauty, and gastronomy, respectively. Each sign provides an example of complementary multilingualism, as discussed by Sebba (2007). More specifically, English is used for one part of the entire message, while the rest of the information is given in another language.

The first two examples in Figure 5 feature Swedish proper names ('Ikkan' and 'Louise Lindeberg', respectively). In terms of size and placement (top position), they are prominent. However, these parts of the message alone are not enough for the LL audience to interpret what kind of service is offered at the establishments. The use of Swedish is metaphorical, while the LL audience are required some proficiency in English to understand the entire content. Information in English is placed underneath, in an "inferior" position in terms of code preference, while taking on the referential or situational function.

Similarly, in the third example, the metaphorical function is expressed through the use of Thai, which indeed is the more salient language in terms of code preference. Here, the LL author clearly applies the idea of an ethno-cultural stereotype associated with Thai cuisine, while providing a communicative message at the bottom of the sign. So far, the examples have shown how English may constitute the communicative part of the message. Now, consider Figure 6 for two additional examples, taken from a beauty salon and an interior design shop, respectively, in Höllviken. Here, the roles have been somewhat reversed.



**Figure 6:** Primary texts in Höllviken (beauty and home and leisure, respectively).

In both examples, English appears at the top of the sign, presented in a larger font, while fulfilling the metaphorical or emblematic function. In the first example, the LL author uses a positive adjective (*happy*) along with the noun *feet* to form the text's emblematic message. While the LL audience might be able to infer what is offered at the establishment by looking at the noun, some proficiency in Swedish is necessary to understand the referential message given

underneath. The second example illustrates yet another metaphorical expression in English (*Cottage Rose*; here, accompanied by an illustration of a rose), followed by a referential message in Swedish.

Thus, a pattern illustrating the arrangement of languages in primary texts can be established. That is, in multilingual texts, the more prominent language in terms of code preference is frequently performing the emblematic/metaphorical function, while a referential/situational message is presented underneath.

More importantly, the above examples illustrate how LL authors may capitalize on the symbolic prestige of English in different ways. On the one hand, English is used for stylistic flavour, on the other, it fulfils its role as a language of wider communication. From her study in Amsterdam and Brussels, respectively, Vandenbroucke (2016:98) notes that:

Using English, the global lingua franca, in purely informational signage indirectly generates economic profit as it enables communication with prospective clients not necessarily proficient in [Dutch] or [French]. Conversely, ubiquitous emblematic language use in any language indexes (trans)local prestige, profitable values or prevalent associations in linguistic markets. Here, the use of purely emblematic English is more of a marketing tool for shop-owners to create a certain image or social stereotype customers want to associate themselves with through buying the advertised commodities and more prestigious lifestyle associated with them.

In comparison, Laitinen (2014:70) reports from his study of the LL in rural Finland that English outside the main urban centres is mainly found “in various types mixed or polyphonic translations together with the national language”. Note that the terms ‘mixed’ and ‘polyphonic’ refer to different types of complementary multilingualism (cf. Backhaus 2007:90-91).

### 5.3.2 Secondary texts

Similar to the previous sub-section, consider Table 7, where the various secondary text language combinations in which English appear on each research location are presented.

**Table 7:** Language combinations involving English in secondary texts.

<b>Language combination</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Alingsås</b>	<b>Höllviken</b>	<b>Svedala</b>	<b>Hönö</b>
Monolingual English	10	6	2	2	
Swedish-English hybrids	27	10	8	5	4
English together with additional languages	4	2	2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>



The patterns illustrated in Table 7 indicate similar tendencies in terms of the presence of English as brought up in the preceding discussion. Rather than appearing separately, English is used in combination with other languages. Now consider Figure 7, featuring examples of Swedish and English being used together.



**Figure 7:** Secondary texts in Alingsås (health) and Höllviken (home & leisure).

Both texts in Figure 7 take on the referential function. Moreover, both are examples of parallel multilingualism; in other words, an identical message is repeated. The first example features verbatim repetition. Moreover, the hierarchy between the languages can only be decided by considering the order in which they appear, since each part of the message is identical in size to the corresponding translation.

While the discourse in the first example in Figure 7 is “regulatory”, the second example appears more “commercial” to the audience. Again, the message is repeated word for word. However, here, one part of the message in Swedish (‘hyr cykel’) is presented in a larger font. Interestingly, the Swedish noun ‘dag’ has not been translated; however, taking into account the similarities in orthography between this word and the English cognate *day*, the LL author might have regarded a translation unnecessary.

More importantly, the tendency here seems to be toward a preference for Swedish in terms of code preference in parallel secondary texts, in cases where both languages clearly perform the referential function. Next, consider Figure 8, which illustrates a secondary text found at a hamburger restaurant in Svedala. Here, English is once again performing a different function.



**Figure 8:** Secondary text in Svedala (gastronomy).

In Figure 8, the pattern resembles the one discussed in the context of the primary texts. In terms of code preference, English appears as the more prominent language, placed at the top position. However, while referring to a product sold at the establishment, its use is again metaphorical, while the Swedish text underneath provides additional information about the product in a situational manner.

## 6. Conclusion

To reiterate, the purpose of the present study was to map the presence and functions of English in the LL of four research locations in Sweden, outside of the main cities, all of which are characterized by a relatively small and homogenous population. Admittedly, the study is restricted to survey areas from these locations, all of which, however, are equal in terms of size, with the focus being on the central parts of each research location (cf. Section 4.4). Nevertheless, several interesting patterns have been discovered which contribute to expand the knowledge on LL in Sweden.

First of all, the observations made in the present study agree with the claims made by Ben Rafael *et al.* (2006:14) regarding bottom-up signs; namely, that they are “designed much more freely according to individual strategies”. This is illustrated by the fact that around 80 percent of the signs appearing in the study were found at local establishments, where LL authors are supposed to have been given a greater freedom in the choice of language. This, in turn, provides a more accurate view on the symbolic prestige of English among individual LL authors.

Nevertheless, the study also proves that several parallels can be drawn between the LL of these four research locations and previous research carried out in global urban centres. A

preference for English in service-related domains such as beauty, gastronomy, and clothing was noted, a pattern reflected in several other LL studies, while English is virtually absent from signs found at municipal and governmental institutions. Indeed, this points towards a marked preference for English in domains that signify “chic cosmopolitanism, classy urbanism, and technological sophistication” (Nikolaou 2017:174), illustrating the dominant position of English in the context of “western consumerism” (Dimova 2007:19).

Furthermore, the study has established that English may take on different functions in the LL depending on its position and salience in the different primary and secondary texts that together constitute a sign. That is, when English is placed in a more prominent position in terms of code preference, it frequently performs what Hult (2009) and Vandembroucke (2016) refer to as the metaphorical or emblematic functions, respectively. Examples include both names of establishments and names of products offered at establishments. However, when English appears underneath a more salient language, frequently Swedish, or in examples of parallel multilingualism, its function more closely resembles what is referred to as the situational or referential functions.

Moreover, as the results of the present study establish that the presence of English in the LL is obvious on several relatively small locations, future studies should focus more on attitudes towards the global influence of English among both LL authors and LL audience on such locations. To the knowledge of the author, attitudes to the LL have been given very little attention in Swedish contexts thus far. Future studies could also continue in the spirit of Laitinen (2014), exploring even more remote regions and areas in Sweden, which have little or no representation in current LL literature.

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