

LANGUAGE VARIATION IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF THE CHINATOWN AREA IN MAGELANG CITY

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Abstrak

Kajian lanskap linguistik menelaah penggunaan bahasa tulis di ruang publik sebagai representasi praktik kebahasaan sekaligus refleksi fungsi informatif dan simbolik dalam masyarakat. Secara teoretis, lanskap linguistik memiliki dua fungsi utama, yaitu fungsi informatif dan fungsi simbolik. Namun, dalam praktiknya penggunaan bahasa di ruang publik lebih menonjolkan fungsi informatif daripada fungsi simbolik. Kesenjangan antara konsep teoretis dan kenyataan tersebut mendorong penelitian ini dilakukan di Kawasan Pecinan Kota Magelang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan bentuk variasi bahasa serta fungsi lanskap linguistik yang muncul di kawasan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Sumber data penelitian berupa teks visual yang terdapat di ruang publik, meliputi papan nama, spanduk, iklan, dan papan petunjuk jalan. Data ini dikumpulkan melalui teknik observasi dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan metode padan menggunakan teknik pilah unsur penentu (PUP) melalui tahapan pengumpulan data, klasifikasi berdasarkan bentuk variasi bahasa, analisis unsur kebahasaan, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya variasi bahasa monolingual, bilingual, dan multilingual yang didominasi oleh penggunaan bahasa secara monolingual. Fungsi bahasa yang ditemukan meliputi fungsi informatif dan fungsi simbolik, dengan fungsi informatif sebagai fungsi yang paling dominan. Hasil temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa lanskap linguistik di Kawasan Pecinan Kota Magelang lebih berorientasi pada penyampaian informasi di ruang publik.

Kata Kunci: fungsi bahasa; media tulis; lanskap linguistik; ruang publik; variasi bahasa

Abstract

Linguistic landscape research examines written language in public spaces as a reflection of societal linguistic practices across various forms of public signage. Theoretically, the linguistic landscape has two main functions: informative and symbolic. However, in practice, language use in the observed Chinatown area of Magelang tends to emphasize the informative function. This gap between theoretical concepts and actual practice motivated the present study, which was conducted in the Chinatown area of Magelang City. This study aims to identify and describe forms of language variation and the functions of the linguistic landscape in the area. This research employs a qualitative, descriptive research design. The data sources consist of visual texts found in public spaces, including signboards, banners, advertisements, and road signs. Data were collected through observation and documentation techniques. Data analysis was conducted using the equivalence method with the determinant element sorting technique Pilah Unsur Penentu (PUP), comprising the following stages: data collection, classification by language variation type, analysis of linguistic elements, and conclusion drawing. The results show the presence of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual language variations, with monolingual language use being the most dominant. The language functions identified include informative and symbolic functions, with the informative functions being the most dominant. These findings indicate that the linguistic landscape in the Chinatown area of Magelang City is more oriented towards conveying information in public spaces.

Keywords: functions; chinatown; linguistic landscape; public space; language variation

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the development of written language use in public spaces, various visual forms have emerged, such as signboards, banners, advertisements, and other written signs. The phenomenon of language use in visual forms is known as the linguistic landscape. The study of the linguistic landscape views written language in public spaces as a representation of a community's linguistic practices, which functions not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of the social, cultural, and ideological conditions of a community.

Over the last two decades, the linguistic landscape has emerged as a dynamic field of study in linguistics. This development has been marked by an increase in the analysis of language use in public spaces. Linguistic landscape studies do not view language solely as a means of conveying messages, but also examine the variations of language that appear in public spaces as reflections of society's social, cultural, and ideological identities. The diversity of speakers' backgrounds and differences in communication goals have led to variations in language use, ranging from monolingual to multilingual (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008).

The existence of written language in public spaces is closely related to the character of public spaces as places of social interaction. Hakim (1987) states that public spaces are accessible to the general public and facilitate human interaction. Such social interaction triggers linguistic phenomena, especially in written form, which is present across various visual media. Therefore, public spaces are strategic locations for observing the dynamics of language use in society.

