

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN TOURISM SPACES IN PUNCAK

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Abstract

This study investigates the linguistic landscape in tourism spaces in Puncak, a popular tourist destination in West Java, Indonesia. It explores the diversity, distribution, and functions of languages used, as well as the reasons why this phenomenon occurred in this specific area, where people host tourists. Using a qualitative approach, this research examines language use in signs, advertisements, and public notices, revealing the socio-cultural and economic dynamics that shape language choices. Findings highlight the prominence of three languages: Indonesian, Arabic, and English, reflecting local identity, the influence of Middle Eastern tourists, and global tourism trends. The study also investigates how multilingualism, cultural identity, and the commodification of languages interact in tourism. By examining the symbolic and informational roles of language in public spaces, this research contributes to an understanding of sociolinguistic diversity in multicultural tourism settings. It offers insights for the development of inclusive language policies, especially in tourism spaces.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, language commodification, tourism setting

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji lanskap linguistik di kawasan Puncak, salah satu destinasi wisata populer di Jawa Barat, Indonesia. Kajian ini menelusuri keragaman, distribusi, dan fungsi bahasa yang digunakan, serta faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan fenomena tersebut muncul. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan bahasa pada papan tanda, iklan, dan informasi publik untuk mengungkap dinamika sosial, budaya, dan ekonomi yang memengaruhi pilihan bahasa di wilayah di mana penduduk lokal hidup berdampingan dengan para wisatawan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan dominasi tiga bahasa utama, yaitu bahasa Indonesia, bahasa Arab, dan bahasa Inggris, yang mencerminkan identitas lokal, pengaruh wisatawan, serta tren pariwisata global. Penelitian ini juga menelaah keterkaitan antara multilingualisme, identitas budaya, dan komodifikasi bahasa yang didorong oleh industri pariwisata. Dengan mengkaji peran simbolik dan informatif bahasa di ruang publik, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman mengenai keragaman sosiolinguistik dalam konteks pariwisata multikultural, serta menawarkan wawasan bagi pengembangan kebijakan bahasa yang inklusif di area wisata secara spesifik.

Kata Kunci: *Lanskap linguistik, komodifikasi bahasa, kawasan wisata*

A. INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism is a common phenomenon in tourism settings, especially at destinations that attract international visitors. Some studies show that multilingualism appears in public areas where tourists arrive, such as airports (Widiyanto 2018, 71–85; Woo and Nora Riget 2022, 404–23), rail station (Lock 2003, 195–214; Tan 2014, 451; Vesya and Datang 2022, 232–43), museum (Widiyanto 2019, 211–17). It is also present in cities and surroundings (Wulansari 2020; Danuwijaya and Abdullah 2021), as well as in other tourist destinations.

Most Indonesian destinations with international status also face a similar situation, in which the preferred language in tourism spaces is Indonesian (as suggested by language policy makers) (Widiyanto 2018) and English (Barrs 2015), as the most popular language used in tourism globally (Takhtarova et al. 2015). While local and minority languages are present, it is important to note a shift in predominance. This research

highlights the prevalence of three dominant languages: Indonesian, Arabic, and English in tourism spaces, which serve as a symbol of hospitality and destination brand awareness.

The Tourism Ministry, through the data center and information system, stated that foreign tourist arrivals in 2024 totalled 13.9 million, up from 11.68 million in 2023. Among them, Malaysian, Australian, and Chinese tourists are the majority. However, this number is lower than in 2019, when COVID-19 had not yet occurred. In 2019, the number of tourists reached 16 million, with Middle Eastern tourists reaching 264,000 visits (Tim Penyusun Pusat Data dan Sistem Informasi 2024; Gitiyarko 2022). Accordingly, the data also show a significant upward trend in international tourist visits over the three years from 2021 to 2023, both in Bogor and Cianjur regencies, where Puncak is located. In Bogor Regency, the number of foreign tourists increased from an unrecorded figure in 2021 to 31,603 in 2022, and then nearly doubled to 61,481 in 2023. Similarly, Cianjur Regency experienced remarkable growth, with arrivals rising from 2,436 in 2021 to 11,996 in 2022 and reaching 44,261 in 2023 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Jawa Barat 2024). As a result, over the last three years, more than 100,000 foreigners have visited this tourist destination.

