

MISSPELLINGS IN THE KUMASI CITYSCAPE: AN ANALYSIS OF ASANTE TWI-BASED SIGNAGES

Obed Nii Broohm

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology.

obed.broohm@knust.edu.gh

Abdulai Akuamah

St. Joseph's College of Education, Bechem, Ghana.

akuamah81@gmail.com

Patrick Ntiamoah

St. Joseph's College of Education, Bechem, Ghana.

patrickntiamoah@gmail.com

Abstract

Linguistic landscape research is gradually gaining traction in Ghanaian circles. Most studies in the field have focused on the form and function of the language of signages in L2 contexts (Anderson et al., 2020; Akuamah, 2022; Owusu-Afriyie, 2020). As yet, not so much scholarly attention has been given to misspellings in Ghanaian language-based (L1 contexts) signages. This study, therefore, focusing on the linguistic landscape of the Kumasi Metropolis (Ghana), investigates misspellings in Asante Twi monolingual signages on commercial vehicles. Data is collected from the two (2) sub-metropolises, namely Subin and Kwadaso via observation and interviews of both vehicle drivers and sign artists. The dataset is a corpus of 111 spelling errors. Cast in the analytical lens of Cook's (2001) typology of spelling error, this work identifies several spelling errors in Kumasi cityscape including segregation error, omission error, substitution error, insertion error, amalgamation error, contraction error, transposition error, capitalization error, and multiple errors. Our results show that substitution is the most prevalent error type, while transposition and capitalization errors constitute the least prevalent types. Through follow-up interview sessions, the study establishes that the causes of misspellings result largely from the lack of knowledge of the orthographic conventions of Asante Twi. The study has implications for language learning and spelling acquisition.

Keywords: Asante Twi, spelling errors, Akan orthographic conventions, Linguistic landscape, Kumasi

Anim muabɔsem

Lengwesteks lansekep ho nhwehwemu regye nhini wɔ Ghanaman mu nkakrankakra. Nhwehwemu dodoɔ no ara akɔgyina ɔkasa bɔbea ne ne dwumadie wɔ ntwerɛɛ a wɔde kasa foforo (L2) na atwerɛ so (Anderson, et al., 2020; Owusu-Afriyie, 2020; Akuamah, 2022). Abenfoɔ mfaa won adwene nkɔ mfomsoɔ a ɛwowa ntwerɛɛ a wɔde Ghana Kasa na atwerɛ no so. Wei nti, nhwehwemu yi fa mfomsoɔ a ɛwowa Asante Twi ntwerɛɛ a ɛwowa ahyen (pasinnya kai) a ɛwowa Kumase Kuropɔn (Ghana) mu no ho. Yenyaa deta firii amansini mmienu mu; Subin ne Kwadaso, bere a yebɔ anan kɔ ahyen gyinabea kɔhwehwɛ ntwerɛɛ no sane hyiaa adɔbafoɔ ne won a wɔtwerɛwɛ ahyen ho binom bisabisaa won nsem. Deta 111 a yede dii dwuma no ye atwerem mfomsoɔ ahodoɔ a yehunuie. Deta no mpensempensenmu gyina Cook (2001) mfomsoɔ nkyekyemu ahodoɔ no so. Nhwehwemu yi da no adi se atwerem mfomsoɔ a ɛwowa ahyen ho ntwerɛɛ mu no bi ne ntemu, nyifirimu, ananmusie, nhyemu, nkabom, ɔdedee ntesoo, nsesaedic, atwerɛɛ akeseɛ ne afrafa mfomsoɔ. Nhwehwemu yi da no adi se ananmusie mfomsoɔ na ɛdɔso pa ara, ɛna nsesaedic ne atwerɛɛ akeseɛ mfomsoɔ nso na ɛsua koraa. ɛnam yene ahyenkafoɔ ne won a wɔtwerɛwɛ ahyen ho nsemmissa no so bɛdaa adi se saa mfomsoɔ yi farebae titire no gyina nimdee a wonni fa Asante Twi atwerɛ mmara ho so. Nhwehwemu yi wɔ nsunsuansoo wɔ kasasua ne sedee yetwere ɔkasa so.

Nsemfua atitire: Asante Twi, atwerem mfomsoɔ, Akan ɔtografi, Lengwesteks lansekep, Kumasi

1. Introduction¹

The use of language is *sine qua non* to our existence as human beings. The appropriate use of language helps us to express our thoughts and feelings. We use language for both oral and written forms of communication. When interlocutors are competent in the language being used, it helps the communication achieve its intended purpose.

Studies on linguistic landscape, that is, the use of inscriptions in the public space, date back to 1997, when Landry and Bourhis (1997) first drew scholarly attention to that aspect of

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language discipline. For Coulmas (2009), linguistic landscape primarily concerns writings in urban spaces: hence the term *linguistic cityscape* (Coulmas, 2009). The linguistic cityscape of a city includes writings on billboards, banners, kiosks, vehicles, taglines, flyers, posters in the city, which are all intended to convey messages to the readers of such texts (Akuamah, 2022).

The official language of Ghana is English language, and that makes it a dominant language in both official and unofficial signages (Anderson et al., 2020). Interestingly, English and Akan compete for space in the unofficial signage of the cityscape. Duah (2020) observes that public space in Ghana is symbolically dominated by English, and in other instances Asante Twi, especially in cities where Akan is widely spoken such as Kumasi (Tuffour & Asamoah-Poku, 2020). Anderson et al. (2020) corroborate this observation by noting that in bilingual English-Akan signages, Akan is given more prominence over English. On this basis, they contend that “the presence of Asante Twi on bilingual signs and its position on these signs highlight the important role Akan performs in Ghana and makes it a very important indigenous language in the country” (Anderson et al, 2020: 20).

Being the most dominant dialect of Akan, the presence and use of the Asante Twi dialect in the linguistic landscape of Ghana is worthy of scholarly attention. Since Akan is spoken by over 50% of the Ghanaian population (Agyekum, 2020; Ghana Statistical Service Report, 2010), inscriptions in Asante Twi are not uncommon even beyond non-Asante Twi speaking communities like Accra, Winneba, and Ajumako (Nyame and Tomekyin, 2018; Anderson et al., 2020). Some of these writings depict religious beliefs, the writer’s philosophy of life, motivational messages and sometimes innuendoes.

Interestingly, signages on vehicles in the Ghanaian context fall within varied themes. Thanks to the work of legendary highlife musician (the late) Nana Kwame Ampadu, titled *Driver Adwuma*, literally translating as ‘driver’s work’, Ghanaian vehicular signages have attracted and continue to attract some social and scholarly attention. In the song which took the musician six-years to compose, he collected about seventy vehicular signages from across different regions in the country (Ampadu, 2018). These signages touched on the varied themes ranging from love, friendship, business and commerce, social life, and culture. His aesthetic and artistic categorization of signages makes the song evergreen to both the young and the aged. He argues that inscriptions on the *new* vehicles and the *older* ones differ. While the new ones sound attractive and trendy, the *older* ones sound archaic and unattractive because they are full of innuendoes (Ampadu, 2018). The crucial role of vehicular signages within the Ghanaian society is reflected in the fact that most times drivers are even named after the inscriptions on their vehicles which are predominantly written in Akan, especially in the Akan speaking communities like Kumasi.