Theoretically, the linguistic landscape has two main functions: the informative and the symbolic (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The informative function concerns the delivery of information to the public, such as place names, directions, prohibitions, and appeals (Susianti et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, the symbolic function relates to the affirmation of identity, cultural values, and social affiliation within a group (Paradida, 2024). However, in practice, language use in public spaces often prioritizes informative purposes over symbolic representation. This tendency raises critical questions, particularly in culturally marked spaces such as Chinatown areas, where multilingual expression and ethnic identity might be expected to be more visibly represented. The dominance of informative functions may indicate a negotiation of identity, a shift in symbolic representation, or even a reduced visibility of ethnic markers in public signage. Therefore, examining whether Chinatown in Magelang reflects multilingual identity or instead prioritizes communicative efficiency becomes a significant sociolinguistic inquiry.

Language variation refers to differences in language use among speakers that are influenced by social, geographical, and communicative context factors (Sari & Ningsih, 2024). Within the linguistic landscape context, language variation can take the form of using one, two, or more than two languages in a single public space (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). Landry & Bourhis (1997) limit their study of the linguistic landscape to written language in public spaces, such as road signs, nameplates, and advertisements. In addition, linguistic landscape analysis distinguishes between top-down texts, produced by government agencies, and bottom-up texts, produced by individuals or private parties and reflecting the linguistic habits of the local community.

Linguistic landscape studies are rooted in sociolinguistics, which examines the relationship between language and society. Sociolinguistics studies linguistic phenomena, such as language variation, bilingualism, and multilingualism that arise from social interaction (Sari et al., 2022). This field of study places language use in a specific social context and links language to the identity of speakers and social communities

(Yusetyowati et al., 2022). Therefore, the linguistic landscape reveals the diversity of languages in public spaces, reflecting not only the demographic composition of a particular region but also the identities of individuals and groups in a multicultural society (Nasarudin et al., 2024).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Chinatown areas in Indonesia represent spaces where economic activity intersects with ethnic identity construction. As historically and culturally marked zones, Chinatowns are often associated with the visibility of Chinese linguistic and cultural symbols (Jenny & Rianto, 2021). However, the extent to which such identity markers are maintained, negotiated, or minimized in contemporary public signage remains an open question, particularly in smaller urban contexts such as Magelang City. Recent studies show that ethnic areas, such as Chinatowns, display multilingual complexity that reflects identity negotiations in the era of globalization (Fadhilah, 2024). One Chinatown area that has distinctive language use in public spaces is Magelang City Chinatown, which has a high concentration of Chinese residents (Refransa, 2020). This area is known as a center of commercial and tourist activity with strong historical and cultural value, making it a potential meeting place between local tradition and modernity, as reflected in various written texts in public spaces.

The linguistic variation observed in the Chinatown area of Magelang City reflects the complex interaction between the national language (Indonesian), regional language (Javanese), Chinese (in various scripts), and foreign languages (English) used in public spaces. This diversity of language use forms an interesting multilingual phenomenon to study because it represents the linguistic practices of the local community (Winarni, 2024). This phenomenon is relevant to study because it shows the efforts of the Chinese community to maintain their ethnic identity while adapting to the wider social environment (Sidarta, 2023). In addition,

the study of the linguistic landscape provides insight into the dynamics of language use in Indonesia's multicultural context (Syam et al., 2023) and serves as an indicator of the community's attitude towards the languages used in public spaces (Pramudya et al., 2025).

This study is similar to that of Florenta & Rahmawati (2021) in that it examines the linguistic landscape in public spaces using a descriptive qualitative approach and focuses on language variation in visual texts. However, there are differences in the context and reasons for language use. Florenta and Rahmawati's research focused on beach signs in the Gunung Kidul tourist area, so the use of multilingualism was primarily driven by tourism interests and the appeal to foreign tourists. Meanwhile, research in the Chinatown area of Magelang City focused on urban ethnic areas, where language use was more oriented toward message comprehensibility and the communication needs of the local community, as evidenced by the dominance of monolingual and bilingual varieties and a more prominent informative function.

This study is also in line with Sartini (2021) study on the linguistic landscape in public spaces, which used a descriptive qualitative approach, photographic documentation as the main data source, and classified the data into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. However, Sartini's study focused on the campus environment of Airlangga University, which is influenced by internationalization, so that English plays a strong role as a symbol of modernity. In contrast, the study in the Chinatown area of Magelang City places language as a means of local communication and representation of Chinese cultural identity, with more limited multilingual use and a more dominant informative function.