Linguistic landscape (LL) is a field of linguistic research that examines language use in public spaces (Spolsky 2014). It is particularly linked to the relationship between language use and context and background, not only as a sign system and a means of mobility, but also as a reflection of the social interaction of its native speakers (Landry and Bourhis 1997).

The term was officially introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997), to distinguish research on language in the public settings from general linguistic research (Spolsky 2009a). Nonetheless, it was honestly used by other scholars long before to investigate street names written in multiple languages (Spolsky and Cooper 1991). In fact, linguistic landscape is a part of sociolinguistics and language policy (Spolsky 2009b).

The linguistic landscape has also been used to review language use in tourism areas. In West Java, relevant studies on linguistic landscape were conducted on two specific tourism areas: Tangkuban Parahu (Abdullah and Wulung 2021) and Bandung (Danuwijaya and Abdullah

2021). Those studies highlighted multilingualism and the distribution of Indonesian, English, and local languages across tourism zones to support accessibility and cultural education. Meanwhile, another study examines how bilingual and multilingual concepts have been implemented in tourism advertisements, such as banners and brochures. Both imply the critical function of language diversity in enhancing tourists' experience. Since it's hard to find previous studies that have examined the linguistic landscape (LL) of the Puncak region and include Arabic, the present research aims to investigate the LL of this area.

Certain areas, such as airports, were also studied. For example, the Tamil language was not supported by Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA)'s authority, even though some airport users are from this local language (Woo and Nora Riget 2022). In contrast, a museum in Surakarta has encouraged the use of local language, serving both local hosts and domestic tourists (Widiyanto 2019). These examples illustrate that language use in public areas varies according to the authorities' priorities, not only tourists' needs (Yan and Lee 2014).

It is perceived that this phenomenon emerged as a result of multilingualism, supported by multiple ethnic groups within a community (Landry and Bourhis 1997), language management and policy (Spolsky 2009a) or other factors. Building on these perspectives, this research, grounded in language studies, aims to investigate language signs used in a public area that have not only specific functions but also symbolic meanings (Spolsky 2014). In this situation, its symbolic function may indicate the number, type, and language composition in a certain community (Landry and Bourhis 1997).

The concept of linguistic landscape is relatively new in linguistics, as it explores how language is used in public areas. While this topic has gained attention, there has been little research on locations visited by tourists, except for museums (Widiyanto, 2020), airports (Widiyanto 2018), tourist attractions (Widiyanto 2019) and modes of transportation, such as trains (Wahyunianto 2019). Despite the importance of linguistic landscapes in Indonesia, many researchers still overlook them, especially within tourism research.

Tourists require clear language signs in both public and tourist areas. Morrison (2013) argued that signs serve both directive and interpretive functions. Language signs in tourist areas are crucial for helping tourists navigate. Some tourists report becoming lost due to unclear or absent signage (Morrison 2013), which can negatively influence their perception of a destination (Yan and Lee 2014). As foreigners, tourists often feel disoriented when searching for specific attractions in unfamiliar places. In these situations, language signs can guide tourists to their intended locations. Alternatively, language signs may help them understand a site by providing descriptive texts. These signs help tourists find the attractions they want to visit.

The presence or absence of language signs in these facilities, along with the arrangement of language pairs, is crucial to examine from a linguistic perspective. Specially the arrangement of language pairs can signal the status of each language in use (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). Moreover, identifying the actors in the linguistic landscape (LL) can reveal the relationship between these actors and the LL they create (Widiyanto 2018). Additionally, the presence or absence of language signs reveals the degree to which LL actors engage with the LL (Danuwijaya and Abdullah 2021). More broadly, it reflects micro-linguistic dynamics, language code usage, language practices, and psychological, socio-psychological, and sociological factors (Sahril et al. 2019).