Sadly, the prominence and dominance of Akan in the commercial signage (e.g., vehicles) is somewhat marred by the high incidence of orthographical errors. In other words, the beauty of these inscriptions is tainted in a way by the errors or substandard expressions that go almost unnoticed by the general public. Drivers (and by extension sign writers) who misspell words in English-based vehicular inscriptions/signages are often trolled on social media. Surprisingly, most people see and read the inscriptions in their (native) Ghanaian languages (in this case Asante Twi) without considering whether or not these inscriptions follow orthographic conventions of the language. This could be attributed partly to the fact that some genuinely cannot read and write in their own native language or perhaps, they are simply not bothered because of the notion that Akan is only spoken within the confines of Ghana. However, such errors in signages must not be trivialized because, as noted in the literature, the linguistic landscape of a country/region serves as a rich resource for teaching spelling and improving literacy in general (Rowland, 2013, Duah, 2020). Spelling errors can give a bad image about the cityscape by causing misinformation (see Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau, 2009). According to Zeng and Luo (2019), some mistakes are disturbing because they “have very bad influence on the image of a city” (p.114). This suggests that orthographic accuracy in the signages of the cityscape may project a positive image about the locality and can at the same time cause

miscommunication. This makes the subject of spelling errors an important aspect of linguistic landscape study. Unfortunately, spelling errors in indigenous language-based signages have not received much attention. Previous studies have mainly centred on the standard of L2 English used (cf. Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau, 2009; Zeng and Luo, 2019; Duah, 2020) without considering errors in the indigenous languages present in the cityscape; in our case Asante Twi. The language used in signage is worthy of scholarly attention because it reveals to us how the population use their language, and it speaks to the language attitude of the community as well (Lavender, 2019). The paucity of studies in this area makes the present study imperative and relevant since it attempts to bridge the gap in the literature.

The primary goal of this study is to investigate the types of errors found in Asante Twi monolingual vehicular inscriptions in the linguistic landscape of Greater Kumasi, and their possible causes. Therefore, the study seeks answers to the following questions: (i) What are the common types of errors in the signages written in Asante Twi? (ii) What are the causes of errors found in Asante Twi monolingual vehicular inscriptions in the linguistic landscape of Greater Kumasi?

1.1 Ghana's Ethnolinguistic Profile

Ghana had a total population of 30,832,019 and a total land area of 238,305 kilometres (92,660 square miles) in 2021 (Ghana Statistical Service Report, 2022). Ghana is an ethno-linguistically diverse country despite having a small landmark. There are approximately 81 living languages in Ghana, making it a multilingual country (Guerini 2008). These languages are divided into Kwa, Mabia (Gur), and Mande and are categorized as being members of the Niger-Congo language family. According to the 2010 National Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service Report, 2012), about 48 percent of Ghanaians speak Akan. This is followed by the Mole-Dagbani language at 17 percent, the Ewe language at 14 percent, the Ga-Dangme language at 7 percent, and other languages (Ghana Statistical Service Report Report, 2010).

Indeed, Akan is Ghana's most widely spoken and popular language, serving as both the *de facto* national language and a *lingua franca* (Sekyi-Baidoo 2020). According to Agyekum (2020), the term "Akan" refers to both the people and their language. The Ahantas, Aowins, Nzemas, and Sefwis are ethnographically distinct from the Akans. Akan is the native language of the Akans. They are Ghana's most populous ethnic group. According to the 2010 National Population and Housing Census, Akan is spoken natively by 47.5 percent of Ghana's population, with 44 percent of non-Akans using it as a first, second, or third language (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Akan is also spoken in Cote d'Ivoire. It is without a doubt the dominant language in Ghana's electronic media (radio and television).

Southern Ghana is dominated by the Akans. The indigenous language of nine of Ghana's sixteen regions is Akan. They are the Eastern, Oti, Western, Bono, Bono East, Western North, Ahafo, Ashanti, and Central regions. The Akan language group consists of thirteen dialects: Agona, Akyem, Akuapem, Akwamu, Asante, Assin, Bono, Buem, Denkyira, Fante, Kwawu, Twifo, and Wassa (Agyekum 2020). While Akan is studied from primary school to tertiary level education in Ghana, it lacks a common orthography. The main three Akan dialects, namely Asante, Akuapem, and Fante, have been reduced to writing and are taught as Akan in schools, depending on the school or region in which one resides. As a result, we have Asante Twi, Akuapem Twi, and Fante with distinct orthographies.

1.2 Spelling in Akan orthography

According to Kress (2005), spelling implies knowing how to write words correctly. Spelling is "the skill of writing words of a language according to the rules or customs of that language" (Sebba 2007; p. 10). This means that there are underlying standards in every language that regulates how words are written. When these laid-down rules are not followed, misspellings occur. Baker (1997) defines orthography as "a writing system specifically intended for a

particular language and which is either already in regular use among a considerable proportion of that language's native speakers, or which is or was proposed for such use" (p.93). Also, orthography, according to Sebba (2007), is viewed as a collection of rules for writing words in a language. As a result, orthography can be defined as a set of guidelines for writing words in a specific language. Accordingly, Akan (Asante Twi) has its own set of rules that must be adhered to in order to spell words correctly and communicate effectively. As a result, understanding orthography and having an awareness of the rules employed in one's language's writing system (Treiman & Cassar, 1996) are essential for individuals to navigate through the writing process. As earlier noted, the Asante Twi, Akuapem Twi, and Fante dialects of the Akan language have three unique orthographies. As Dolphyne (2006) observes, the scenario in the 1950s, when one language was written in three different orthographies, was viewed as undesirable. For that reason, in 1952, an Akan Orthography Committee was formed with the goal of developing a consistent orthography for the Akan language. The idea was to get to a point where Asante, Akuapem, and Fante speakers would be able to read it without difficulty. The Committee's recommendations were codified in a pamphlet named "Unified Akan Orthography" by the Bureau of Ghana Languages and the Language Centre of the University of Ghana in 1978. Unfortunately, the Unified Akan Orthography has not been used to date due to the perceivable discrepancies between the dialects of Akan (Abakah, 2005). As a result, while Asante, Akuapem, and Fante are dialects of the same language (Akan), they remain orthographically unique. In fact, the sort of orthography used is determined by the place one finds himself or herself. Because of this non-uniformity, the dataset (signages) used in this study was restricted to the Asante Twi script. We focused on inscriptions written in the Asante Twi script, so as to determine how they violate the underlying principles governing Asante Twi orthography.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ghana's Language Policy

Ghana, like other countries that do not have an explicit National Language Policy, tends to use the language policy for education as its national language policy (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Aboagye & Adade-Yeboah, 2019). Although English is the official language for government communications, various governments have made concerted efforts to support indigenous languages, to the point where it has created the Bureau of Ghana Languages to produce works in the Ghanaian languages.

The indigenous languages that have been given literacy status and are studied in the various Ghanaian schools are Asante, Akuapem, Fante, Ga, Adangme, Ewe, Nzema, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani and Dagaare. For now, Ghana's language policy for education mandates "that a familiar local language, i.e., the dominant Ghanaian language in the community where the school is located should be used as the medium of instruction for the first five years- from Kindergarten to Primary 3, while English is taught as a subject. However, from Upper Primary 4 upward, English is used as the medium of instruction for the rest of the child's education while one of the eleven indigenous languages that have attained literacy status namely, Akan (i.e., Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi), Dagaare, Dagbani, Ewe, Fante, Ga, Kasem, Gonja, Nzema and Dangme) is taught as a subject" (Owu-Ewie 2019; p.72).

