Recent studies on Linguistic Landscaping (LL) have enabled an analysis of public bilingualism that was hitherto under-researched and under-theorized (cf. Landry & Bourhis 1997, Shahomy & Gorter 2009, Shahomy et al. 2010, Jaworsky & Thurlow 2010, Coupland 2012). This paper, a part of a large-scale study of LL in Indian urban spaces, focuses on displays of English bilingualism in urban public spaces to argue that at least in the domain of public bilingualism, English, an expensive economic resource in the local Indian economy of signs representing global culture, modernity, and associated with symbolic and economic capital in local linguistic markets interacts with local languages, e.g., Hindi, in two sociolinguistically insightful ways:

(i) English dominates the urban public spaces: the semiotic landscaping of English-Hindi bilingualism is invariably such that English occupies the core of the space, visually salient and foregrounded, whereas Hindi occupies a place in the periphery – backgrounded, offering important insights into the entextualization of competing linguistic ideologies of the perceived power dynamic between the two languages;

(ii) Bilingual English-Hindi signage is often designed to produce a hybridity of form and function: indigenizing a global product or modernizing a local product. The inter-animation of the global-local, we argue, allows for a theorized understanding of the sociolinguistics of globalization, especially in urban spaces.

The data comes from a corpus of photographic images of 5,649 signs (Shahomy & Gorter 2009, Coupland 2012), taken in the summer of 2013 in New Delhi, India. For this presentation, we offer data taken from commercial districts of two upper-middle class communities (208 images) to analyze how in the agentive act of production, the producers of the signage mobilize the symbolic values and social meanings associated with use of English and Hindi.

Our analysis of data confirms the results in (i) and (ii) above.

Keywords: linguistic landscapes, multilingualism, globalization.