



ELEJ

English Language Education Journal

E-ISSN: 2828-5077

<https://jurnal.unikastpaulus.ac.id/index.php/elej>

Vol. 5, No. 1, April 2026, Pp. 1-11

THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN PROMOTING TOURISM IN INDONESIA: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Mauli Denil¹

Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

*Email: maulidenil@gmail.com

Abstract: This study presents a systematic literature review examining the role of linguistic landscape (LL) in promoting tourism in Indonesia. Using the PRISMA framework and guidelines for systematic reviews, relevant studies published between 2015 and 2025 were identified, screened, and analyzed. The findings reveal that LL plays a significant role in shaping tourists' first impressions by visually communicating a destination's identity, readiness, and professionalism. Multilingual signage, particularly the combination of Indonesian and English, emerges as the dominant communication strategy, facilitating accessibility for international visitors while maintaining national identity. In addition, the inclusion of local languages contributes to cultural preservation and enhances the authenticity of tourist experiences. The review also highlights the function of LL as a destination branding tool, where language, symbols, and visual elements work together to create attractive and memorable images. Clear and readable signage is found to improve tourist mobility, satisfaction, and overall travel experience. Furthermore, private businesses actively utilize LL as a marketing strategy, while digitalization expands its scope through online and interactive platforms. However, disparities in LL development across regions indicate unequal tourism readiness. LL serves as a strategic instrument for

communication, branding, and cultural representation in Indonesian tourism.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape, Tourism Promotion, Multilingualism, Destination Branding, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Linguistic landscape (LL) was first systematically introduced by (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), who defined LL as the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory. Since then, LL studies have expanded to examine the interplay between language, identity, power, and space. In multilingual societies, such as Indonesia, LL offers a valuable lens for exploring how languages coexist and are strategically used in various domains, including tourism.

From a theoretical perspective, LL is grounded in several interrelated frameworks, including sociolinguistics, semiotics, and discourse studies. Scholars such as (Shohamy, 2005) and (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006) argue that public signage serves not only as a means of communication but also as a symbolic representation of social hierarchies and language ideologies. In tourism contexts, LL becomes even more complex, as it reflects both local identity and global communication needs, often resulting in multilingual and multimodal signage.

The semiotic dimension of LL is particularly relevant in tourism settings. Signs are not merely linguistic artifacts; they also incorporate visual elements such as images, colors, and symbols that contribute to meaning-making (Khan, 2023). Tourism discourse often relies on stylized language and visual cues to construct attractive and consumable images of destinations (Torkington et al., 2020). Thus, LL in tourism areas functions as a form of place branding that shapes tourists' perceptions and experiences.

In addition, LL is closely related to the concept of language commodification, where language is treated as a resource with economic value. In tourism, languages particularly global languages

such as English are frequently used to attract international visitors. As noted by (Heller, 2010), the commodification of language reflects broader socio-economic processes in which linguistic choices are influenced by market demands. This perspective highlights the strategic role of LL in promoting tourism.

The phenomenon of LL in Indonesia is particularly dynamic due to its linguistic diversity and growing tourism industry. Tourist destinations such as Bali and Labuan Bajo exhibit rich multilingual landscapes, where Indonesian, local languages, and foreign languages coexist. Public signs in these areas often prioritize English to cater to international tourists while maintaining local linguistic elements to preserve cultural identity (Mulyawan, 2019).

Several empirical studies have examined LL in tourism settings. Ardhian & Fajar (2017) studied Linguistics Landscape in Malang City, East Java. The study shows that top-down linguistic landscapes are dominated by Indonesian (monolingual and bilingual), while bottom-up patterns are more multilingual, and language use is driven by globalization motives such as modernization, branding, expansion, and cultural factors. Similarly, Mulyawan (2020) studied visual design of outdoor signs in Kuta, Bali. The study finds that commercial outdoor signs in Kuta Village employ salient multimodal elements through representation, interaction, and composition to effectively convey information, services, and products, with actors functioning as symbolic and communicative focal points in non-linear text structures. Other study was carried out by (Rafael et al., 2024) on The visible languages on landscape linguistics in primary schools in Kupang and the implementation of education language policy. The study finds that Indonesian dominates primary school linguistic landscapes in Kupang due to national curriculum policies, while English, Arabic, and Spanish reflect institutional affiliations, and the minimal presence of local languages indicates their marginalization in the educational environment. Rohmah et al. (2024) also studied the LL at Darussalam education complex of Gontor, Indonesia. The study reveals that the school-scape of Gontor is dominated by monolingual English and Arabic signs due to institutional language policy, leading to the marginalization of Indonesian and Javanese despite the multilingual