Ghana's language policy for education has been inconsistent due to frequent amendments made by various governments (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Anyidoho, 2018). Some governments were of the view that proper education could take place if children were taught in the first language (L1), while others hold the view that proper education could only take place through the use of the English Language (L2) (Owu-Ewie, 2019). Mayo (2012) attributed the practice to past political history and the bond with the colonial masters. These ideological battles have immensely influenced the changes that have occurred over the periods (Owu-Ewie, 2003). The timelines of Ghana's language policies in history as chronicled by Owu-Ewie (2019: 57) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: History of Ghana's Language Policy

PERIOD	KG	1 st YEAR	2 nd Year	3 rd YEAR	4 th YEAR +
1925-1951	-	+	+	+	-
1951-1955	-	+	-	-	-
1956-1966	-	-	-	-	-
1967-1969	-	+	-	-	-
1970-1973		+	+	+	+
1974-2002	-	+	+	+	-
2002-2007	-	-	-	-	-
2007-Present	+	+	+	+	-

Adopted from Owu-Ewie (2019: 57)²

2.2 Studies on Linguistic Landscape

Research on the languages used in signages dates back to the 1970s, but it only began to receive much attention after Landry and Bourhis' (1997) seminal work, in which they coined the term "linguistic landscape," which has since drawn significant attention in the fields of sociolinguistics and other academic disciplines around the world. Since then, this area has attracted a lot of attention. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), Linguistic Landscape (LL) refers to "the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region." (p. 23). In more specific terms, "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry and Bourhis 1997, p 25).

Currently, the parameters of linguistic landscape have been expanded by research to include written linguistic artifacts on display such as text on vehicles (Sebba 2010), newspapers (Rosendal 2009), tourist brochures (Reershemius 2011), postcards (Jaworski 2010), clothing (Coupland 2010), and littering bins (Kallen & Dhonnacha 2010).

Landry and Bourhis (1997) identified linguistic landscape as performing two basic functions. One is informational function and the other is symbolic. These two functions can be said to be the benchmark for research in the linguistic landscape. Informational function means that the written words or the icons in the public space transmit important information to the general public i.e., to direct, to inform, to educate, to warn, or to express thoughts. Also, Zhao and Liu (2014) posit that linguistic landscape provides information about the identities of the people who live in or pass through it. The symbolic function also affords us the opportunity to determine how the use of a language can reflect the social status of languages. Besides, it greatly impacts language speakers because it can reflect the social status, cultural status, and social power of these language speakers. In the words of Shohamy and Gorter (2009: 3), it "offers a rich domain of "real life", authentic language in very dynamic and energetic uses". For Curtin, cited in Dagenais et al. (2009: 254), it "reflects peoples' local, regional, national and transnational identities and as site/object of identity construction." Agreeing with this observation, Ben-Rafael et. al (2006: 8) point out that LL encompasses:

the very scene — made of streets, corners, circuses, parks, buildings — where society's public life takes place. As such, this scene carries crucial socio-symbolic importance as it

² Key: + = Use of Ghanaian Language (L1) as a medium of instruction

- = Ghanaian Language not used as a medium of instruction

actually identifies — and thus serves as the emblem of societies, communities and regions.

Aside from the above functions, the linguistic landscape serves as a source for literacy acquisition. For instance, House and Rehbein (2004) pointed out that the concept of multilingualism goes beyond speaking more than one language; it also includes writing in several different ways in the sense of “multiliteracy.” This has resulted in the growing interest in the written signs displayed in public spaces. As Shohamy and Gorter (2009) point out, the linguistic landscape

touches various fields and attracts scholars from a variety of different and tangent disciplines: from linguistics to geography, education, sociology, politics, environmental studies, semiotics, communication, architecture, urban planning, literacy, applied linguists, and economics (p.1).

In a study that sought to look at brand names in linguistic landscape, Lerman et al. (2017) argue that spelling and semantic congruence can influence consumers’ perceptions, with particular reference to how a brand name is spelled. This, in their opinion, will influence whether or not consumers remember a product. According to Shohamy and Gorter (2009), this aspect of linguistics encapsulates literacy and investigating it in the cityscape is in the right direction. This is a clear indication that the linguistic landscape presents an opportunity for literacy acquisition.

Within the Ghanaian context too, the subject of linguistic landscape has received some attention. In what follows, we provide an overview of some of the influential works that have focused on the form and function of signages in the Ghanaian linguistic landscape.

Nyame and Tomekyin (2020) studied the linguistic landscape of two communities; Ajumako, an indigenous Fante-speaking community, and Winneba, a cosmopolitan city with Effutu or Awutu being the home language. The aim of their study was to find the competing languages in the linguistic landscape in these two communities. The study focused on vehicular signages in the various commercial lorry stations in both communities. The results showed that English and Fante were very frequent in both communities, and few others appeared infrequently.

Tuffour and Asamoah-Poku (2020) explored the linguistic landscape of Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The paper looks into the languages used in the writings on shopfronts on the streets, the mode of writing either with paint or stickers, the size of the writings, and the colours used in writing. Data for the study were both quantitatively and qualitatively collected. Primarily, the data was from the writings on taglines of shops that were all privately owned. The results showed that Asante Twi was highly represented as compared to the English language. The point of departure from Tuffour and Asamoah-Poku (2020)’s work is that the present study focuses on misspellings in vehicular signages.

Anderson et al. (2020) investigated the linguistic landscape of the central business district of Accra, the capital of Ghana. The study which employed both Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory and the Place Semiotic Theory sought to explore the signage displayed by shop owners to determine the language(s) that are dominant and how the use of such languages reflect the ethnolinguistic vitality of indigenous languages used in Accra. Their findings suggest the preponderance of the English language, as a powerful tool for inter-ethnic communication and national integration. This notwithstanding, Akan was given prominence in the bilingual signage where both English and Akan were present. The study postulates that the presence of Akan in the linguistic landscape highlights the important role of the language in Ghana.

Duah (2020) examined signages to determine whether or not misspellings in the English language in the linguistic landscape have potential effects on the spelling competence of Senior High School learners of the English language in the New Juaben Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Fifty-two students were purposively selected for the study. Her work showed

that the majority of the learners read the inscriptions on the signage however, some students still misspelt them by writing them as they were written on those signages. This implies that misspellings in the linguistic landscape can affect the spelling competence of students. She concluded that by extension, the majority of the learners' spellings could be improved if their linguistic landscape is used as a teaching resource for teaching spellings. This suggests that inscriptions on signages could have an influence on learners' competence which can eventually be translated into their academic writings.

It is therefore imperative to investigate the spelling errors in signages written in Asante Twi since inscriptions on signage can positively or negatively affect students spelling competence (Duah, 2020).

2.3 The Conventional Writing Pattern in Akan

We present an abridged version of the principles and rules governing the writing of Asante Twi as proposed in extant literature (cf. Christaller, nd, i-ix; Akrofi, 1937, 2-4; Dolphyne, 2006: 154-166).

- i. When a subject pronoun is directly followed by a verb, they should always be written together as a single word. Consider the example below.

1. 1 st person singular	<i>me</i> ^{SUBJ.}	Medi	'I eat.'
2 nd person singular	<i>wo</i> ^{SUBJ.}	Wodi	'You eat.'
3 rd person singular	<i>ɔno</i> ^{SUBJ.}	ɔdi	'S/he eats.'
	<i>eno</i> ^{SUBJ.}	ɛdi	'It eats.'
- ii. Object pronoun and the verb that follows it directly should always be written as separate words. Consider the example below.

