

Linguistic Landscape in Bandung Geological Museum

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Abstract

Landscape Linguistics (LL) is a subfield of linguistics that explores the presence and function of written language in public spaces. This study aims to examine the use of language in informational signs that describe historical and geological objects at the Bandung Geological Museum. Specifically, it seeks to identify what languages are used, how these languages are visually represented in terms of size and prominence, and how they are positionally arranged on the signs. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze linguistic data collected from signs displayed in the museum. Data were obtained through systematic observation and photographic documentation of all relevant linguistic signs, followed by categorization and interpretation based on LL theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal that the museum utilizes four language variations: Indonesian, English, Latin, and Dutch. These languages appear in different formats—monolingual (1 sign), bilingual (17 signs), and multilingual (2 signs). Among them, Indonesian is the most dominant language, particularly in the naming of stones and primary object labels. The use of larger font sizes for Indonesian names indicates a communicative intent to make the information more accessible and prominent for local visitors. English is used primarily for international visitors, while Latin and Dutch appear in scientific or historical contexts. In terms of placement, Indonesian typically occupies the top or center position, emphasizing its primacy in communication. This study highlights how language choices and arrangements in public educational spaces reflect broader social, cultural, and functional considerations.

Keywords: *Linguistic Landscape, Language Use, Bandung Geological Museum, Multilingualism, Public Space*

Introduction

The concept of Linguistic Landscape (LL) was first introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) as the study of language used in public signage, including road signs, street and place names, as well as names of government buildings within specific regions or cities. LL reflects how language visually occupies public spaces and plays a crucial role in shaping social identity, language dominance, and multilingual awareness. Further development by Shohamy and Gorter (2009) broadened the scope of LL, not only as a visual language display but also as a powerful medium of communication, ideology, and social interaction in increasingly dynamic and multicultural environments. LL is not limited to outdoor public spaces but includes semi-public and institutional spaces such as schools, hospitals, and notably—museums.

A museum is more than just a place to display historical or scientific artifacts; it is a communicative institution that aims to educate, inform, and engage the public. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a museum serves as a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, and tasked with acquiring, conserving, researching, and exhibiting tangible and intangible heritage. As such, the presentation of information through signage and labels becomes vital in helping visitors interpret the exhibited collections. This is where

linguistic landscape plays a central role: the language choices, arrangements, and designs used in exhibition labels shape how accessible and inclusive the museum experience is for diverse audiences.

The Geological Museum in Bandung is a prominent educational tourism site and historical monument that houses an extensive collection of geological materials—fossils, minerals, and rocks—many of which were collected as early as 1850. Labeling in this museum does not only serve as a means of identification but functions as a multilingual communication tool, often presented in Indonesian and English, and occasionally in Latin and Dutch. These labels are not only informative but represent broader sociolinguistic dynamics, including the prioritization of national language, accommodation for international visitors, and the retention of scientific or historical terminology.

This study investigates the language use patterns in the labeling of geological and historical artifacts in the Bandung Geological Museum, focusing on what languages are used, how they are visually displayed in terms of size and prominence, and how their positional configurations contribute to meaning. While previous LL research has predominantly examined outdoor public spaces such as streets, markets, or educational institutions, this study contributes a novel perspective by exploring LL within the semi-public space of a museum—an environment where language signs are curated, context-bound, and play a strategic role in knowledge dissemination.

By examining the museum as a linguistic landscape, this research sheds light on the interplay between language, space, and identity in educational-cultural settings, and provides insight into how linguistic presentation affects visitor engagement, comprehension, and inclusivity.

The concept of Linguistic Landscape (LL) refers to the visibility and salience of languages displayed in public spaces through signs, billboards, posters, nameplates, and informational boards. These signs can be analyzed not only from a linguistic perspective but also from cultural, social, and political dimensions. LL reflects the symbolic construction of space and language hierarchies, where written language interacts with spatial, institutional, and societal forces.

Recent studies define LL as a dynamic field that goes beyond mere signage—it is a lens to understand how language is used to construct identity, assert power, and mediate social relations in physical environments (Barni & Bagna, 2020; Malinowski, 2022). LL encompasses both top-down signs (such as those created by authorities and institutions) and bottom-up signs (such as graffiti or community-based messaging), and both play a role in shaping the linguistic character of a space.

