

CHARACTERISTIC OF LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE: A CASE STUDY OF HIGH EDUCATION SCHOOL IN TANJUNGPINANG

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Abstract

Linguistic Landscape is a part of sociolinguistics that discusses how language is used and displayed in public places, and how it can indicate cultural identity, power relations, and communication purposes. This study aims to identify the linguistic characteristics found on boards and signs in the higher school environment in Tanjungpinang, and Tanjungpinang is known to have a strong Malay culture. The focus of this research includes language and phrase structure, layout and communication function of the linguistic signs found. This research uses qualitative description method with data collection techniques in the form of observation, documentation and note-taking. Documentation is done by taking photos as the main tool, then further analyzed based on language version (monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual). The results showed that most of the advertisements were bilingual, namely with Indonesian - English and on the intitution signage it showed that most were bilingual by using Indonesian = Malay. This study concludes that the linguistic landscape in the high school environment in Tanjungpinang reflects the existence of multilingualism and identity representation in the educational public space at the high school in Tanjungpinang.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, High Education School,
Tanjungpinang

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape is a field of study in sociolinguistics that examines language use in public spaces, especially through written signs such as signage, road signs, advertisements, and banners. The concept was first introduced by Landry and Bourhis in 1997. According to (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009) Linguistic Landscape is the attention to language in the environment, words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces, that is the center of attention in this rapidly growing area. In all such studies, publicly displayed language is understood to be more than unidirectional communication to passers-by. It is understood to be constrained by available languages that are subject to legal and social restrictions;

it is understood to make claims and demonstrate agency or power; it is understood to be constructed (Burdick, n.d.).

Language today no longer serves only as a tool for direct communication, but also as a marker of identity, power, and ideology. One of the main frameworks for researching these aspects is the linguistic landscape (LL), which refers to the engagement of language use in public spaces such as signage, billboards, banners, and official writings. Language use on signs can either indicate the dominant culture or be a way for minority groups to assert their presence and identity (Benu et al., 2025)

Indonesia, known for its rich linguistic diversity, offers a unique context for LL studies, especially in urban commercial areas and tourist spots. For example, (Wulandari, n.d.) found in Braga Street, Bandung, that "English is dominantly used to represent modernity and attract foreign attention, despite the presence of local languages". Similarly, (Zahara & Wijana, 2022) noted that in Padang, English serves more symbolic functions associated with prestige and modernity rather than purely communicative purposes.

Lack of awareness of the use of good and correct language in campus public spaces is a common problem that is still often encountered. This can be seen in various information media such as notice boards, banners, and posters used by the academic community. Many information boards and posters in the campus environment contain language errors, such as inappropriate spelling, inappropriate use of two languages, inappropriate use of words, and unclear sentence structure. The study of the linguistic landscape is one effective way to see the language situation of a particular area, region or urban (Coluzzi & Kitade, 2015). In addition, linguistic landscape focuses on the representations of language(s) in public space. It can be understood that the linguistic landscape discussed all writings in a public area such as a banner and the name of a certain store (Gaho et al., 2022). These markers provide a symbolic and traceable information function. However, LL focuses on the texts displayed in public spaces so that it does not show the true nature of language.

One of the areas that is very thick with Malay customs in Indonesia is Riau, a province located on the east coast of Central Sumatra. One of the cities that still has a strong Malay culture is the city of Tanjungpinang. Tanjungpinang is the name of a city on Bintan Island. In various colonial sources such as research by (Swastiwi et al., 2024) Tanjungpinang is also known as Riouw, Riau, Rijau, Rhio, and Rio. George Winston Earl in his travel notes (1823) once mentioned the name of a Dutch-made city, Rhio (Tanjungpinang) located on Bintan Island. The Malay ethnic group in Tanjungpinang is very dominant because Tanjungpinang City is also known for its very thick Malay customs, known for its clothes or food and most importantly its

language, which attracts more tourists and residents. The community mostly uses the Malay Archipelago language in informal communication, while Indonesian is used in formal entities. Foreign languages, such as English, Arabic, and Mandarin, are used in limited domains. In addition, Tanjungpinang was once the capital of the Johor-Riau-Lingga Sultanate, which strengthened its identity as a center of Malay culture. This cultural heritage is still visible today, making Tanjungpinang one of the cities with a strong Malay cultural influence in Indonesia.