2. Mede no kɔɛ.			
Me-de	no		kɔ-ɛɛ.
1SG-Aux	3SG.OBJ		go-PAST
'I went with him.'			
- iii. When two or more verbs are following each other in a serial verb construction, they should be written as separate words. Consider the example below.

3. Ka kyerɛ no.			
Ka kyerɛ	no.		
say show	3SG.OBJ		
'Tell him/her.'			
- iv. Whenever a possessed object begins with the letter 'a' and is preceded by a possessive pronoun or adjective, it is written together as a singular word. However, an apostrophe is introduced to replace the vowel in the possessive pronoun. E.g.,

4. Me	ataadeɛ		M'ataadeɛ	'My clothe.'
Wo	ani		W'ani.	'Your eye(s).'
- v. Pronouns and nouns are written separately except as stated in above in principle (iv).
- vi. All bound verbal inflectional (TAMP) and in Asante Twi are at all times attached to their respective bases. Under no circumstance should they be made to stand as lone words because they are bound morphemes. Consider the example below.

5. Future	bɛ-:	ɔbɛdi	‘S/he will eat.’
Perfect	a-:	Wadi	‘S/he will eat.’
Progressive	re-:	ɔredi	‘S/he is eating.’
Ingressive ‘going’	kɔ-	ɔkɔdi	‘S/he goes to eat.’
‘coming’	bɛ-	ɔbɛdi	‘She comes to eat.’

3. Methodology

3.1 Setting

Kumasi City is the second most important industrial base in Ghana (JICA, 2013). It is the administrative, commercial, industrial, and cultural capital of the Ashanti Region. The population has sharply increased due to rural-urban migration coupled with industrial growth and commercial activities. Thus, Kumasi has become the most populous city in Ghana with a total population of 1,730,249 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Kumasi Metropolis currently has nine sub-metropolitan district councils namely; Asokwa, Bantama, Kwadaso, Manhyia, Nhyiaso, Oforikrom, Suame, Subin, and Tafo. The location of Kumasi has contributed to its urbanization. It is the intersection point of the major roads linking Ouagadougou, the capital city of Burkina Faso to the coastal cities like Accra, Cape Coast, and Takoradi making Kumasi an attractive centre of business with one of the largest open markets in West Africa (JICA, 2013). From Ouagadougou, Trans-Sahelian Highway connects the major cities in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Cote D’Ivoire. Almost all the ethnic groups in Ghana reside in the Metropolis. The largest group in the Metropolis is the Asante (80.7%), a sub-group of the larger Akan ethnic group. Mole Dagbon (8.7%) and Ewe (3.6%) follow respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

3.2 Data Collection

The data collection process for the study spanned four months (June 2021-September 2021), after which mop-up follow-up interviews were conducted. The first phase of the data collection took place at lorry stations in two of the sub-metros, namely Subin and Kwadaso. Having obtained permission from the leaders of the three leading transport associations in each of the localities where data was gathered, monolingual (Asante-Twi) vehicular signages/inscriptions were photographed. These associations are the Progressive Transport Owners Association (PROTOA), VIP Bus Terminal, and The Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU). The study adopted Backhaus’ (2007) definition of sign which refers to “any piece of the written text within a spatially definable frame... including anything from the small handwritten sticker attached to a lamp-post to huge commercial billboards” (p. 66). Only sign texts in monolingual Asante Twi were captured; bilingual signs with texts in both Asante Twi and English or any other language(s) were excluded because code-switching may influence the phonology of the word which will eventually affect the spelling. The data for this research was acquired specifically through walking interviews, as well as sedentary interviews with vehicle drivers and signwriters. Walking interviews differ from sedentary interviews in that they can generate both quantitative data about the routes travelled and qualitative data about the conversational exchange. Walking interviews are among the mobile procedures employed in social science research that is becoming increasingly recognised for their capacity to generate more dynamic data and understanding of mobilities (Moles, 2008; Mokwena, 2021). In the walking interview with the drivers, the main question that elicited responses was (1) Which Akan dialect was used in your inscription on the vehicle? This was to get confirmations of the dialect used by the drivers whose vehicles were photographed to ensure that the inscriptions were indeed Asante Twi. This was done to prevent accidental ‘errors’ resulting from dialectal variations. The word *ye* ‘be good’ could be wrongly classified as a misspelt word in inscriptions like **Nyame ye** ‘God is good’, which is correct in Akuapem, but rendered in Asante Twi as **Nyame yɛ**, due to dialectal differences. Photos of signages that did not receive confirmation from the drivers and the selected signwriters were discarded. As a result, our original dataset of 197 photos was reduced to 111. We employed the principle of one-vehicle one sign; hence, each vehicle was

photographed once. Where the same inscription was found on different vehicles, it was treated as one token. As a result of the application of this principle, more than two-hundred (200) inscriptions were also excluded. For instance, inscriptions **Aseda ben?** and **Nyame tease** (translated as *What manner of praise* and *God is alive*, respectively) alone had over 50 occurrences each on different vehicles, but only one token was used in each case for the analysis. This further reduced the number of errors counted. However, if the errors identified in each token differed, they were treated as different signs since the errors are not the same.³

Five (5) signwriters from across the metropolis were purposefully sampled and interviewed to ascertain their perspective of the causes of the misspellings, since the signages are products of both drivers and/or sign artists, and also because they are the designers of most of the inscriptions if not all. We also interviewed signwriters to better understand the typology of misspellings. The duration for each session was approximately 60 minutes and the interview was conducted in Asante Twi. Sedentary interviews were held

Given that the focus of the study is on misspellings, only inscriptions that contained misspelt words were used for analysis. Those devoid of errors were excluded from the decoding, categorization, and analysis. The study considers spelling errors or misspellings as a deviation from the accepted standard of spelling a word in Asante Twi. We did

3.3 Data Overview

The errors identified in the Asante Twi inscriptions were categorized and analyzed. Figure 1 details the frequencies and percentages of the types of errors identified through our data collection.