This research applies a qualitative approach. Data were gathered through direct site observation, then semi-structured interviews. Primary data includes photographs of signs in tourism and public spaces (Fakhiroh and Rohmah 2018). Examples include traffic signs, billboards, place names, street signs, street names, and building names (Mulyawan and Ratna Erawawati 2019). Multiple representations, such as names, transliteration, and romanization, are also included (Jamoussi and Roche 2017). Interviews were conducted with stakeholders in tourism spaces, including Le Eminence management and the local government in Cianjur. Over 250 photographs of linguistic signs were collected from diverse locations, including small towns and villages along the Puncak highway and small roads. Equipment included a prosumer camera and a smartphone. The data cover linguistic signs at accommodations, such as

hotels and villas. Small-scale businesses, such as restaurants and travel agencies, were also included. Additionally, significant tourist destinations, like the Cibodas Botanical Garden, and shopping centers, such as Brasco, were analyzed. Street signage along Cipanas Street, Hanjawar Street, the Puncak Highway, and in Tugu Village, Cisarua, Bogor, was documented. This ensured a comprehensive representation of the region's linguistic landscape. Some interviews were also conducted with hotel management to understand how the linguistic landscape is built in tourism contexts. All data were compiled into a computer folder and classified by language and appearance in a list. The data were analyzed using content analysis, including language names, form analysis, font size, positional configuration, functional analysis, and socio-cultural background. The analysis used the linguistic landscape theory framework, involving language identification, functional analysis, and socio-cultural interpretation. Data focused on four categories: place and street names, warning signs, advertisements, and instructions in tourism and public facilities. Grammatical analysis was also included for some signs.

B. MULTILINGUALISM IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN PUNCAK

The linguistic landscape is the study of language use in public signs, reflecting the region's social, cultural, and economic dynamics. In Puncak, linguistic features reveal complex interactions among locals and foreigners. Arabic targets the Middle Eastern market, English symbolizes modernity and globalization, and Indonesian remains the dominant language, maintaining local identity. As a prominent tourist destination, Puncak exhibits cultural diversity, visible in signage, advertisements, and visual elements. This analysis identifies that tourism fosters multilingual signage, with language choices reflecting economic priorities, social interactions, and the prominence of Indonesian in preserving local identity.

1. Language Distribution




Language distribution is an attractive attribute among linguists (Scott 2012), evident from both perspectives: regulators and users (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). Here, the regulators' role is evident, as the most commonly

used language is Indonesian, in line with the regulation that prefers Indonesian in public (public law no. 24 of 2009).

Three dominant languages used as LL in Puncak's tourism areas are Indonesian, Arabic, and English. Those languages differ in their status among users: Indonesian has a high status as the national language of Indonesia, whilst Arabic and English are foreign languages. Particularly in Puncak, both are used to accommodate foreigners' needs, particularly tourists. Furthermore, this research shows an interesting fact that, unlike other tourist destinations in Indonesia, Arabic in Puncak is more dominant than English. Many tourist facilities, such as restaurants and shopping areas, use Arabic to write their business names and logos. In Hanjawar Street, most restaurants have both Arabic and English names. Some of their services are also written in Arabic. Along the Puncak highway, many restaurants and money changers also listed their names, services, and facilities in Arabic. Other facilities, like clinics and salons on the Hanjawar Street, were treated the same way regarding their names and facilities. While Indonesian is found in most areas of LL, Arabic is prominently featured in advertisements and place names targeting Middle Eastern tourists, and English is also used to attract a broader international audience.

In fact, the LL in foreign languages like English is used for tourists. In Athens, Greek (the national language) competes with English in LL's used for shops (Nikolaou 2017). Furthermore, Arabic usage without romanization, which can be problematic when inconsistent (Jamoussi and Roche 2017), provides strong evidence that Arabic is readable by the target users (native Arabic speakers) and locals, even though some restaurants use Arabic transcriptions in their menu lists. Therefore, the use of Arabic or other languages in signage is not only a matter of owners' preference, as suggested (DeKeyser 1991), but is also supported by the target consumers. The detailed description is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
The Distribution of Languages in the Public Spaces in Puncak