Based on the research results of Dhea Tisane Ardhan et al in the journal entitled "Linguistic Landscape Mapping as Identity Representation in Higher Education Institution" they studied the mapping of linguistic landscapes in the Jakarta State Polytechnic campus area classified according to language variations, namely monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual linguistic landscapes. It can be concluded that there are only 2 (two) of the 3 (three) types of linguistic landscapes found in the Jakarta State Polytechnic campus environment, namely monolingual and bilingual linguistic landscapes. The monolingual linguistic landscape in the campus environment is formed from 2 (two) language variations, namely 1) Indonesian and 2) English. Furthermore, the bilingual linguistic landscape in the campus environment is formed from 3 (three) language variations, namely 1) Indonesian and English, 2) Indonesian and Arabic, and 3) Mandarin and English. In addition, the function of information contained in the linguistic landscape at the Jakarta State Polytechnic is as a place marker, appeal, announcement on the wall magazine, directions, congratulations, slogans, vision and mission statements, and business advertisements. In short, the function of using monolingual and bilingual languages in the linguistic landscape found at the Jakarta State Polytechnic can be considered to represent the identity of this institution.

This study focuses on identifying the linguistic characteristics found on boards or signs in the higher school environment in Tanjungpinang. The linguistic characteristics include the type of language used, the structure of sentences and phrases attached, the layout of the writing as well as the message conveyed in the boards and signs. This research emphasizes how linguistic elements are used on the boards and signs in the academic or high school environment, as well as how the existence of the boards and signs in showing language identity, language policy, and communication purposes in the higher school environment. By systematically observing and analyzing these aspects, this research also aims to provide an understanding of the Linguistic Landscape that exists in the higher school environment in Tanjungpinang. This research also has the potential to become a foundation for understanding

multilingualism in the delivery of information in high school public spaces.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research method conducted to reveal the use of linguistic landscape in the public sphere. According to (Rahis Pasaribu & Salmiah, 2024), descriptive qualitative research is a type of research that uses data in the form of words and explains the results without being altered or manipulated. This research combines descriptive and qualitative approaches to provide a clear picture of the relationship between variables related to the problem being studied. This method was chosen because this study describes a linguistic phenomenon, especially the linguistic landscape that exists in high schools in Tanjungpinang City. In collecting data, this study uses two kinds of techniques, namely documentation and observation. Data was collected by means of documentation, because in Linguistic Landscape study, documentation or visual image capture is the main step before conducting research. The observation aims to observe social phenomena around language signs in the surveyed public spaces (Yusuf et al., 2022). This technique is aimed at finding supporting data as additional research material to explain the factors that led to the creation of language signs in the surveyed high education skills. (Eliawati et al., 2024) the process of gathering data involves a number of processes, such as attempting to restrict the scope of the study, gathering data by observation, organized and unorganized interviews, documentation, visual aids, and attempts to create recording or recording methods. Furthermore, documentation was carried out by taking photos using a mobile phone camera. Then recording and grouping the language variations found. The analysis technique is carried out by collecting data, namely images obtained from various sources of linguistic landscape, as supported by (Gorter, 2006), who states that the linguistic landscape method involves photographing written texts in public spaces to analyze language use and visibility in a particular area, then data is reduced by sorting out images that have good quality in terms of clarity of images and writing. Furthermore, the data was analysed by categorizing the data using categories (Monolingualism, Multilingualism, Bilingualism). Then the function of the text was analysed using Laundry & Bourhis (1997) theory to reveal the function of linguistic landscape data found in several Higher education school in Tanjungpinang. Through this analysis, it can reveal several social phenomena such as cultural relations, language policy, ethnic identity, and language imperialism. In addition, this method allows researchers to understand how language visibility influences perceptions of identity, use of symbols, use of colors, and the use of minority languages such

monolingualism, multilingualism, and bilingualism in educational environments especially linguistic landscapes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This research discusses language signs found in public spaces or also known as linguistic landscapes found in Tanjungpinang, Riau Islands. The data found are 15 data in the form of information boards, advertisements, unames of high education school as presented in Table 1. This discussion refers to the results found in the location of the research object. Furthermore, it is analysed based on the form of language variation, category and function.