context, reflecting a strategic focus on preparing students for international engagement.

Despite the growing body of research on LL, studies focusing specifically on the role of LL in promoting tourism in Indonesia remain limited, particularly those employing a systematic literature review approach. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research question: How does linguistic landscape contribute to the promotion of tourism in Indonesia based on existing literature? This question aims to explore the functions, patterns, and implications of LL in tourism contexts. By providing a comprehensive overview, this study is expected to contribute to the development of LL research in Indonesia, particularly in relation to tourism.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to comprehensively identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research on the role of linguistic landscape (LL) in promoting tourism in Indonesia. The SLR approach was chosen because it provides a transparent, replicable, and rigorous procedure for reviewing literature, minimizing bias while ensuring a structured synthesis of findings. This study followed established SLR guidelines which include identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.

The review process began with the formulation of a clear research question: *How does linguistic landscape contribute to the promotion of tourism in Indonesia based on existing literature?* This question guided the entire review process, including the selection of databases, search strategies, and inclusion criteria.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across several reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The search was carried out using keywords to ensure broad yet relevant coverage. The primary keywords included: *"linguistic landscape"*, *"tourism"*, *"Indonesia"*, *"public signage"*, and *"multilingualism"*. Example search strings were: The search was limited to publications written in English and published between 2015 and

2025 to capture recent developments in LL research.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, (2) studies focusing on linguistic landscape, (3) research related to tourism or public spaces, and (4) studies conducted in Indonesia or with strong relevance to Indonesian contexts.

Exclusion criteria included: (1) non-academic publications (e.g., blogs, opinion pieces), (2) studies not directly related to LL or tourism, (3) duplicate records, and (4) articles with insufficient methodological transparency.

Data Extraction

Data from the selected studies were systematically extracted using a structured data extraction form. The extracted information included: author(s), year of publication, research location, research objectives, methodology, key findings, and relevance to tourism promotion. This process ensured consistency and facilitated comparison across studies.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The analysis followed the steps proposed by Miles et al. (2014), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Key themes identified in this study included language choice, multilingualism, identity representation, and tourism promotion strategies.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, the quality of each selected study was evaluated based on criteria such as clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of methodology, data validity, and relevance to the research question. Only studies that met acceptable quality standards were included in the final analysis.

The final stage involved synthesizing the findings of the selected studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of how LL contributes to tourism promotion in Indonesia. The synthesis focused on identifying common patterns, differences, and research gaps, which

were then discussed in relation to existing theoretical frameworks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the linguistic landscape has an important role in promoting tourism in Indonesia by shaping tourists' first impressions of destinations. Public signs such as welcome boards, street names, menus, and advertisements visually represent the identity, readiness, and professionalism of a tourism area. Tourists often interpret well-organized multilingual signage as evidence that a destination is friendly and prepared to receive visitors (Rastitiati & Suprastayasa, 2022).

The review found that bilingual and multilingual signage, especially the use of Indonesian and English, is the most common communication strategy in Indonesian tourist destinations. English functions as an international language that helps foreign tourists understand directions, services, and safety information. In tourism centers such as Bali, English appears frequently alongside Indonesian to balance global accessibility with national identity.

Another major finding is that local languages significantly contribute to destination attractiveness and cultural preservation. Regional languages such as Balinese and Javanese are often included in signs to symbolize heritage and local pride. Their presence creates a stronger sense of authenticity, allowing visitors to experience cultural uniqueness through everyday public texts.