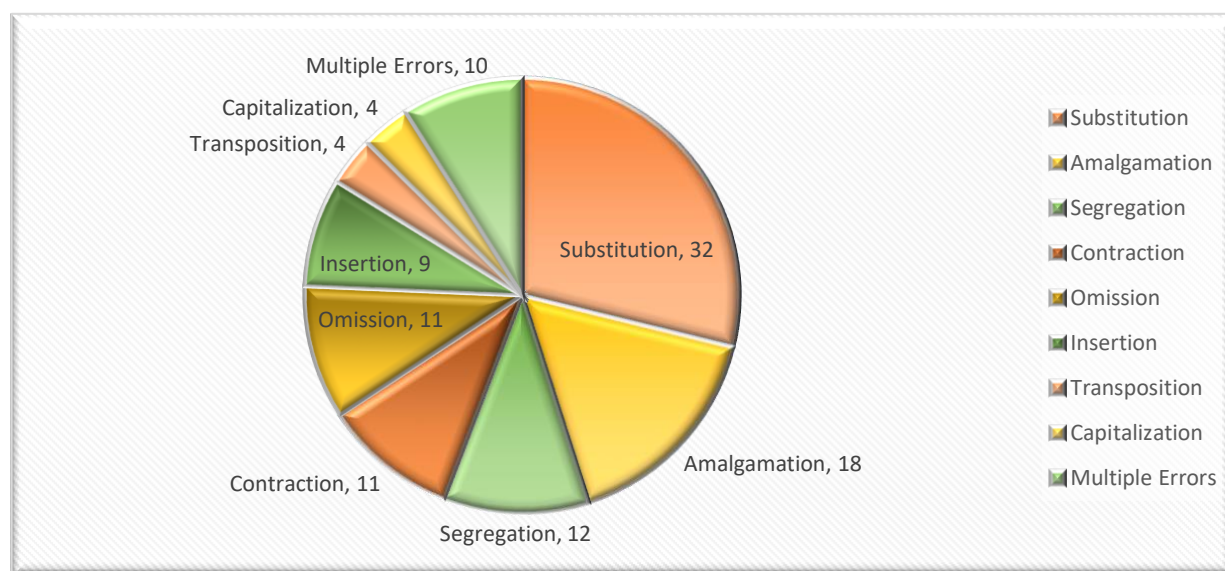


Figure 1. Frequencies of various spelling errors

³ Although studies like Bruye'l-Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2009) and Lavender (2020) excluded 'mobile' signs, such as flyers and posters from their work, Sebba (2010) disagrees with this position. He argues that the inclusion of moving vehicles (e.g., buses) and unfixed stickers, pamphlets, banknotes, etc. in the study of the linguistic landscape complement the fixed ones. We support this position because we believe that both fixed and unfixed signages complement one another to provide the total makeup of the linguistic landscape of a locality. We used vehicle signages because they constitute a rich source of Asante Twi-based monolingual inscriptions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Typology of Asante Twi Misspellings

This section discusses the categorization of the spelling errors as were identified, following Cook (2001)'s typology of spelling errors. A detailed analysis is given to each of them. The causes of these errors as revealed by the scriptwriters are also discussed.

4.1.1 Substitution Error

Substitution refers to replacing one letter with another or a word for another like in homophones (Al-Jayousi, 2011). This type of error constitutes 28.8% (n=32) of the entire data. Some examples found in the signages include the following:

6. (a) Substitution Errors involving 'e' for 'ɛ'

Error	Correct form	Gloss
a. <i>Ɔkyeso</i>	<i>Ɔkyɛso</i>	'Benevolent one'
b. <i>Fa asem kye</i>	<i>Fa asem kyɛ</i>	'Forgive'
c. <i>Nipa nse hwee</i>	<i>Nipa nɛ hwee</i>	'Man is nothing'
d. <i>Ohia ye musuo</i>	<i>Ohia ye mmusuo</i>	'Poverty is a curse'
e. <i>Ensoso so</i>	<i>Ensosɔ so</i>	'Don't entertain it'
f. <i>Se manhyia</i>	<i>Sɛ manhyia</i>	'If I had not met.'
g. <i>Nyame beye</i>	<i>Nyame bɛyɛ</i>	'God will do it.'
h. <i>Awaresem</i>	<i>Awareɛm</i>	'marital issue'
i. <i>Ɛna pa ye</i>	<i>Ɛna pa yɛ</i>	'Good mother'
j. <i>Sua papa ye</i>	<i>Sua papa yɛ</i>	'Learn to do good'
k. <i>Nyamekye</i>	<i>Nyamekyɛ</i>	'Name of person (God-given)'
l. <i>Atamfo nye Nyame</i>	<i>Atamfo nyɛ Nyame</i>	'Enemies are not God'
m. <i>Aseda ben?</i>	<i>Aseda bɛn?</i>	'How shall I say thanks'
n. <i>Eye adom</i>	<i>Ɛyɛ adom</i>	'It's by grace'
o. <i>Enye Awurade a</i>	<i>Ɛnyɛ Awurade a</i>	'But for the Lord'
p. <i>Ewo so me</i>	<i>Ɛwoso me</i>	'It shakes me'
q. <i>Onyame aye bi</i>	<i>Onyame ayɛ bi</i>	'God has done much'
r. <i>Ɔsenkafoɔ</i>	<i>Ɔsenkafoɔ</i>	'preacher'

It is obvious from the above data that the letter 'ɛ' is substituted with 'e' in all cases. When asked why they do that one of them remarked:

Yenni font a yede twere saa letes no. Hmm! Enti yetaa de 'e' si 'ɛ' anan mu, na yede 'o' nso agyina ho ama 'ɔ'.

Translation: "We don't have fonts that have those characters. Uhhh! So, we normally replace 'ɛ' with 'e' and at times 'ɔ' with 'o'. And that is normal"

Clearly, one could say that this kind of substitution error is avoidable because the sign writers could have made further efforts to design the appropriate fonts required to write some of the Asante Twi alphabets. Others also indicated that they were simply copying from others, without knowing that they were copying from the 'wrong' source. A typical example of this is *Ɔsenkafoɔ* 'preacher' where the letter which some writers claim they do not have is correctly used in this case but its counterpart ɔ is substituted with the letter 'e'. Again, in some of the vehicular signages, 'o' was substituted for the letter 'ɔ' as presented in the uses below:

6 (b) Substitution Errors involving ‘o’ for ‘ɔ.’

Error	Correct form	Gloss
<i>Abodeɛ</i>	<i>Abɔdeɛ</i>	‘Creature’
<i>Nyansapo</i>	<i>Nyansapɔ</i>	‘Wisdom knot’
<i>Wofa pa bi ye</i>	<i>Wɔfa pa bi ye</i>	‘It’s great to have a good uncle’
<i>Ohene</i>	<i>ɔhene</i>	‘King’
<i>Kohye po</i>	<i>Kɔhye po</i>	‘Go and burn the sea’
<i>Oyere pa</i>	<i>ɔyere pa</i>	‘Good wife’
<i>Mabo wo din</i>	<i>Mabɔ wo din?</i>	‘Have I mentioned your name?’
<i>Metwere obotan</i>	<i>Metwere ɔbotan</i>	‘I’m leaning on a rock’
<i>Osenkafoɔ</i>	<i>ɔsenkafoɔ</i>	‘the preacher’
<i>Fa bone kye</i>	<i>Fa bɔne kye</i>	‘Forgive’
<i>Obetumi aye</i>	<i>ɔbetumi aye</i>	‘He [God] can do it’
<i>Ohemmaa</i>	<i>ɔhemmaa</i>	‘Queen’
<i>Yonkodo</i>	<i>Yɔnkodo</i>	‘friendly love’

Also, in one inscription, ‘ɛ’ is substituted for ‘a’ as in **ɛtiefɔɔ** instead of **atiefɔɔ** meaning ‘audience’. Some of the sign artists interviewed attributed the substitution of e for ɛ to the similarity between the two sounds. According to them, some of the letters in the words are in some cases auditorily/perceptually difficult to distinguish. This is understandable, given the perceptual closeness between ɛ and the [æ] [+ATR] high vowel represented by **a** in writing (Dolphyne, 2006). Furthermore, ‘u’ was substituted for ‘o’ in the inscription **Nyame nsa wum** ‘God has a hand in it’. The correct inscription should have been **Nyame nsa wom**. Again, the letter ‘e’ was replaced with ‘i’ in the inscription **pim** instead of **pem** ‘to hit’. Some sign artists attributed the substitution error to the fact that these letters in question are phonetically close in terms of pronunciation, hence confusing. As earlier indicated, other artists also cited their familiarity with such (erroneous) renditions as the reason for spelling errors such as ‘O’ in **Osenkafoɔ** ‘the preacher’ ‘e’ in ***kye** ‘forgive’ (6b) above. It is observable that the ɛ is accurately written/spelt in **Osenkafoɔ** and **asɛm** but not in **kye** ‘forgive’.