Table 1. Number of Linguistic Landscape Language Variations of Higher Education

Language Type	Language Variation	Type	Total
Advertising	Bahasa	Monolingual	1
	Bahasa – English	Bilingual	5
	Bahasa – English – Arab	Multilingual	1
	Arab		
Institution			
Signage	Bahasa	Monolingual	3
	Bahasa - Malay	Bilingual	4
	Bahasa - Arab	Bilingual	1

Based on the classification of data on language variation forming linguistic landscapes at Tanjungpinang High School in table 1, it can be seen that there are 3 (three) formers of language variation, which are monolingual, with the number of linguistic landscapes in the type of banner landscape found as much as 1 (one). Bilingual as many as 5 (five), multilingual as much as 1 (one). Furthermore, in the linguistic landscape of the type of institutional signage, 3 (three) forms of language variation are also found, consisting of monolingual as many as 3 (three), bilingual as many as 4 (four), and multilingual as many as 1 (one).

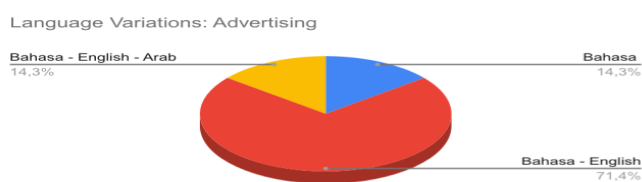


Figure 1: Language Variations Advertising

Figure 1 displays the distribution of data on language variation in advertising High education school which includes three languages. Namely Bahasa, English, and Arabic, based on the data obtained there are Monolingual signs with the use of Bahasa (14.3%), then there are Multilingual signs with the use of Bahasa-English-Arabic (14.3%), and finally there are Bilingual signs with the use of Bahasa and English with a percentage of (71.4%) in the picture above it can be concluded that the use of bilingual signs dominates in advertising at high education schools in Tanjungpinang.

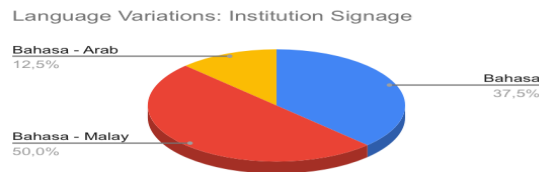


Figure 2: Language Variations Institution Signs

Figure 2 shows data on language variation in institution signs in higher schools in Tanjungpinang that there are 3 language variations, namely Indonesian - Arabic, Indonesian, and Indonesian - Malay. The data obtained from analyzing the institution signs in Tanjungpinang, on Indonesian - Arabic as much as 12.5% and Indonesian - Malay as much as 50.0%, the 2 variations are bilingual and on Indonesian there are 37.5% and it is monolingual. so on the institution signs in Tanjungpinang it dominates the use of Indonesian - Malay on institution signs.

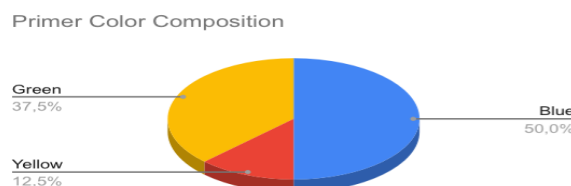


Figure 3: Primer Color Composition

Figure 3 provides the percentage of variation data in the use of primary colours for each Higher Education Institution. According to (Al-Shraideh & El-Sharif, 2019), colour is a sign that mediates humans' internal experience of the external physical and symbolic world. There are 3 (three) primary colours from the data analysis, including blue, green and yellow. Blue is the dominating colour with the highest percentage at (50.0%), half of the total number of Colleges in Tanjungpinang. Green is the colour with the second largest percentage after blue, at (37.5%). Finally, yellow is the colour

with the lowest percentage of only (12.5%) of the total number of Colleges in Tanjungpinang.

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DISCUSSION

Linguistic landscape on Monolingual signs at university in Tanjungpinang



Data 1: Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) Pembangunan Tanjungpinang, Riau Island.



Data 2: Politeknik Kesehatan Tanjungpinang, Riau Island.