LL also includes functional aspects such as informational signs, instructions, and warnings, and commercial messages meant to attract consumer attention. These signs serve practical communicative purposes while simultaneously reflecting linguistic norms, preferences, and power structures (Gorter, 2021).

Puzey (2020) further explains that LL is inherently interdisciplinary, engaging with sociolinguistics, geography, semiotics, and discourse analysis. Through the study of LL, researchers can trace the interaction of languages in public space, revealing language contact, multilingual practices, and the sociopolitical dynamics of language presence.

In essence, LL provides insight into the linguistic ecology of a region, serving as a visual representation of language use, policy enforcement, and cultural identity in action.

Meanwhile, according to Landry & Bourhis (1997), Linguistic Landscape (LL) has two primary functions: the informational function and the symbolic function. The

informational function is related to how language use on signs can delineate and distinguish the geographical areas inhabited by certain language communities, such as through the naming of places. The symbolic function, on the other hand, concerns the sociocultural impact of the presence or absence of a particular language or group on public signage, influencing the group's sense of belonging. This symbolic dimension is also closely tied to the representation of national identity and the sociopolitical visibility of language groups within a specific space.

In the context of this research, Linguistic Landscape (LL) is understood as the study of written language displayed in public or semi-public spaces, specifically in how signs and texts visually construct and communicate meanings related to identity, culture, and space. Based on the above conceptual framework, this study focuses on the LL found in the Bandung Geological Museum, particularly through the signage and labels that describe historical and geological objects.

The object of this study is the visual linguistic elements—texts, labels, and signs—that convey information about museum objects. These were documented using a mobile phone (Samsung A51), where each sign was photographed twice to ensure clarity, and the clearest image was selected for analysis. The findings are expected to reveal the types and functions of languages used in the signage of the Geological Museum, thus contributing to the broader understanding of Linguistic Landscape in museum settings as a form of cultural and informational communication.

Method

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. A qualitative approach is used because it concerns the focus and phenomena analyzed which emphasizes describing the language used, and the function of the linguistic landscape in the description of each object in the Geological Museum. The data collection method in this study was obtained by observation and documentation techniques and photographs were taken of objects in the Geological Museum using a Samsung A51 device. The research data obtained are labels for each object in the Geological Museum. Furthermore, the data will be analyzed using a linguistic landscape study. The rationality of scientific research activities lies in the empirical and systematic nature of science as postulated by Sugiyono (2013, p: 3) as summarized by Tamara (2024).

In collecting data, the author conducted observations at the Geology Museum. The author took pictures of all the information boards of the Geology Museum. The tool used for taking pictures is a gadget because the gadget can easily collect data.

Finding

This research explains the use of language in the linguistic landscape and the size of language signs used on stones at the Geological Museum, Bandung. Based on the results of data analysis in this study, namely regarding the use of linguistic landscapes in information on historical objects at the Geological Museum, Bandung and the size of the language signs used, it can be seen that the use of linguistic landscapes in the museum uses four language variations, namely Indonesian, English, Latin, and Dutch. These languages are written monolingually with a total of 1 (one) sign, bilingual Indonesian-English variation 17 (seventeen) signs, and multilingual 2 (two) language signs.

The use of bilingual Indonesian-English is the most widely used language to provide information about objects in the Geological Museum, Bandung. It is known that the use of Indonesian is as a national language required by the government in informing

various things. This also refers to the fact that Indonesian is the official language of the Indonesian nation. While the use of English is to accompany Indonesian because it is an international language and also as its role as a language in the field of tourism as a form of service to foreign visitors. English was chosen because many foreign tourists come to visit the museum, so it can facilitate tourists in understanding various information or instructions. In addition, English is displayed so that local tourists, especially students, can understand English.

As for the size of the language marks used for the names of stones that use Indonesian, the size is larger. This aims to make the name easy to read and striking, so that it can be distinguished from other languages and information.