The review also shows that linguistic landscapes function as destination branding tools. Signage that combines language with local symbols, traditional expressions, and attractive visual design can create memorable tourism images. Such signs help destinations distinguish themselves from competitors while reinforcing local identity in the minds of visitors.

Several studies emphasize that clear and readable signage increases tourist mobility and satisfaction. Visitors depend on directional boards, maps, warning signs, and transportation information when navigating unfamiliar places. Destinations with informative multilingual signs provide more comfort, reduce confusion,

and improve the overall travel experience.

The findings further reveal that private businesses such as hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and travel agencies actively use linguistic landscapes to attract customers. English-dominant signs are often associated with modernity, international standards, and prestige, while mixed-language signs are used to appeal to both domestic and foreign tourists. This demonstrates that language choice in commercial signage is also a marketing strategy.

In addition, digitalization has expanded the concept of linguistic landscape in Indonesian tourism. Digital boards, QR-code information systems, multilingual websites, and social media displays now complement physical signs. These digital linguistic landscapes help destinations communicate faster and more effectively with international travelers while enhancing engagement and convenience.

Another result is the unequal development of linguistic landscapes across regions. Major destinations such as Bali have more advanced multilingual signage systems, while smaller or emerging tourism areas often rely mainly on monolingual Indonesian signs. This disparity may affect destination competitiveness and visitor readiness, especially for international tourism markets.

The findings of this review support previous research showing that linguistic landscapes strongly influence tourists' first impressions of destinations. Landry & Bourhis, (1997) argued that public signage reflects the sociolinguistic vitality of a place and communicates symbolic messages to visitors. In the Indonesian context, multilingual signs similarly signal openness, professionalism, and tourism readiness. This suggests that visible language choices can shape destination image before tourists interact directly with local communities.

The dominance of Indonesian–English bilingual signage found in this review is consistent with the study of (Backhaus, 2006), who observed that global cities often prioritize English for international communication while maintaining national language presence. In Indonesian tourism destinations, English serves practical purposes for foreign tourists, while Indonesian reinforces national identity. This balance demonstrates how tourism spaces negotiate globalization and

local sovereignty through language display.

The inclusion of local languages in Indonesian signage also aligns with the work of Shohamy, (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006), who emphasized that public signs function as tools of identity and language policy. In Indonesia, the use of Balinese, Javanese, or Sundanese in tourism spaces does more than provide information; it indexes heritage and cultural authenticity. Therefore, linguistic landscapes can simultaneously preserve minority languages and market destinations (Widiyanto, 2019).

This review's finding that signage contributes to destination branding is comparable to studies by (Alomoush & Al-Naimat, 2020), stating that local governments use multilingual signs and visual symbols to build internationally recognizable city brands. Similar strategies are visible in Bali, where signs often combine English with Balinese scripts and cultural motifs (Mulyawan, 2020). Such comparisons indicate that language display has become a strategic branding instrument in competitive tourism markets.

The importance of readable signage for tourist mobility supports findings by (Daar & Supartini, 2024), who highlighted the informational function of public texts. In Indonesia, tourists depend on transport boards, maps, and directional signs in unfamiliar settings. Where signage is clear and multilingual, visitor anxiety decreases and travel efficiency improves. Thus, linguistic landscapes directly affect service quality as well as symbolic image.

The role of private businesses in shaping tourism landscapes parallels studies by (Piller, 2021), who found that commercial language choices often associate English with prestige, modernity, and cosmopolitan lifestyles. Indonesian hotels, cafés, and souvenir stores similarly use English or mixed-language signage to attract domestic and international consumers. This confirms that linguistic landscapes are not only government-managed phenomena but also market-driven communication practices.

Regional inequality in Indonesia's linguistic landscapes can also be compared with research in China (Lu et al., 2020), where major cities receive more sophisticated multilingual signage than peripheral

regions. Destinations such as Bali and Jakarta benefit from international exposure, while smaller destinations often lack equivalent investment. Consequently, unequal signage development may reproduce broader economic disparities within national tourism systems (Algryani & Syahrin, 2021).