No	Language	Number	%	Position	Places	Samples
1	Indonesian	133	53.2	Dominant	At most public spaces	
2	Arabic	52	20.8	Minority, in some occasions like restaurants dominant	In the specific areas (especially in tourism and business area)	
3	English	60	24	Minority, but dominant in hotel	In specific areas (especially in tourism and business area)	
4	Others	5	0.2	Most minority	Out of the discussion	

2. Positional Configuration




The positional configuration of LL has been discussed by scholars (Tan 2014; Nikolaou 2017; Widiyanto 2019). Two states of positional configuration are: top-down or bottom-up (Shohamy and Gorter 2008; Fakhroh and Rohmah 2018, 102). LL enjoys the top position, for example, to indicate privilege and acknowledgement. Basically, in certain situations, such as the status of Greek as a national language (Nikolaou 2017) or Chinese (Tan 2014), this position indicates the language's privileged or acknowledged status.

The Indonesian language faces a similar situation in Puncak, always appearing at the top of the configuration, indicating its domination and hegemony. The creator of LL plays a significant role in this arrangement. In Puncak, these two states often appear in the majority of LL, especially when languages are used bilingually alongside Indonesian. However, when a language is used alone, all information is written in that language, so there is no hegemonic positioning.

In tourist areas, English is mostly at the top, alone or with other languages. English is the most popular language among international tourists in Macau (Yan and Lee 2014). This is also true in Puncak, where English is most commonly used in tourist spots.

Below are the positional configurations of three languages: Indonesian, English, and Arabic, which are found in Puncak.

Table 2
Positional Configuration of the LL in Touristic Spaces in Puncak

No	Language	Position	Places	Examples
1	Indonesian	Usually at the top	In most public spaces, Indonesian is the dominant language, including in tourist areas.	
2	Arabic	When used independently, Arabic is positioned at the top centre with big fonts	In the specific areas (especially in tourism and business areas)	
3	English	When used independently, English is positioned at the top with big fonts	In specific areas (especially tourism and business area)	

-
- 5 Indonesian – English
Indonesian – Arabic
- When a language is used bilingually with Indonesian, Indonesian is always at the top.
- Mostly in tourist areas.



Furthermore, Arabic and English are two of the most commonly used languages in bilingual settings. It seems both are intended to attract international tourists. Therefore, sometimes the Arabic used is larger and at the top of the LL, while in other cases, the situation may be the opposite. However, it is also found that Arabic and English are used at the same position side by side.

Figure 1

Arabic and English are used equally in the same position



3. Linguistic Landscape's Function

The function of LL used for tourism and public spaces is also highlighted in this research. As discussed earlier, LL's have various functions. In the literature, six functions of LL are commonly identified: informative (information and regulation), as a symbol of identity or ownership (Landry and Bourhis 1997, 25), local language preservation, showing identity (such as Arabic for Muslim), readiness to welcome visitors, and economic/commercial purposes (Fakhroh and Rohmah 2018, 103–14).

Among the eight functions mentioned by Spolsky and Cooper (1991) and Wahyuniyanto (2019), three were identified in Puncak:


informative, commercial, and identity. For example, LL is used here as an identity for the names of roads, restaurants, hotels, etc. It also informs the facilities offered by businesses, especially restaurants and hotels; therefore, it serves commercial use as well. In addition, it has symbolic meaning when the Sundanese welcome is used in hotels, such as airports (Ilmia 2022). However, this function was not seen as dominant or explicit, as in LL use in front of some mosques, for example (Yusuf and Putrie 2022). Four language functions are identified in this research: informative, commercial, identity, and symbol, as shown in the analysis below.

a) Informative

A basic function of public signs is to provide direct information to visitors in their own language. This is usually intended for languages used on signs for public facilities such as streets, public health facilities, or police offices. For example, at the gate to the Puncak Highway, there is a sign that informs visitors they will enter the Puncak area. It is written “Anda Akan Memasuki Kawasan Puncak.” The same situation occurs at sign-in areas, such as hotels. A text “Reception” is written in front of a room in a hotel, as a way to inform that any visitors may check in or participate in any hotel guest-related activities in this specific area.