Data 3: STTI INDONESIA

Source: data processed

Based on the Data presented above, the monolingual linguistic landscape in Indonesian at universities located in Tanjungpinang City is realized in the form of phrases. These phrases are generally used for naming educational institutions, particularly universities. According to (Ardhan et al., 2025) The importance of mapping the linguistic landscape in educational institutions aims to determine the regulation of language use in educational institutions and can also represent the ideology or identity of the educational institution itself.

In Data 1, the language variation used is monolingual Indonesian, with the naming of the campus of the College of Economic Development, the phrase has an informational function because it provides information about its superior majors or study programs related to economics and development. besides that the campus is dominated by blue in each building which shows the distinctive identity of the Riau archipelago region which is known for its marine wealth and maritime nuances.

In Data 2, the language variation used is monolingual Indonesian, with the naming of the Tanjungpinang Health Polytechnic campus, the phrase has an informational function because it provides information about its superior majors or study programmes related to health.

In Data 3, the language variation used is monolingual Indonesian, naming the campus of Sekolah Tinggi Teknologi Indonesia (STTI) Tanjungpinang, the phrase has an informational function because it provides information about its superior majors or study programmes related to Technology.



Data 4: Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru TA. 2025/2026

Source: data processed

In Data 4 there is a billboard that has a monolingual language variation of Indonesian because there is no text in other languages besides Indonesian. The billboard contains information related to the implementation of new student admissions, this data has an informational function related to the registration schedule, registration fees, and single tuition fees.

Linguistic landscape on Bilingual signs at university in Tanjungpinang

In addition to monolingual language use, there is also the use of bilingual language variation at the University in Tanjungpinang city. The variety of bilingual language signs found consists of the use of Indonesian-Malay, Indonesian-Arabic, and Indonesian-English.



Data 5: Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru STTI (Sekolah tinggi teknologi Indonesia)

Data 5 represents bilingual practices in the linguistic landscape with the use of two languages, Indonesian and English. Indonesian is used predominantly to convey key information such as "Program Studi", "Persyaratan", "Beasiswa", and "Kontak", indicating an instrumental and informative function as the official language of educational institutions in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the English phrase "REGISTER NOW!" is symbolically present in the bottom left corner without being informative, but giving a modern impression to prospective applicants.



Data 6: Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru STIE Pembangunan Tanjungpinang

Data 7: Festival Prestasi STIE Pembangunan Tanjungpinang

Figure 9 displays a billboard promoting student admissions for the upcoming academic year at STIE Pembangunan Tanjungpinang. The linguistic landscape of the billboard demonstrates a bilingual pattern, combining Indonesian as the dominant language with English lexical items strategically placed to emphasize modernity and professionalism. English phrases such as

"Your Future Starts Here," "Full AC in Every Room," "Projector in Every Room," "Internet Hotspot," "Online Registration," and "SCAN THIS FOR MORE INFO" are used alongside the Indonesian text. These elements not only inform prospective students but also serve to construct a symbolic identity of the institution as globally oriented. This aligns with (Ferrarotti, 2017) view that, "English fulfills its function both as a lingua franca and as a symbol of prestige" (p. 65), which explains its frequent presence in public signage even in non-English speaking regions.

Similarly, Figure 10 presents a billboard advertising festival event organized for students, in which Indonesian remains the primary language, but English terms such as "Essay Competition," "E-Sport (Mobile Legends)," "Lomba Business Plan," and "FUN RUN KATEGORI MAHASISWA & UMUM" are prominently featured. The use of English in this context highlights the influence of global youth culture and the growing tendency to associate English with innovation and entertainment. This is supported by (Gorter, n.d.-a), who asserts that "multilingualism turns out to be an important dimension of the linguistic landscape everywhere, as well as the reflection of the process of globalisation, visible through the use of English" (p. 192). Thus, the inclusion of English on such billboards not only facilitates comprehension for diverse audiences but also enhances the perceived prestige and appeal of the events.

In terms of visuals, there are several colours underlying the billboards, such as blue, gold, red. Blue implies that STIE Pembangunan is a high school that stands in a maritime area, because the location itself is in the city of Tanjungpinang, which is the capital of the Riau Islands province which is a maritime area. Gold hints at a luxurious and festive impression to every competition activity offered. red itself becomes a colour that gives the impression to emphasize the enthusiasm and energy in the activities to be carried out.



