



## Linguistic Landscape Analysis on Public Signs in Semarang High Schools: Languages and Scripts Distribution

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### ABSTRACT

This research analyzed the distribution of languages and scripts on public signs of high schools in Semarang, at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung. Data were collected through observation, photographs, and interviews with principals, teachers, and students using a qualitative descriptive method. A total of 78 signs were collected. The findings showed that most signs were monolingual, with Bahasa Indonesia as the dominant language (71.79%). Bi-script signs using Indonesian with Balinese script, represent 10.26%, while English monolingual signs were relatively rare (2.56%). Bilingual signs were identified, with 7.69% in Indonesian-English and 11.54% in English-Indonesian. Unfortunately, there is no multilingual signs were found. The use of Bahasa Indonesia was the most common on the school signs, which followed national language rules like Law No. 24 of 2009 and Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019. The use of Balinese script showed that the schools also followed the local language rule, Bali Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018. Based on the interviews, the choice of language and script was based on how well the message could be understood, students needed, and efforts to preserve local culture. English was used mainly for academic or international purposes.

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### INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape (LL) refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signage in a given territory or region (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Language use in public signs does more than convey information; it reflects the cultural identities, power dynamics, and values embedded within a community. Investigating the linguistic landscape can be undertaken from various viewpoints and is connected to multiple fields: linguistics, communication studies, sociology, sociolinguistics, economics, social geography, landscape architecture, psychology, and education (Gorter & Cenoz, 2008). Schoolscape is a term introduced by Brown

(2012) to refer to the use of visual language in educational contexts. In educational settings, this visual language environment is termed the schoolscape, which represents written, printed, or digital texts present in schools and reflects socio-emotional and educational functions (Tódor & Vančo, 2024). Public signs in schools, such as banners, posters, or information boards, form a crucial part of the linguistic environment experienced by students and teachers.

In Indonesia, research on linguistic landscapes has been widely conducted in public spaces, particularly in urban and tourist areas. Mahayana et al. (2023) analyzed public signs in the tourism area of Candidasa and found a predominance of monolingual signs in English. Rastitiati (2023) examined the linguistic landscape of I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport, identifying seven language variations and emphasizing the role of bilingual Indonesian-English signage. Dewi et al. (2024) explored signage in three tourist destinations in Banjar District, highlighting informative, commercial, and symbolic functions, with a focus on bilingual signs. Several previous linguistic landscape (schoolscape) studies have been conducted in educational settings. Some studies have begun to explore schoolsapes in Java. Gapur et al. (2024) studied public elementary schools in Medan, identifying monolingual and bilingual signage dominated by the Indonesian language, but lacking ethnic or cultural representation. Andriyanti (2019) investigated the linguistic landscape of multilingual high schools in Yogyakarta and found monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual sign patterns, with Indonesian being dominant, Javanese marginalized, and English used despite limited proficiency among students. Sumarlam et al. (2021) analyzed signage in schools across Malang, uncovering themes related to social issues and character education, with signs appearing in Indonesian, English, Arabic, and Javanese.

Although these studies contribute to the understanding of linguistic landscape in educational settings, there are still notable gaps. However, most studies focus on LL in urban environments or tourist areas, while studies on LL in schools are still limited. Further studies concerning public signs at Indonesian schools are relatively rare to be conducted. Not Many researchers have conducted linguistic landscape studies in schools in Bali, specifically in Semarang. Previous studies mostly conducted research that used observational methods assisted by photography to document linguistic signs. Previous studies rarely added other methods, such as interviews to enrich the data. To address these gaps, this study investigated the linguistic landscape in two high schools in Semarang, SMA Negeri 2 Semarang and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung. This study aims to examine the distribution of languages and scripts on public signs.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted in two high schools, academic and vocational high schools; SMA Negeri 2 Semarang and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung. This study used a