Figure 2. Substitution errors

4.1.2 Amalgamation Error

Amalgamation error occurs when sign artists combine words or morphemes that are supposed to be written separately. By the orthographic convention of Asante Twi, possessive pronouns and nouns are to be written separately. These errors violate one of the Akan orthography rules by

involving instances where possessive pronouns and nouns are written together as a single unit. This type of error represents 16.2% (n=18) of the data. Some examples identified include:

7 (a) Amalgamation Errors involving (personal) pronouns.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
<i>Wone mekamafoɔ</i>	<i>Wone me Kamafoɔ</i>	‘You are my Intercessor.’
<i>Menkwa ahoɔden</i>	<i>Me nkwa ahoɔden.</i>	‘You are the strength of my life.’
<i>Me Dimafo tease</i>	<i>Me Dimafo te ase</i>	‘My Redeemer lives.’
<i>Fa wodeɛ</i>	<i>Fa wo deɛ</i>	‘Take your thing/yours’

We found errors like *W’adeɛ ne wodeɛ* ‘What belongs to you belongs to you’. This is erroneous because the possessive pronoun *wo* ‘you’ and inanimate possessed pronoun *deɛ* ‘yours’ should have been written as separate entities as *wo deɛ*. The pronoun *wo* in this instance is showing possession though, but *deɛ* does not begin with the letter ‘a’, as can be seen in rule (iv) above.

Akan orthography rules also require that words such as *ho* ‘self’ and *so* ‘on’ are written separately as independent words and not to be attached to any word in writing (Agyekum, 2010); except they form part of a word in the case of *mfatoho* ‘example’, *nhwesoɔ* ‘example/template’ etc. Nevertheless, this principle of Akan orthography is sometimes violated in vehicular signages. Some of the examples identified are shown below.

7 (b) Amalgamation Errors involving *ho* ‘self’ and *so* ‘on’.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
Dwene woho	Dwene wo ho	‘Think of yourself’
Brɛ woho ase	Brɛ wo ho ase	‘Humble yourself’
Dɔ wo yɔnko sɛ woho	Dɔ wo yɔnko sɛ wo ho	‘Love your neighbor as yourself’
Kso bɔ mpaɛɛ	Kɔ so bɔ mpaɛɛ.	‘Keep on praying’

As in the case of serial verb constructions, each verb is written as a separate word. This means that when two or more verbs are following each other in a serial verb construction, they should be written as independent words e.g., *Ka kyerɛ no*. ‘Tell her/him’. The principle is applicable to an inherent complement verb such as *te ase*. Nonetheless, it was discovered that some words in the vehicular signages were wrongly written together, contrary to the Asante Twi orthographic rules.

7 (c) Amalgamation Errors in Serial Verb Constructions.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
Kekako	Keka kɔ	‘Be gossiping and go scot-free’
Pɛhu	Pɛ hu	‘Seek to find’

(d) Inherent Complement Verb constructions

Error	Correct form	Gloss
<i>Obi dɔ obi a obi <u>nteaseɛ</u></i>	<i>Obi dɔ obi a obi nte aseɛ</i>	‘No one knows the reason for loving someone’





Figure 3. Amalgamation errors

7 (d) Other amalgamation errors.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
Dabi	Da bi	'a day may come'
Onyame nkaabi	Nyame nkaa bi	'God has not said that'

Finally, we also discovered that the noun/adverb **da** 'day' and the determiner **bi** 'some' were wrongly written together as **Dabi** instead of **Da bi** 'a certain day'. Also, the verb phrase **nkaa** 'has not said that' and the determiner **bi** 'some' were misspelt as **nkaabi** instead of **nkaa bi** 'Has not said that'. Through the interview, it was revealed that most of the writers are not aware of the orthographic conventions of the Asante Twi.

4.1.3 Segregation Error

Segregation is the type of error that occurs as a result of writing one word as two or more separate words. According to Akrofi (1937) and Christaller (nd), a pronoun functioning as a subject and the verb that comes after it are written together as a single word. However, evidence from the data below reveals that these errors violate this orthographic principle in Akan. This type of misspellings accounted for 10.8% (n=12) of all the errors identified in the vehicular inscriptions.

8 (a) Segregation Errors involving Subject Pronouns and Verbs

Error	Correct form	Gloss
Wo bēdi sēn?	Wobēdi sēn?	'How much will you eat/spend?'
Wo yē ɔhene	Woyē ɔhene	'You are a king.'
Wo nni panin a due	Wonni panin a due	'Woe to you if you don't have an elder'
Wo beyē onipa dēn?	Wobeyē onipa dēn?	'What will you do to a man?'
Wo sere kwa	Wosere kwa	'You laugh for nothing.'
Me hwē Awurade	Mehwē Awurade	'I look unto the Lord.'

As indicated above, pronouns that function as subjects and the verb that follows them are written together as one word.

Another noticeable error was the separation of the subject pronoun **Yɛ-** and the verbal prefix **ɛ-/bɛ-** from its root verbs, which by convention is always written together with the accompanying verb as a single word. Contrary to this rule, we observed that in some cases (as in 8b), the subject pronouns, verbal prefixes and verbs were written together as the Asante Orthography requires. However, the verb **tumi**, **tɔ** and **di** of the words are separated from the

subject pronoun **Yɛ-** and verbal prefixes **ɛ-/bɛ-** as exemplified in the data below.

8 (b) Segregation Errors involving verbal prefixes

Error	Correct Spelling	Gloss
<i>ɛbɛ tumi ato wo</i>	<i>ɛbetumi ato wo</i>	'It can happen to you.'
<i>ɛbɛ tɔ da</i>	<i>ɛbetɔ da</i>	'A time will come.'
<i>Yɛ bɛ di</i>	<i>Yɛbedi</i>	'We shall eat.'

Apart from phonological words (clauses) involving verbs and their prefixes, segregation errors were also observed in some compounds and simple words, as the following examples indicate; **apaawa** 'cassette' is written as two words **apaa wa** and **daabi da** 'never' is written as **daa bi da**. For instance, the **apaawa** is a single word and must be written as such was rendered wrongly, while **ngosra** 'anointing', on the other hand, is a compound that is also written together by convention. A section of the writers admitted that they did not know that these constructions were supposed to have been written together. For instance, one of them remarked that: "**Metwerɛ no sɛdɛɛ yɛbɔ din no ara. Mamfa m'adwene akɔ so saa.**" translated as 'I wrote it as them I pronounced them. It didn't occur to pay attention to them.' Clearly, these errors are caused by the author's ignorance of the orthographical convention. These errors render the inscriptions, which are meant to be communicative, both ambiguous and anomalous.



Figure 4 showing the error of segregation

4.1.4 Contraction errors

The apostrophe is used to write contractions, which are shorter versions of words that have one or more letters omitted. As stated in rule (iv) above, contraction in Asante Twi is grounded on a convention. But from the data in (9), we observe a total violation and misapplication of this rule in the Asante orthography. Contraction errors constitute 9.9% (n=11) of the dataset.