Most signs of this type are written in Indonesian, especially when found in public spaces. However, hotel signs are mostly written in English, even though Arabic signage was also found at the only hotel, namely, Le Eminence, to indicate that this information is important for their hotel guests. The detailed description is shown in the table below.

Table 3
Informative Function of Languages in the Tourism Spaces in Puncak

No	Function	Language	Examples
1	Informative	Indonesian	
2	Informative	English	

looks like the Arab tourists are not its main target, as its services are open to locals and foreigners alike.

Table 4

The Commercial Function of Languages in the Tourism Spaces in Puncak

No	Language	Function	Aims	Examples
1	Indonesian (as a single language)	Commercial	To cater local potential buyers	
2	Indonesian – Arabic (bilingual)	Commercial	To attract local and foreigners' visitors	
3	English (single language)	Commercial	To attract local guests and foreigners	
4	English – Arabic (bilingual)	Commercial	To catch certain international tourists (Arabic-English speakers)	
5	Arabic only	Commercial	To catch certain international tourists	

As seen in Table 4, there are also LL's written in only one language, such as Indonesian, Arabic, or English. It seems that Indonesian signs are aimed at local customers in a commercial store that sells local foods and supplies. LL's with Arabic-only content are more specific and target


visitors who can read Arabic. Moreover, the English version is used for more general visitors, who are usually tourists from Arabic-speaking and other countries. It is because English is more familiar and more understandable in the tourism industry in general. The English-only signs are usually found in a luxury restaurant like Al Jazeera or in a five-star hotel like Le Eminence. However, Arabic is used both in singular and bilingual contexts alongside Indonesian or English. It means Arabic can be aimed at international tourists, Arabs, or non-Arabs alike.

c) Identity

Another function of language use in the tourist settings is to show local identity and cultural pride. This happens to both the national and local languages. Indonesian, as a national language, is used in most public and tourist spaces and is an official language in the country. Most of the instructions are in Indonesian to show that people are in Indonesia, a country proud of its language and nationality.

Table 5

The Identity Function of Languages in the Tourism Spaces in Puncak

No	Language	Function	Aims	Examples
1	Indonesian	Identity	To show the status as an official language of Indonesia.	

d) Symbol

LL also functions as a symbol, for instance, a symbol of ownership, a symbol of warm hospitality to foreigners. In this case, Arabic serves as a symbol of hospitality for Arab tourists, and English also functions as a symbol of welcome to the international and global market as well. The informant F said that using Arabic at the hotel to welcome tourists and make them feel comfortable during their stay.

4. Socio-cultural Context

As LL reflects on socio-cultural phenomena, the presence of multiple languages indicates that tourism is the economic backbone of the area. In this situation, tourists' languages are dominant. Arabic in Puncak is like English in Macau (Yan and Lee 2014) or Athens (Yan and Lee 2014). Suggested by the informant (Fa, 2024), the hotel he works for uses two languages, as shown in LL: Arabic and English. As he said, some tourists cannot read Latin-script text, despite their understanding of English. Therefore, the social forces behind the scenes here are not only the government (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006), but also tourists, as the presence of certain languages indicates the presence of native speakers (Widiyanto 2019).

Most of Puncak's people are Sundanese who speak Indonesian and other local languages. However, some of them know Arabic from their colleagues or their fellow native Arabic speakers who visit this place as tourists (Misran 2019). Therefore, in the socio-cultural context, factors such as religion, the economy, and tourist travel patterns influence language choices on public signs in touristic areas like Puncak.

For instance, the use of Arabic in advertisements like "Al Haramain" highlights the strong influence of the Middle Eastern Muslim community. Conversely, signs in English indicate a broader, more heterogeneous target audience. Tourism from the Middle East significantly contributes to the presence of Arabic in the area. Most owners consider the significance of the Arabian tourist market to their business. They need to attract most potential customers, particularly when their products are suitable for them. For example, most restaurants that serve Arabic food use Arabic signage to let Arabic-speaking customers know that their needs are available and served by the restaurant or business.