Data 8: Pendaftaran Mahasiswa Baru STIKES Hang Tuah

Data 9: Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru STISIPOL Raja Haji

Source: data processed

Data 8 presents a promotional banner from STIKES Hang Tuah Tanjungpinang for the 2025/2026 academic year. The linguistic

features of the banner reveal a bilingual sign, where Indonesian is predominantly used for conveying core information such as the institution's name, study programs, and registration procedures. Meanwhile, English appears in a limited but symbolically significant capacity, such as in the phrase "Scan Me". The integration of English serves not as the primary communicative medium, but rather as a symbolic marker of modernity and global orientation. According to (Cenoz, 2017), the use of English in public signage often carries connotational functions—representing prestige, sophistication, and international relevance, rather than facilitating actual communication.

Data 9 displays a banner from STISIPOL Raja Haji Tanjungpinang, which also announces student enrollment. Indonesian is exclusively used for the main content, while English is selectively applied, again in the phrase "Scan Me" to guide viewers toward a digital interaction. This minimal yet strategic presence of English suggests a semiotic strategy aimed at signaling technological literacy and modern engagement, particularly appealing to digitally-oriented youth. As discussed by in their study of linguistic landscape (Mubarok et al., 2024) apes in Lembang, Indonesia, such practices reflect a top-down and bottom-up interplay, where institutional signs adopt global elements like English to increase social appeal and communicative efficiency without displacing the national language.



Data 10: Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji

Data 10 displayed the name "Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji" represents the exclusive use of Indonesian in naming higher education institutions in Tanjungpinang. Linguistically this phrase shows bilingualism as it uses both Indonesian and Malay, this name contains three main elements: "Universitas" as a formal and standardised term for higher education institutions, "Maritim" which emphasises the marine specialisation in accordance with the geographical character of the Riau Islands this is shown by the dominant blue colouring of the buildings at the university, and "Raja Ali Haji", who is an important figure in Malay history and literature. The choice of name reflects respect for local cultural heritage while strengthening the identity of the Malay tribe in the region.



Data 11: STIKES Hang Tuah Tanjungpinang

Data 11 that although the signage of “STIKES Hang Tuah Tanjungpinang” appears monolingual in its use of the Indonesian language, the inclusion of the name “Hang Tuah” a prominent figure rooted in classical Malay cultural heritage reflects a form of symbolic bilingualism within the linguistic landscape. This incorporation blends national language with local cultural identity, thus serving not only a communicative function but also an ideological and identity-related one. According to (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009), symbolic elements in public language display serve as semiotic resources that convey deeper sociocultural meanings beyond mere linguistic communication. Therefore, the use of “Hang Tuah” can be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural bilingualism, representing a linguistic fusion between the Indonesian national identity and the historical-linguistic traditions of the Malay world particularly relevant in the sociolinguistic context of the Riau Archipelago and its surrounding communities.



Data 12: Yayasan Raja Haji Fisabilillah Stisipol Raja Haji

Data 12 displayed “Yayasan Raja Haji Fisabilillah - Stisipol Raja Haji Tanjungpinang”, which combines formal Indonesian language elements, Malay terms, and national higher education acronyms. The words “Yayasan Raja Haji Fisabilillah” refer to an important figure in Malay history, as well as showcasing the cultural and spiritual values that the institution promotes. Meanwhile, “Stisipol” is an acronym for Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, a typical institutional term in Indonesia's higher education system that denotes academic identity. The use of Indonesian dominates the signage, but there are visual elements such as symbols and logos that have additional semantic value that is universal. In the context of the linguistic landscape, this naming reflects local, national, and religious cultural identities, and shows that although there is no visible use of foreign languages, bilingual values are still implicitly represented through the symbolism and historical background of the name.

Therefore, this signboard functions not only as a physical marker, but also as an ideological representation and linguistic identity of educational institutions in Tanjungpinang.



Data 13: STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman

Data 13 shows one of the higher education institutions in Tanjungpinang called "Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Sultan Abdurrahman", which incorporates elements of the Indonesian language, and uses one of the names of the Malay cultural figure "Sultan Abdurrahman". Sultan Abdurrahman himself is an important figure of Malay culture, the last sultan of the Riau-Lingga sultanate, which is an important part of Malay history and culture in the Riau Islands. The use of the name "Sultan Abdurrahman", also symbolises the position of STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman as a high school that upholds religious principles in the Malay community area. Green symbolises religion in Islam which has been the religion of the majority of Malay people in the Riau Islands since time immemorial.