9 (a) Contraction Errors resulting from omitting the Apostrophe

Error	Correct form	Gloss
Wano	w'ano	'your mouth'
Wanim	w'anim	'your face'
Mahɔɔden	m'ahɔɔden	'my strength'
Magyapadeɛ	m'agyapadeɛ	'my inheritance'
Wasɛm	w'asɛm	'your case'

Wani	w'ani	'your eye'
Matamfo	m'atamfo	'my enemies'
Wadwene	w'adwene	'your opinion'
wa'sɛm	w'asɛm	'your case'

The misspelling in this category occurred because sign writers are ignorant of this rule in the Akan orthography. One of the sign writers commented, "*Menim se yede apɔstrɔfi to edinnsiananmu anim de kyere se adeɛ no wɔ oniiko no deɛ, nanso mmara a ɛda ho no deɛ mennim.*" translated 'I know we use apostrophe to show something belongs to someone but I do not know the rules associated with its use.' This came to light as the sign writers we interviewed revealed that they are aware of the fact that apostrophe is used to show possession in Asante Twi but they were actually not aware of the rules governing its use. Hence, in some instances, this rule was misapplied resulting in the misspelling of some words in the inscriptions on the vehicles. For instance, the rule was overgeneralized to cover verbs which is a clear case of misapplication. A few examples sampled are:

9 (b) Contraction Errors resulting from Overgeneralization

Error	Correct form	Gloss
W'ayɛ	Wayɛ	'S/he has done'
M'ayɛ obi dea.	Mayɛ obi dea.	'I now belong to someone'



Figure 5 Showing an error of contraction

4.1.5 Omission

Omission refers to deleting one or more letters in a word. Errors of omission constitute 9.9% (n=11) of the entire data.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
10 (a) han	hann	'light'
musuo	mmusuo	'curse'
nipa	nnipa	'people'
dwen	dwene	'think'

For example, *hann* 'light' is wrongly spelt as *han*, omitting the letter 'n', *mmusuo* 'taboo' is misspelt by omitting letter 'm' as in *musuo* while *nnipa* is also misspelt as *nipa* omitting the letter 'n'. The omission normally occurs both word-initially and word finally. Another example is

dwene ‘think’, wrongly spelt by omitting letter ‘e’ as in *dwen*. It can be observed that the omissions mostly occur after nasal consonants.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
10 (b) trim	tirim	‘in mind’
fri	firi	‘from’
hyɛbrɛ	hyɛberɛ	‘destiny’

It can be observed from 10 (b) that *tirim* ‘mind’ is misspelt as *trim* via the omitting letter ‘i’, *firi* ‘from’ is misspelt as *fri* by omitting letter ‘i’, *hyɛberɛ* ‘destiny’ is misspelt as *hyɛbrɛ* by omitting letter ‘e’. Here, we see the omission occurring at the medial position involving vowels preceding the letter ‘r’.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
10 (c) awieɛ	awieeɛ	‘end’
asomdwɛɛ	asomdwoeɛ	‘peace’

As shown in 10 (c), *awieeɛ* ‘end’ is wrongly spelt as ‘*awieɛ*’, omitting the letter ‘e’, and *asomdwoeɛ* ‘peace’ is misspelt as *asomdwɛɛ*, omitting letter ‘o’.

Error	Correct form	Gloss
10 (d) obiaa	obiara	‘everybody’
Yɛɛba	Yɛreba	‘We are coming.’

As can be observed in example 10 (d), *obiara* ‘everybody’ is misspelt by omitting ‘r’ as in ‘*obiaa*’. Again, as indicated earlier in Akan orthography, a word can be a whole phrase, clause or sentence. For instance, the word *Yɛreba* ‘We are playing’ is misspelt as *Yɛɛba* by omitting ‘r’. In the interview, the sign artists admitted that it was spelt that way because that is how it is pronounced. One of them remarked: *Woanka a, anka mennim sɛ ‘r’ bi hyɛ ho mpo ɛfiri sɛ yɛka no [yɛɛba]* meaning ‘if you had not pointed it out, I never knew the letter ‘r’ is supposed to be there because we pronounce it as *[yɛɛba]*’. This implies the sign writers in this instance are ‘ignorant’ about the fact that the ‘r’ is written in Asante Twi orthography.



Figure 6. Showing an Error of Omission

The sources of these errors could be attributed to the fact that sign writers do not know the actual spelling of the words. This came to light when we drew the attention of the sign artists to this kind of misspelling during our interview session. For instance, one of the sign artists remarked, *Na mennim sɛ mmara nwonworann bata Twi atwerɛ ho saa* translated ‘I never knew Twi orthography was that complex.’ We also observed from the data that most of the errors in this category came about because words were written based on writers’ knowledge of the relationship

between graphemes and phonemes.

4.1.6 Insertion

Insertion refers to adding an extra letter to a word. This kind of error made up 8.1% (n=9) of the total data. The first kind of spelling error in this category is the insertion of vowel at initial position of words. This form of insertion was the insertion of ‘ε’ in **Enso** for **nso** ‘too’, **Ensuro** for **Nsuro** ‘Don’t be afraid’, **enka** for **nka** ‘Don’t say’, **engosra** for **ngosra** ‘anointing’, and **ensoso** for **nsoso** ‘Don’t aid’. These words were written without any given linguistic context. However, a critical look at the data reveals that the insertions of ‘ε’ always occurs at the word-initial position before the letter ‘n’. A sign writer responding to the insertion of ‘ε’ at the word-initial position had this to say “*Saa ara na yeka no nti menhunu dee nti a εε se yeretwere a, yeyi firi hε. Wei dee, gye se wokyerε me.*” meaning ‘That is how it is pronounced. So, I don’t see why it should be excluded in writing. You have to explain this to me.’ The implication is that there are some of the errors in this category that came about as the result of the insertion of vowels at the final position of the words.



Figure 7. Insertion Errors

Examples are the insertion of ‘i’ in **kōnkōnsanii** for **nkōnkōnsani** ‘liar’ and **nyansanii** for **nyansani** ‘Wise person’. During the interview some expressed the view that the sources of such errors are as a result of the mismatch between spoken and written language mostly by Asante speakers. The writers indicated that to the extent that these words are pronounced in a certain, they felt that had to be written in the same way they are pronounced. Asante Twi appears to exhibit an interesting type of insertion error, where the inserted sounds typically occur in some specific (predictable) environments. We observed that insertion of letter ‘i’ mostly occurs at the word-initial position before the letter ‘n’ while at the word-final position, the insertions of letter ‘i’ occur after letter ‘i’. In few instances too, the nasal consonant ‘n’ was inserted, as in **Nnyε** for **Nyε** ‘Don’t’ and **Nni** for **Ni** ‘Mother’. Some of the sign artists disclosed that they genuinely did not know that they had misspelt some of the words. They wrote what they thought was right. Clearly, these sign artists are not familiar with Asante Twi orthographic rules and conventions. This finding confirms Albalawi’s (2016) view that poor knowledge of spelling conventions is the reason behind insertion errors.