Normally, to avoid mistakes in grammar or spelling, there is a normal procedure to follow. Using translators, especially in a hotel, is necessary to avoid some unexpected mistakes. As F says, 'if we do not work with a translator, otherwise the translation may result in significant misinterpretation.' F, a graphic designer at a hotel in Puncak, said the decision to provide Arabic and English signage was conveyed to

management by the owner. Then, every department in the hotel would list any signage needed, and the graphic designer would contact a freelance translator. The translation result are checked by the graphic designer, who in turn redesigns the signage using combined languages, and showing it to management is a must before publishing it to the public. This kind of process is ideally followed by every section of the hotel when signage is centralized.

However, since most businesses are small-scale, processes like this may not be followed strictly. Even though many of the signs are written correctly in English or Arabic, it seems that professional translation is not necessary for most of them. Therefore, in some cases, native-speaker participation is normal. As stated by Fe (2024), asking native speakers via a communication tool is normal when he wishes to find an answer to his Arabic language problem. Furthermore, the use of English also indicates efforts at globalization and the area's international appeal. English is common in Indonesian public spaces, particularly in tourism spaces. This is why an international hotel and most restaurants in Puncak use both Arabic and English in most situations. In addition, the Indonesian language is normally used to respect the native language of people. As an official language, Indonesian is used on public signs in Indonesia to prevent it from going unused.

5. Grammatical Analysis

Linguistically, most phrases and sentences are written in short and readable form, especially by normal people. Indonesian LL for instruction and information is usually written in a single phrase or sentence, with clear, correct spelling and grammar. English LL is also written correctly, without any mistakes. And also, Arabic phrases and sentences are written in a short, readable form, especially by Arab people, without diacritics.

Mistranslations and typos are rarely found in the written signs. Most of them are written correctly, with no typos. Even in a handwritten message found inside a store, the grammar is correct. However, the only mistake is in the sign in front of a clinic, with a typo in the Arabic spelling of two words: "مستوصات و صيدلية", which should be "مستشفى و صيدلية", meaning hospital and pharmacy.

Figure 2

Some LL in Arabic Appear in Puncak with and Without Grammar Mistakes



To summarize, as a tourist destination, Puncak was popular among Middle Eastern tourists, especially Saudi Arabian tourists, for its ambience and accessibility (Admin 2023). It's only 2 to 2.5 hours from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, and it offers diverse tourist attractions for all ages and generations, from nature to adventure, with scenic views and magical weather. Many tourism facilities and accommodations are built in this area, especially on Hanjawar Street and the Tugu Village. The only five-star hotel in this area was built here since 2015. Many restaurants serving Arab and local cuisines are easily found on Hanjawar Street, with the biggest being Al Jazeera restaurant. The shopping center in Cimacan is also a favorite destination for tourists after visiting the area's attractions. On the Puncak highway, some restaurants and money changers are also seen. Furthermore, other facilities, such as clinics, salons, and food stores, are available on Hanjawar Street. Therefore, all of these businesses need to adapt to tourists as their target market. Since this target market is diverse and speaks multiple languages, it should choose a preferred language for public areas such as streets, hotels, restaurants, bus stations, and other tourism-related venues.

Highlighting the process of producing LL, the informant (F) notes that translators have a specific role in avoiding mistakes, despite the owners' significant role in deciding whether to use translators or native speakers. Therefore, grammatical errors are rarely found in the hotel, whilst errors are found in an LL in front of a clinic. Since no English grammatical errors were found, as Shohamy and Gorter (Shohamy and Gorter 2008) highlighted, it seems that short-sentence strategies were adopted by the LL owners, as suggested by Rubdy and Said (2015).

C. CONCLUSION

This research proves that the linguistic landscape in tourism spaces serves not only as a communication tool but also as a reflection of socio-cultural and economic dynamics in the Puncak region. Although Indonesian is used in most LL items, the presence of Arabic and English provides opportunities for local businesses to reach international tourists, while the dominance of Indonesian helps maintain regulations and local identity. Furthermore, it is suggested that local businesses and government authorities increase the use of multilingual signage to promote inclusivity. Educating the local community about the importance of the linguistic landscape as a tool for tourism promotion is also encouraged. Future research should explore tourists' perceptions of multilingual signage in the region.

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