Data 14: Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Miftahul Ulum Tanjungpinang

Data 14 displayed the official signage of Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Miftahul Ulum Tanjungpinang, a higher education institution located in the Riau Islands, Indonesia. The name combines Indonesian and Arabic linguistic elements, reflecting both the national identity and the Islamic foundation of the institution. "Institut Agama Islam" identifies the academic focus on Islamic studies, while "Miftahul Ulum" — meaning "the key to knowledge" in Arabic — highlights the institution's mission in advancing education through Islamic values. The addition of "Tanjungpinang" marks its geographic identity. While the name could be translated into English as *Islamic Institute Miftahul Ulum of Tanjungpinang*, it is commonly retained in its original form in bilingual contexts to preserve authenticity and cultural nuance. The acronym "IAI" also supports institutional branding and facilitates recognition in both academic and public discourse.

Linguistic landscape on Multilingual signs at university in Tanjungpinang



Data 15: Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Miftahul Ulum

Data 15, it shows a billboard from the Institut Agama Islam (IAI) Miftahul Ulum Tanjungpinang, which announces student registration. there are three different languages used in the banner. Indonesian is exclusively used for the main content in the sentence "Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru", and Arabic is used for the name of the college itself "Mihtahul Umum" which means the key to knowledge, and there is also English applied in duplicate. Based on the Billboard, we can see that the dominant color used is green. The use of green itself is very identical to the Islamic religion, such as the name of the college, namely IAI (Institut Agama Islam) which is a school with a majority of strengthening Islamic religious education. And then, in the phrase "Call center" to guide the reader towards further registration. This minimal but strategic presence of English indicates a semiotic strategy aimed at signaling technological literacy and modern engagement, particularly appealing to digitally oriented youth. The integration of English does not function as a primary medium of communication, but rather as a symbolic marker of modernity and global orientation. According to Cenoz and Gorter (2008), the use of English in public signage often has the connotative function of representing prestige, sophistication, and international relevance, rather than facilitating actual communication.

This study aims to explore such dynamics within the bilingual linguistic landscape of Tanjungpinang universities, where Melayu language holds local significance alongside the national Bahasa Indonesia. This study also aimed to examine not only the displayed language and its hierarchies but also the manner in which the language is presented.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

The concept of linguistic landscape, first introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997), refers to the visual representation of language in public spaces, primarily through signage, banners, billboards, and other forms of written display. This concept frames language not merely as a tool for communication but as a marker of power, identity, and sociocultural ideology. Within this framework, the present study aimed to identify and analyze the linguistic characteristics observed on signs and boards in higher education institutions in Tanjungpinang.

The findings reveal a rich diversity of language use in academic public spaces, including monolingual (Indonesian), bilingual (Indonesian–English, Indonesian–Malay, Indonesian–Arabic), and multilingual signage. These languages serve not only communicative functions—such as conveying announcements, directions, and institutional messages—but also symbolic functions related to institutional identity, local cultural values, and global engagement. The integration of English, for instance, symbolizes modernity and technological literacy, while the presence of Malay reflects local rootedness and cultural continuity.

The study underscores that linguistic landscapes in higher education are not arbitrary; they reflect deeper processes of language policy, identity construction, and ideological positioning within the public sphere. This is further confirmed by Blackwood (Rezaei, 2017), who highlight how the deliberate use of languages on signs and displays in educational environments may both question and promote dominant linguistic and cultural beliefs. However, this study is limited in scope, focusing solely on visual data without incorporating the perspectives of language users such as students, lecturers, or campus visitors. Future research is encouraged to address this limitation by employing interviews or surveys to explore how linguistic signs are interpreted and experienced. Further studies across other institutions or non-academic public spaces are also recommended to gain a more holistic understanding of Indonesia's complex linguistic landscape.

SUGGESTION

The study underscores that linguistic landscapes in higher education are not arbitrary; they reflect deeper processes of language policy, identity construction, and ideological positioning within the public sphere. However, this study is limited in scope, focusing solely on visual data without incorporating the perspectives of language users such as students, lecturers, or campus visitors. Future research is encouraged to address this limitation by

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