qualitative research design with a descriptive method to explore languages and scripts distribution on public signs in two high schools in Semarang. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a method for understanding the phenomenon explored in the study. It focuses on comprehending and interpreting social events by thoroughly investigating and analyzing data. The subjects of this study are the public signs displayed in the two high schools in Semarang and school principals, teachers, and students selected through purposive sampling to enrich the data. The objects of this study are the language used in public signs in two high schools in Semarang. Data collection methods include observation, interviews and photograph documentation and analyzed following Miles and Huberman's (1994) analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, data were first categorized according to research focus, then organized for further analysis, connected with theoretical frameworks, and used to draw conclusions aligned with the study's objectives. Finally, all conclusions were verified against the collected data for accuracy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The existence of the language chosen on public signs in schools is influenced by goals and target readers and is regulated by several regulations. Law No. 24 of 2009 on the Flag, Language, State Symbol, and National Anthem, mandates the use of Indonesian in public signs, including in educational institutions. Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 concerning the use of the Indonesian language in public signs reinforces this obligation by ensuring that Bahasa Indonesia holds a dominant and formal function in public communication. Besides that, regional languages or foreign languages can be used for public service information by including Indonesian as an integral part. The choice of language on public signs refers to language policy regulations. Bali Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018, in Article 8, Paragraph 1 requires Balinese script must be placed above Latin letters.

Based on the results of observations conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung, a total of 78 public signs were collected. In this context, the language and scripts distribution in two high schools in Semarang consists of monolingual and bilingual, which comprises Indonesian, English, and Bi-script (Indonesian-Balinese script). The data collected from two high schools in Semarang are revealed in Table 1.

**Table 1 Languages and Scripts Distribution**

Schools	Monolingual			Bilingual		Multilingual
	Indo	Eng	Indo-Balinese Script	Indo+Eng	Eng+Indo	
SMA 2	20	2	3	2	4	-
SMK 1	33	-	5	4	5	-
Total	53	2	8	6	9	-
Percentages	71,79%	2,56%	10,26%	7,69%	11,54%	0%

In Table 1, it can be seen that monolingual signs dominated in these two schools of the total 78 public signs. The findings reveal a strong predominance of monolingual signs, particularly in Bahasa Indonesia. The majority of public signs in these two schools are written in Indonesian, displaying 56 signs (71,79%). These include 33 signs in SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung and 20 signs in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang. Then, English signs only two (2,56%) signs were found in one school, which in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang. Besides that, there are eight (10,26%) Bi-script signs in these two high schools, which are written in Indonesian-Balinese script, with five signs in SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung, followed by three signs in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang. A total of 15 bilingual signs were identified. Six signs (7.69%) were written in Indonesian-English and nine signs (11.54%) in English-Indonesian. SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung had the highest number of bilingual signs among SMA Negeri 2 Semarang, with four signs written in Indonesian-English and five signs written in English-Indonesian, followed by two signs in Indonesian-English and four signs in English-Indonesian in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang. Unfortunately, there are no multilingual signs in these two high schools.

The distribution of language and script is adjusted to the context, communication goals, and regulations. Interviews with the principal, teachers, and students reinforced these findings. The majority of public signs found in both high schools are monolingual, mostly written in Indonesian. Interview with the Principal as the Informant. Informant P1 stated that "At school, regarding the use of language on information boards and other things, we prioritize Indonesian. This was confirmed by the Informant P2. The distribution of the use of Indonesian is most widely used in public signs because it is easy for most students to understand. According to Informant T2, "The use of language is in accordance with the needs of students because the language used is generally Indonesian. In addition, the language used is easy to understand by students." This was confirmed by the informants T3, T4, T5, and T6. However, Informant T1 had a different opinion. Informant T1 stated that "The use of language on the information board for students has not been utilized optimally because there are still students who are less able to read the information board and the level of student concern for the information board is still lacking.". In addition, the results of interviews with students also support the findings on the use of Indonesian in public signs. Informant S1 revealed that "The language I often see is Indonesian." Informant S4 also stated that "What I often see here is that information boards often use Indonesian, which students can read because they understand Indonesian better." This point has been confirmed by all students that Indonesian is a dominant language used on public signs in two high schools in Semarang.