Discussion

In order to respond to the research questions and achieve the research aims and objectives of this study, the collected sample data will be analyzed. As for the data analysis of this sort, the following objectives shall be achieved:

Monolingual Language Signs (Dutch)

LLM Data 13

Reinder Fennema

Geboren te Sneek 21 oktober 1849

Bij een geologisch onderzoek verdronken in het Poso

Based on data from LLM 13, This is a monolingual language sign written in Dutch. It provides personal and biographical information about an individual named Reinder Fennema. The text states that he was born in Sneek on October 21, 1849, and that he drowned in Lake Poso during a geological research expedition. This type of language sign likely serves as a commemorative inscription, possibly found on a gravestone or memorial, and reflects the historical presence and activities of Dutch individuals in Indonesia during the colonial era.

Bilingual Language Signs (Indonesian – English)

LLB Data 1

Konglomerat / Conglomerate

Ciletuh, Jawa Barat

In the LLB 1 data, it shows that the information on the stone is explained bilingually with variations of Indonesian and Latin. Indonesian is used as the national language, while Latin is the origin of the name of the stone from Greece. In this information, it is explained that the conglomerate stone was found in Ciletuh Village, West Java. The size of the language signs used for the name of the stone using Indonesian is larger than the English and city names. This is so that visitors can easily read it.

LLB Data 2

Batugamping/ Limestone

Sumatera

Based on LLB 2 data, the use of bilingual signs in Indonesian and English. The name of the limestone is then translated into English as an international language. And Sumatra is the origin of the stone found. In the use of language signs on the stone, the name of the stone is larger than the English translation and the name of the city where the stone was found.

LLB Data 3
Batubara / Coal
Papua

In LLB 3 data, objects are described with bilingual signs, namely using two languages, Indonesian and English. The stone was found in the Papua region, as the western part of Indonesia. The use of the size of the language signs used in the name of the stone written in Indonesian is larger than the size of the language signs using English and the place where the stone was found.

LLB Data 4
N.V Exploitatie Maatschappij
“Wadjak”
Toeloeng – Agoeng

In the LLB 4 data, the language used is bilingual, specifically Dutch and Indonesian. The title “*N.V. Exploitatie Maatschappij*”, which means “*Exploitation of Society*”, is written in Dutch, while the name of the place, “*Toeloeng-Agoeng*” (referring to Tulungagung), is written in Indonesian.

From the perspective of Linguistic Landscape (LL), this bilingualism serves both informational and symbolic functions. The use of Dutch in the title reflects the historical colonial influence in the region, symbolizing the past exploitation during the colonial era. This gives the sign a strong symbolic significance, linking the place to the Dutch colonial history. On the other hand, the use of Indonesian for the place name provides informational clarity, ensuring that the sign can be understood by the local population, which is predominantly Indonesian-speaking.

Regarding the visual aspect, the size of the language signs is uniform, as both the Dutch and Indonesian inscriptions are carved into a stone plaque. This uniformity in size indicates that there is no visual hierarchy between the two languages. Both languages are given equal importance in terms of their visual representation, highlighting their complementary roles in providing both historical context (Dutch) and local relevance (Indonesian).

LLB Data 5
Kerak Mangan / Manganese
Laut Banda, kedalaman 3.936 meter

In the LLB 5 data, the description of the stone uses bilingual language signs, specifically Indonesian and English. The name of the stone, “*Kerak Mangan*” (Manganese), is written in Indonesian, while the English translation “*Manganese*” follows. The sign also includes the additional information, “*Laut Banda, kedalaman 3.936 meter*” (Banda Sea, depth 3,936 meters).

From a Linguistic Landscape (LL) perspective, the bilingual format serves both informational and functional purposes. The use of Indonesian as the primary language reflects its status as the national language of Indonesia, ensuring that local visitors, particularly Indonesians, can easily understand the information. The English translation caters to the international audience, especially foreign tourists or researchers, facilitating their understanding of the geological feature.

In terms of visual hierarchy, the Indonesian language is displayed in larger text for the stone's name, emphasizing its prominence. This design choice highlights the national language, making it the focal point of the sign, while the English translation is secondary in size. This visual approach is consistent with the idea of Linguistic

Landscape, where the visual prominence of language signs can reflect both the functional priorities (such as accommodating local and international visitors) and the symbolic weight of the language used.