This study is similar to Susianti et al. (2025) study on the linguistic landscape in public spaces, which uses a descriptive qualitative approach and photographs as the main data. Both studies also examine language use within the community's

social context. However, Susianti et al.'s study focuses on the Sanur tourist area, which is heavily influenced by tourism, so English is more dominant as the language of communication with tourists. In contrast, the study in the Chinatown area of Magelang City emphasizes the use of language as a communication tool for the local community, with a dominance of monolingual variation and informative functions, as well as limited multilingual use.

This study also aligns with Wahyuni et al. (2025), which examined language variation in the linguistic landscape of public spaces using observation and documentation methods. Both studies grouped the data into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual categories. However, the study by Wahyuni et al. showed that English was more dominant in place names in Mataram City because it was considered more commercially attractive. In contrast, research in the Chinatown area of Magelang City shows that language selection is based more on the ease of understanding the message and the community's daily communication needs, rather than solely on attracting the market's attention.

The novelty of this research lies in its critical examination of language variation and linguistic functions within a smaller urban ethnic enclave. While previous studies have predominantly focused on tourism-oriented or institutional settings, limited attention has been paid to Chinatown areas in smaller cities, where patterns of identity representation may operate differently. This study addresses that gap by analyzing how language use in public signage in the Chinatown area of Magelang City reflects communicative priorities and the positioning of ethnic identity. Rather than merely categorizing monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual forms, this research interprets language choice as a social practice shaped by cultural context, informative needs, and symbolic representation in a multicultural urban space.

Based on comparisons with previous studies, the linguistic landscape study in the Chinatown area of Magelang City is motivated by linguistic phenomena evident in various written signs in public spaces. This study focuses on forms of language variation, including monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual usage, as well as the functions of the linguistic landscape represented through written signs. In line with the study's focus, the research questions address the forms of language variation and the function of the linguistic landscape in the public space of the Chinatown area of Magelang City. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the forms of language variation and the function of the linguistic landscape in this area. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of linguistic landscapes, particularly in the Chinatown area. In practice, the results of this research are expected to serve as a reference for further studies, especially those examining public spaces in tourist or multi-ethnic areas.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze forms of language variation and the functions of the linguistic landscape in the Chinatown area of Magelang City. This approach was chosen to facilitate an in-depth interpretation of language use in public visual texts within their socio-cultural context. The research was conducted in the Chinatown area located along Jalan Pemuda, Kemirirejo Subdistrict, Magelang Tengah District, Magelang City. The observed area stretches approximately 800 meters along Jalan Pemuda and serves as a historic commercial and economic center of the local Chinese community. Geographically, the area is situated approximately 650 meters, or about eight minutes on foot, from Magelang City Square, making it a strategic urban commercial zone. This location was selected due to its historical association with the Chinese community and its high concentration of commercial signage.

Data collection was carried out on September 26, 2025, within the defined spatial boundaries. The data consisted of publicly displayed written signs, including shop signboards, banners, advertisements, and road signs. A total of 72 signs were documented, representing monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual language variations. The study applied a total sampling technique, meaning that all eligible written signs encountered along the 800-meter research area were documented and analyzed. Only signs that were publicly visible, accessible, and contained written language in permanent or semi-permanent commercial or informational form were included in the analysis. Temporary handwritten notices, damaged or unreadable signs, and duplicate signs displaying identical linguistic content within the same establishment were excluded from the dataset.

Data were collected through systematic observation and photographic documentation. Each sign was photographed and cataloged for further analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the matching method as proposed by (Sudaryanto, 2015), in which the determining tools are external to the language system. The determinant element sorting technique *Pilah Unsur Penentu (PUP)* was employed to classify the data into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual categories and to identify the informative and symbolic functions of the linguistic landscape. The stages of analysis included data classification, identification of linguistic elements, functional interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings were presented in descriptive qualitative form.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found three forms of language variation in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Monolingual variation was observed in 41 data points, including Indonesian, English, and regional

languages. Bilingual variation was found in 30 data points, covering combinations of Indonesian English, Indonesian regional languages, and Japanese English. In addition, one data point of multilingual variation was found, combining more than two languages, namely Indonesian, English, and Javanese. This study also identified two functions of the linguistic landscape, namely the informative function and the symbolic function, which are represented through various visual texts in public spaces, such as signboards, signs, slogans, and advertisements. These two functions appear in all forms of language variation, whether monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual.