Next, there are specific regulations or guidelines from the government regarding the distribution of Indonesian + Balinese (Bi-script) on public signs in two high schools. Interviews with the Principal reinforced these findings. Informant P1 stated that "The first is based on government regulations referring to the Bali Governor regulation regarding the preservation of the use of the Balinese language/script. The second is

based on who will see the sign/information board.” This was confirmed by Informant P2 that there is a Bali Governor Regulation that regulates the use of Indonesian and Balinese script. Indonesian remains the main language used because it is considered the most understandable language for all school residents and the public. Meanwhile, the use of Balinese script is placed symbolically and educationally as a form of preserving local culture. Although not all information boards use Balinese script, their existence is still maintained in certain contextual forms.

In addition, English is used for specific needs, such as information on competitions or international activities. This is supported by the Presidential Regulation that regional languages or foreign languages can be used for public service information by including Indonesian as an inseparable part. Interviews with teachers emphasized the importance of balance between Indonesian, regional, and foreign languages. Informant T1 stated that “The use of these languages is very important. Maybe not all students understand English words, but having Indonesian and regional languages will help students understand the language on the information board.” This statement was confirmed by informants T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6. The students have views on the use of regional languages. They recognized the importance of preserving regional languages. Informant S3 stated that “Regional languages are quite important because regional languages should be preserved, and I observed that nowadays many students do not use regional languages very often.” This is supported by informants S4, S5, and S6. Informants S1 and S2 had the same opinion but had a slight difference with informants S4, S5, and S6. Informant S1 stated that “I think the use of regional languages is important, because many young people today do not really understand or want to preserve the regional language. But the use of regional languages is more suitable for short sentences, such as no smoking.” However, informant S2 stated that “The use of regional languages, such as Balinese. If Balinese is very refined, maybe it is quite important to preserve the Balinese language. But, is it very functional? Indonesian is enough.” Informant S2 believed that the distribution of Balinese is important on public signs, but Indonesian is enough to make readers understand the information on public signs.



**Figure 1. Monolingual Indonesian Sign**

The writing of public signs that used one language or monolingual were found in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung. **Figure 1. Monolingual Indonesian Sign** is an example of monolingual signs written in Indonesian. This public sign says “*Kawasan Bebas Rokok*”, which is written in Indonesian. The sign in Figure 1 is

completely in Indonesian and informs that the area is a zone where smoking is prohibited.



**Figure 2. Monolingual English Sign**

**Figure 2. Monolingual English Sign** is an example of monolingual English signs found in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang. This sign says “Say No to Drugs,” which is written in English. The use of English indicates that this sign is intended for an English-speaking audience. This sign provides information to everyone in the school area to not consume drugs in school or in everyday life. This sign is a form of health campaign and prevention of drug abuse. The images of narcotics in the background clarify the message, making it effective even though it is monolingual.



**Figure 3. Monolingual Bi-Script (Indonesia-Balinese Script) Public Sign**

Next are examples of Monolingual Bi-script public signs that are written in Indonesian-Balinese script. **Figure 3. Monolingual Bi-Script (Indonesia-Balinese Script) Public Sign** displays the existence of Balinese script writing. This sign refers to Bali Governor Regulation No 80 of 2018. Figure 3 displays the words “PERPUSTAKAAN WIDYA KUSUMA” in Latin letters and in Balinese script in parallel. At the bottom, there is also the name of the school, “SMK NEGERI 1 KLUNGKUNG” written in full with Balinese script transliteration.



**Figure 4. Bilingual Indo-Eng Public Sign**

This sign is an example of bilingual Indonesian-English signs. The sign in **Figure 4. Bilingual Indo-Eng Public Sign** written entirely in English, but the presence of the abbreviation “UKS”, which is an acronym for *Unit Kesehatan Siswa* (School Health Unit), indicates that this word is written in Indonesian. The next words, "IS HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOL CENTRE", are written in English. Combination of these words makes this sign a mixed representation of Indonesian and English, even though there are spelling errors, such as "HEALT" which should be "HEALTH."



**Figure 5. Bilingual Eng-Indo Public Sign**

Lastly, there are examples of bilingual English-Indonesian signs that were found in two high schools. In **Figure 5. Bilingual Eng-Indo Public Sign**, this prohibition sign is in English at the top with a direct translation below. Its primary function is to inform people not to wear footwear, usually when entering a sterile room such as the UKS. The word “FOOTWARE” is a typo of “FOOTWEAR,” but the meaning is still understandable for students. The use of the crossed shoe icon reinforces the visual message.