LLB 6 Data

Granit / Granite

Sanggau, Kalimantan Barat

Based on the LLB 6 data, the name of the stone is presented in bilingual format, with both Indonesian and English. The term “*Granit*” (Granite) is written in Indonesian, while the English translation, “*Granite*”, follows.

In terms of the size of the language signs, the Indonesian term “*Granit*” is displayed in larger text compared to the English translation. This design choice emphasizes the use of the national language, making it more prominent and easily noticeable, which aligns with the informational function of the sign. The larger size of the Indonesian text ensures it stands out for local visitors, while the English translation, though secondary, still provides access to international or non-Indonesian speakers.

This practice is typical of Linguistic Landscape (LL) studies, where the prominence and size of language signs are strategically used to reflect language priorities based on the target audience, in this case, balancing the needs of both local and international visitors.

LLB 7 Data

Kuarsit / Quarzite

Karangsambung, Jawa Tengah

In the LLB 7 data, the name of the stone is presented in bilingual format, with Indonesian and English. The Indonesian term “*Kuarsit*” is used alongside the English translation, “*Quartzite*”.

Regarding the size of the language signs, the Indonesian term “*Kuarsit*” is displayed in larger text than the English translation. This design choice prioritizes the national language, making the Indonesian term more prominent for local visitors, while the English translation remains secondary. This approach reflects the informational function of the linguistic landscape, ensuring that the sign is clear and accessible to the local audience, while still providing international visitors with relevant information in English.

This practice is consistent with common trends in Linguistic Landscape (LL), where language visibility and size are carefully balanced to cater to the intended audience, with the local language taking precedence in size to meet the needs of the primary demographic.

Multilingual Language Signs (Latin, Indonesian, and English)

LLMT 5 Data



The informational sign utilizes three languages: Latin, Indonesian, and English. According to LLMT 5 data, this multilingual format enhances accessibility for a diverse audience. The object name, *Stegodon trigonocephalus*, is presented in Latin, which serves as the scientific classification, establishing a formal and universal reference.

The visual hierarchy is clearly defined through font size and formatting. The object name “GAJAH PURBA” (Indonesian) and “ANCIENT PROBOSCIDA” (English) are prominently displayed in large, bold fonts at the top of each section, signifying the importance of the subject matter. The scientific name, *Stegodon trigonocephalus*, follows beneath in italicized text, a common typographical convention for Latin species names. The explanatory text in both Indonesian and English is written in smaller font sizes, indicating secondary importance while still providing essential contextual information.

This structured presentation aligns with LLMT 5 principles, where linguistic layers are visually ranked to guide reader attention efficiently. The consistent placement and font differentiation support intuitive comprehension and cater to both scientific and general audiences.

LLMT 7 Data

Batu Tegak

Monolith

Bahan:

Lokasi:

Jawa Barat

Peninggalan tradisi megalitik berupa tiang batu yang ditancapkan dalam posisi tegak. Sering diasosiasikan dalam bangunan pemujaan.

Based on LLMT 7 data, the explanation of the stone above uses multilingual language signs, Indonesian, English, and Latin. The use of language sign sizes for stone names is larger compared to other languages.

Conclusion

Based on the results of taking photos, collecting photos, and classifying data from existing photos, researchers see that the linguistic landscape used in the information on the labeling of historical objects at the Bandung Geological Museum while there are four languages used, namely Indonesian, English, Latin, Dutch. In the presentation on the label of an object, the language used simultaneously is bilingual. The use of the most dominant languages used at the Bandung Geological Museum is Indonesian and English. The use of both languages in the labeling shows that Indonesian as a national language identity and a means of connecting between citizens, between regions and between cultures, so that it can be understood by all Indonesian people. And the use of English as an international language because there are also many foreign visitors who come to the Bandung Geological Museum, so that with the explanation in English all can be understood well. While Dutch is used because the Bandung Geological Museum was first established by the Dutch colonial.

As for the size of the language marks used for the names of stones that use Indonesian, the size is larger. This aims to make the name easy to read and striking, so that it can be distinguished from other languages and information.

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