Monolingual Language Variation in the Linguistic Landscape of the Chinatown Area of Magelang City

Monolingual data in this study were found in various media, especially official government posters, prohibition signs, warning signs, shop signs, and public facilities. These media use simple, direct language that is easily understood by the community. Data selection focused on the most representative examples to illustrate patterns of monolingual language use and the function of the linguistic landscape in the research area.

Monolingual Indonesian in the Chinatown Area of Magelang City

A total of 33 data points showed the use of monolingual Indonesian. This data was found on official government posters, prohibition signs, warning signs, and some business names. From all this data, the analysis focused on a subset of samples considered representative. The selection of samples was based on the clarity of language variation, the strength of linguistic function, and the consistency of language usage patterns in the research area. This approach was taken to produce a more focused analysis in line with the research objectives.

Data 1 Monolingual Indonesian



Image Description: *Dengan Rahmat Tuhan yang Maha Esa Gapura Bhineka Tunggal Ika Persembahkan dari PSMTU-Magelang Diresmikan Oleh Walikota Magelang dr. H. Muchamad Nur Aziz. Sp. PD-KGH Magelang, 1 Juni 2021*

Based on data from the road inauguration plaque in the Pecinan area of Magelang City, monolingual language variations in Indonesian were found. The text on the plaque is displayed in a standard, formal manner, without using foreign or regional languages, thereby demonstrating its official and institutional character as a marker of public space issued by the government. In terms of function, this linguistic landscape serves an informative purpose by conveying the name of the road, the party that inaugurated it, and the time of the inauguration. In addition, the plaques serve a symbolic function, representing the government's authority and legitimacy in managing public spaces. The use of Indonesian as the sole language reflects the power relations and the role of local government in the arrangement of public spaces. Thus, this data shows that the use of monolingual language in the linguistic landscape serves both to convey information and to symbolize institutional legitimacy.

Data 2 Monolingual Indonesian



Image Description: *Berjualan di Area Larangan dipidana Kurungan Paling Lama 3 Bulan dan/atau Denda Paling Banyak Rp50.000.000 Perda Kota Mgl No. 6/2015*

Based on the second data, it was found that a monolingual language, namely Indonesian, was used, with clear, straightforward diction. This official prohibition sign only uses Indonesian without involving other languages, with the aim of ensuring that the message can be understood by all levels of society in the Chinatown area of Magelang City. Linguistically, the text is structured directly and explicitly to reflect the formal language commonly used in announcements or regulations in public spaces. In terms of function, this linguistic landscape serves an informative purpose by conveying the prohibition on selling in certain areas. In addition, the sign serves a symbolic function, affirming the authority of the public space management agency, especially through the phrase punishable by imprisonment, which conveys legal sanctions. Thus, the use of monolingual language on this prohibition sign serves to convey information, legitimize regulations, and control public behavior in the Chinatown area of Magelang City.

Data 3 Monolingual Indonesian



Image Description: *Anda Memasuki Kawasan Tertib Lalu-Lintas*

The third data shows the use of monolingual Indonesian in short and concise sentences. The choice of one language aims to convey the message directly so that it can easily understood by the entire community. The use of the word *tertib* (orderly) reflects the formal language commonly used in public space signage, particularly in signs related to rules and supervision. In terms of function, these official government signs primarily serve an informative purpose by indicating regulations in specific areas. In addition, they also have a regulatory and symbolic function because they represent the presence of government authority and imply an expectation that the community comply with applicable norms and regulations. Therefore, this linguistic landscape functions not only as a conveyor of information but also as a means of social control in the Chinatown area of Magelang City.

Data 4 Monolingual Indonesian



Image Description: *Bersih Itu Sehat Bersih Itu Indah*

The fourth piece of data is text on a trash can in the Chinatown area of Magelang City, which uses monolingual Indonesian. The language is

standard and communicative so that all users of public spaces can easily understand the message. The choice of educational language confirms that the message is intended for the general public without restriction to any particular group. In terms of the linguistic landscape's function, this text serves an informative purpose by conveying a message that links cleanliness with health and environmental beauty. In addition, it has a persuasive function through its implicit invitation to the public to dispose of trash in the designated areas as a form of environmental awareness. This text also has a symbolic function, representing social values and collective awareness that promote cleanliness in public spaces as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Data 5 Monolingual Indonesian