## Discussion

The distribution of languages and scripts on public signs in SMA Negeri 2 Semarang and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung follows national and local government regulations. The dominance of Indonesian aligns with Law No. 24 of 2009, Article 36, and Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019, which requires Indonesian must be used in official communication in educational environments. This constitutional obligation is reflected in the finding that almost all public signs in two high school environments use Indonesian, confirming strong adherence to national policy. Nevertheless, the presence of English, both in monolingual and bilingual forms, demonstrates schools' efforts to promote global awareness and strengthen foreign language competencies. The use of English complies with Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019, Paragraph 4, which permits foreign languages on public signs when accompanied by Indonesian. Meanwhile, the existence of Balinese script is a reflection of the implementation of Bali Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018, which encourages the inclusion of Balinese script on agency name boards and public signs as part of cultural preservation. Although its use is not yet widespread, the presence of Balinese script in certain signage indicates symbolic acknowledgment of local identity.

Interview data reinforced these observations. School principals, teachers, and students agreed that Indonesian is the primary language used for clarity and

accessibility. One teacher, however, noted that some signage failed to attract student attention, suggesting a need to improve communicative design. Teachers also emphasized the symbolic importance of incorporating local and foreign languages for cultural and global engagement. While students recognized the value of preserving Balinese script, some questioned its practical impact, especially given limited proficiency among younger generations. The symbolic function of Balinese script aligns with Landry & Bourhis (1997), who highlight how linguistic landscape can represent ethnic identity. In this study, Balinese appears mostly as script rather than language and serves a symbolic rather than instrumental function.

When compared with previous research, there are several similarities and differences. Andriyanti (2019), for instance, observed the dominance of Indonesian in high schools in Yogyakarta, with English and Arabic also present. Regional languages like Javanese appeared only symbolically. This is consistent with the current study's finding that Balinese script appears symbolically and rarely. However, the current research adds nuance by documenting bi-script signage using Balinese alongside Latin script. Riani et al. (2021) examined schools in East Java, found five languages, including Indonesian, English, Arabic, Sanskrit, and Latin, used in signage, showing both religious and classical academic associations. Although their findings align in the dominance of Indonesian and symbolic use of other languages, this study differs in that only English and Balinese were observed in Semarapura, reflecting a distinct regional linguistic ecology. Sumarlam et al. (2021) also identified the prevalence of monolingual and bilingual signage in Malang, primarily using Indonesian, English, Arabic, and Javanese. This aligns with the current study's findings on Indonesian dominance and English as a secondary language, but differs in the absence of Arabic and Javanese, and no multilingual signage was identified in Semarapura schools. Similarly, Rafael et al. (2024) studied elementary schools in Kupang, where Indonesian, English, Arabic, Kupang Malay, and even Spanish were found on signage. Compared to their findings, this study shares the bilingual (Indonesian-English) context but lacks the wider language diversity, further emphasizing the regional specificity of linguistic landscape practices.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the majority of signs use monolingual in Indonesian, Bi-script (Indonesian-Balinese scripts) and English, followed by bilingual signs in English-Indonesian and Indonesian-English, bi-script and English. The dominant use of Indonesian on public signs in SMA Negeri 2 Semarapura and SMK Negeri 1 Klungkung in accordance with Law No. 24 of 2009 and Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019. The use of Bi-script (Indonesian-Balinese script) of 10.26% reflects the preservation of local culture in accordance with Bali Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018. English, either monolingual or in bilingual form, is used in international and educational contexts. From the interviews, it was found that the use of Indonesian was considered the easiest to



understand by students. However, students and teachers also realized the importance of preserving regional languages and the use of English in the global context. Thus, the distribution of languages on public signs in these two schools shows the alignment between national and regional language policies, communication needs, and educational contexts.

This study was conducted in two high schools located in Semarapura. However, this study is still limited conducted in schools, especially in Bali. Therefore, further research can expand the scope of the location by including other schools in various regions, both public and private schools, and different levels of education (such as elementary, junior high, or university) to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the use of language and character education values on public signs in educational environments.

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