Signage in tourism areas serves informational, symbolic, commercial, and branding functions. Yet Indonesia's multilingual complexity combining Indonesian, English, and numerous regional languages, creates a uniquely layered tourism communication environment. Future policy should integrate lessons from international best practices while protecting local linguistic heritage.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that the linguistic landscape plays a vital role in promoting tourism in Indonesia by supporting communication, strengthening destination branding, and enhancing visitor experiences. Public signage in Indonesian tourism areas functions not only as a practical source of information but also as a symbolic representation of cultural identity, hospitality, and professionalism. The use of Indonesian, English, and local languages creates a multilingual environment that helps destinations become more accessible to international tourists while preserving regional heritage and authenticity.

Furthermore, the review highlights that effective linguistic landscape management can increase tourist satisfaction, improve destination competitiveness, and generate positive impressions of Indonesia as a global tourism destination. However, challenges such as inaccurate translations, inconsistent signage quality, and unequal development across regions still need to be addressed. Therefore, collaboration among government institutions, local communities, and tourism stakeholders is essential to develop clear, attractive, and culturally inclusive signage systems that support sustainable tourism growth in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Algryani, A., & Syahrin, S. (2021). Utilizing Learners' Linguistic Landscape as a Pedagogical Resource in the Translation Classroom: A case study in the Sultanate of Oman. *Arab World English Journal*, 12(1), 357–373. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no1.24>
- Alomoush, O. I. S., & Al-Naimat, G. K. (2020). English in the linguistic landscape of Jordanian shopping malls: Sociolinguistic variation and translanguaging. *Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 101–115.
- Ardhian, D., & Fajar, Y. (2017). Linguistics Lanscape in Malang City, East Java. *JETAFL (Journal of English Teaching as a Foreign Language)*, December, 25–42.
- Backhaus, Peter (2007). *Linguistic Landscapes. A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*. Clevedon–Buffalo–Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd. Pp. x, 158.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2006). Linguistic landscape and minority languages. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3(1), 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668386>
- Daar, G. F., & Supartini, N. L. (2024). Directive Functions of Language on Outdoor Signs in the Renon Field Area, Denpasar. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, c, 519–524.
- Heller, M. (2010). The Commodification of Language. *University of Toronto*. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104951>
- Khan, A. S. (2023). The Impact Of Linguistic Landscape On Learning English As A Foreign Language. *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*, 6(2013), 1081–1085. <https://doi.org/10.53555/jrtd.v6i5s.2642>
- Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1997). Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1), 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>
- Lu, S., Li, G., & Xu, M. (2020). The linguistic landscape in rural destinations: A case study of Hongcun Village in China. *Tourism Management*, 77(October 2019), 104005. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104005>
- Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Data Analysis Qualitative A Methods Sourcebook*. In SAGE (Third). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.30.25.33.s40>
- Mulyawan, I. W. (2019). Impact of tourism on vernacular outdoor signs in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia. *ISVS E-Journal*, 6(1), 42–49.
- Mulyawan, I. W. (2020). Reading visual design of outdoor signs in Kuta (A case study of multimodal linguistic landscapes). *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1748987>
- PILLER, I. (2021). Language Ideologies. *The International Encyclopedia Of Language and Social Interaction*.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315045429>

- Rafael, A. M. D., Artawa, K., Satyawati, M. S., & Purnawati, K. W. (2024). The visible languages on landscape linguistics in primary schools in Kupang and the implementation of education language policy. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2376360>
- Rohmah, Z., Sholihah, D. N., Basthomi, Y., & Milal, A. D. (2024). School-scape as a linguistic battlefield: an LL study at Darussalam education complex of Gontor, Indonesia. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2348301>
- Shohamy, E. (2005). Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches. In *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches* (Issue January 2005). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203387962>
- Torkington, K., Stanford, D., & Guiver, J. (2020). Discourse (s) of growth and sustainability in national tourism policy documents. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1720695>
- Widiyanto, G. (2019). Lanskap Linguistik di Museum Radya Pustaka Surakarta. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Linguistik Dan Sastra (Semantiks)*, 11, 255–262. <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/prosidingsemantiks/article/view/39023/25974>