4.1.7 Transposition

Transposition error, also known as disordering, refers to the swapping of two adjacent letters. Although transposition errors were one of the least as compared to capitalization errors occurring in the data representing 3.6% (n=4), they cannot be overlooked if we want to reduce misspellings to the barest minimum. Errors of transposition included **fei** for **fie** ‘house’, **Piesei** for **Piesie** ‘firstborn/Personal name’, **yie** for **yei** ‘this’, and **whε** for **hwε** ‘look’. Most of the spelling errors in this category took the form of disordering of the phonemes/graphemes ‘ie’. The economic factor too cannot be ignored, given that even when their attention is drawn to the misspelling,

they gloss over it due to its cost implications. *Etɔ da a eye a na letes no sese. Ebi wɔ hɔ a, obi betwe w'adwene asi soɔ no, na woaprinte awie. Wonim se printing no boɔ ye den. Etumi nso a ye anifasoɔ*, translated 'At times the letters appear similar. Before somebody draws your attention to it, you might have printed them already. And you know printing is expensive. Other times, it is an oversight.'



Figure 8. Transposition errors

4.1.8 Multiple errors

These errors were a combination of two or more of the errors identified. Elliot and Johnson (2003) describe these errors as the most seeing type which affects the physical appearance of words. It constitutes 9.0% (n=10) of the data. Some examples from the vehicular signages are:

10. *Asomdwie* exemplifies both substitution and omission errors.

- i. *Asomdw(i)(o)e(ɛ) = asomdwoee* 'peace'
- ii. *Bebiara* involves both insertion and omission of letters *b(a)bir(a)a = baabiara* 'everywhere'
- iii. *Nkoa* involves amalgamation error, capitalization error and omission of letters *nkoa(a)= nko ara* 'only'
- iv. *Ketwa* consists of substitution and omission *ket(e)(w)a. = ketewa* 'small'
- v. *Adwin* consists of substitution and omission *adw(e)n(e). = adwene* 'mind/wisdom'
- vi. *Bedide* consists of substitution, omission and amalgamation *b(ɛ)di(i)d(ɛ)= bedii de* 'came to enjoy'
- vii. *Ma akomkyem* consists of segregation and contraction *M(')akokyem = M'akokyem* 'my shield'

The word *asomdwoee* 'peace' was misspelled as *asomdwie*. There is a combination of both substitution and omission errors. The letter 'o' was substituted with 'i', while 'ɛ' was omitted at the word's final position as observed in example (10) above. Again, the word *baabiara* 'everywhere' was misspelt as *bebiara*. It contains substitution and omission errors. Thus, the letter 'ɛ' has been used in place of letter 'a', while there is an omission of a second letter 'a' preceding the second letter 'b'. On the other hand, the word 'only' written in Asante as *nko ara* was misspelt as *Nkoa*. It consists of amalgamation, capitalization and omission errors. It was

written together, while there are omissions of letters 'r' and 'a' with the letter *n* capitalized. The word *ketewa* 'small' was also misspelt as *ketoa*. It involves substitution and omission errors. Thus, letter 'e' was substituted with the letter 'o', while there is the omission of letter 'w'. Another word *adwene* 'mind' was misspelt as *adwin*. It contains both substitution and omission errors. The letter 'e' was substituted with 'i', while there is the omission of letter 'e' at the word's final position. *Bedii de* 'came to enjoy' was wrongly spelt as *Bedide*. It consists of substitution, omission and amalgamation errors. In the phrase *Bedii*, the letter 'e' that comes after 'b' was replaced with the letter 'e' in the misspelled word, while in the word *de* 'joy', the letter 'e' after 'd' was replaced with 'e'. Also, instead being separated from the verbal base, *de* 'joy' was erroneously attached to the verb base *bedii*. Also, the letter 'i' in *bedii* is omitted. In some cases, some of the letters in the words are perceptually difficult to distinguish. This is anticipated because of the perceptual closeness between ϵ and the [+ATR] high vowel 'i' (Dolphyne, 2006). Here, the sign writers indicated that the inscriptions were written in the manner in which they pronounce them. They cited errors such as *Bedide*, *ketoa*, *adwin* as typical examples. This is seen as a major cause of omission, insertion and substitution.

As indicated earlier, the Akan spelling rules require that whenever a possessed object starts with the letter 'a' and follows a first-person possessive pronoun, it is written together as a singular word. e.g., *Me ataadeε* *M'ataadeε* 'My clothes.' However, under this category of spelling errors, we discovered that examples such as *m'akokyem* 'my shield' were written as *ma akokyem*, which violates the Asante Twi orthographic principles. By convention, the 'e' in the first-person possessive pronoun *me* 'my' is to be omitted and replaced by an apostrophe. Afterward, it is attached to the noun that comes after it to encode possession in Akan (Dolphyne, 2006).

Other cases of this type of misspelling are clear cases of anglicisation. Consider spelling errors like *peh* (instead of *pε* 'only') which consists of the substitution of 'e' and insertion of 'h'. Some sign artists revealed that they know that there is the letter 'ε' but because it is usually written in English with 'eh', it will be easy for readers to read. For instance, the Asante personal name *Prempe* is written as 'Prempeh' in English. That same idea is transferred to the word *pε* 'only'. Again, *eye de* 'it is sweet' and *eye fe* 'it is beautiful' are represented by omitting a whole syllable *yε* in both *ede* and *efe* respectively. The error of amalgamation also emerges here. One could say that this error is attributable to a lack of knowledge of the Asante Twi writing rules.

Figure 9 Showing Multiple Errors



4.1.9 Capitalization

These types of errors were just 3.6% (n=4) of the data. All proper nouns are to begin with capital letters. However, in some instances, proper nouns which were mainly names referring to God were written with lower case letters. A few examples are:

11.	Error	Correct form	Gloss
	gyefo ‘redeemer’	Gyefo	‘Redeemer’
	onyankopɔn ‘god’	Onyankopɔn	‘God’
	nyame ‘god’	Nyame	‘God’
	awurade ‘lord’	Awurade	‘Lord’



Figure 8. Capitalization error

As shown in 11, all capitalization errors identified in this category were associated with God. In our quest to understand the causes of these errors, it came to light that they were mostly used for aesthetic purposes. For instance, one of them commented that “*Wode fɔnt a ɛte saa yɛ a ɛma no yɛ fɛ. Wei deɛ, ɛnyɛ nim na mennim. Onyankopɔn din deɛ, ɛwɔ sɛ anka ɛbere biara ɛsɛ sɛ kapetaa lete na ɛhyɛ asee.*” This is translated as “*If you use such fonts, they make the writings appear beautiful and catchy. It is not that I don’t know. For God’s name, it always begins with capital letters.*” Here, we note that the sign artists are sometimes aware of the principles governing capitalization but they intentionally flouted them for aesthetic purposes.

5. Conclusion

In this study we investigated spelling errors in monolingual Asante Twi on vehicular signages. The aim of the study was to identify and classify the types of spelling errors in the linguistic landscape in the Kumasi Metropolis, and to ascertain the causes of these misspellings. Following Cook’s (2001) typology, the spelling errors identified include segregation errors, omission errors, substitution errors, insertion errors, amalgamation errors, contraction errors, capitalization errors, and multiple errors. The study found among other things, that substitution error constitutes the most prevalent spelling error in the Kumasi cityscape, with transposition and capitalisation errors being the least prevalent. Regarding the causes or motivation of spelling errors in vehicular signages, the study established that the sign artists lack basic knowledge of the relationship between Asante Twi phonemes and graphemes, and lack of appropriate fonts for typing the Asante Twi constituted the main underpinning factors. We recommend that policymakers in education review the current language policy of Ghana, particularly regarding the teaching and learning of Ghanaian languages. In particular, we recommend that the study of the Ghanaian languages as a compulsory subject at the basic school level be extended to the senior high school so as to improve proficiency in Asante Twi.

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