Image Description: *Nasional Sepeda Listrik Sekarang Ada di Sini*

Based on the fifth data documentation, it shows the use of language variants. Indonesia as a monolingual commercial store name. The store name uses communicative Indonesian vocabulary that is easily understood by the general public. The word *nasional* refers to the national identity of the Indonesian people, while the phrase *sekarang di sini* serves as a marker of the store's presence or opening at that location. This linguistic landscape has an informative and symbolic function. The informative function is clearly seen from the conveyance of information that there is already an electric bicycle store in the Chinatown area of Magelang City. The use of the term *nasional* which symbolizes the identity and culture of a nation, is a clear indicator of its symbolic function. This contributes to building the store's image as being close to the community

and strengthening its presence in the public sphere.

Monolingual English in the Chinatown area of Magelang City

The use of monolingual English was found in two data sources at the entrance of a store. This will be explained in detail below.

Data 6 Monolingual English



Image Description: No Smoking

The sixth piece of data is an example of the use of monolingual English in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City. Lexically, the phrase *no smoking* refers to a ban on smoking in certain areas or places for the general public or visitors to the area. Functionally, this sign has an informative function, providing accurate information about the prohibition of using a space. In addition to its informative function, this sign has an indirect regulatory function of regulating visitor behavior to ensure that smoking only occurs in designated areas. The use of English also conveys a universal and modern image, indicating that this text can be understood by various groups, including local and foreign tourists.

Data 7 Monolingual English



Image Description: Lasting Comfort Long Wearing

The seventh piece of data shows the monolingual use of English commonly found in commercial settings, such as stores and product

promotions. The phrase *Lasting Comfort Long Wearing* means long-lasting comfort and can be used for a long period of time. The word *lasting* means enduring, *comfort* means comfortable, and *long wearing* refers to the product's durability. In terms of function, this writing serves a persuasive function because it aims to convince consumers of the quality of the product being offered. In addition, this writing also has a symbolic function because the use of English creates an impression of modernity, professionalism, and high value. In the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City, the use of English in this writing indicates a commercial strategy to create a positive image and increase economic attractiveness in public spaces.

Monolingual Regional Language in the Chinatown Area of Magelang City

This study found six data points that used one language, namely the local language, mainly Javanese, monolingually. This data was obtained through store names.

Data 8 Monolingual Regional Language



Image Description: *Tentrem*

The eighth piece of data reads *tentrem* using a monolingual regional language, specifically the Javanese regional language. The word *tentrem* comes from the Javanese language and means calm or peaceful. The choice of this language variation shows the use of a unique local language without mixing with other languages. When viewed from a functional perspective, this linguistic landscape has a symbolic function to convey the values of harmony and tranquility inherent in Javanese culture. In addition, it serves as an identity marker for places or businesses that

want to project an image of safety and comfort. The use of the word *tentrem* creates a calming atmosphere, free from tension. From a Javanese cultural perspective, the word *tentrem* also describes a harmonious, peaceful life, far from conflict. Therefore, the use of the word *tentrem* reflects the hope for a comfortable atmosphere and good social relations.

Data 9 Monolingual Regional Language



Image Description: *Sarinah*

The findings in the ninth data show the use of regional language variations in a monolingual manner. The name of the store *sarinah* comes from the Javanese language, which means core or main. In the linguistic landscape, this naming serves a symbolic function as the identity of the business because the word *sarinah* conveys the perception of quality that it wants to highlight to visitors. The choice of the word *sarinah* aims to convey a familiar, friendly, and down-to-earth impression so that the business feels close to the community, especially the Javanese community. The use of the name *sarinah* builds a warm and trustworthy image because the word *sarinah* is widely known in culture and everyday life. From a Javanese cultural perspective, *sarinah* is also known as a female name that symbolizes a mother or a simple woman who is strong, patient, and caring. This name conveys sincerity and simplicity, while building consumer trust through its association with warmth and caring. Thus, the use of the word *sarinah* reflects Javanese cultural values that uphold the role of women as guardians of harmony, warmth, and balance in social life.

Data 10 Monolingual Regional Languages



Image Description: *Luwes*

The tenth data shows a store name that uses Javanese as a monolingual language, namely *luwes*. The choice of Javanese in this signboard is not only about meaning, but also about social identity. By using a regional language, the store positions itself as close to the local community in Magelang, where Javanese is widely spoken. The word *luwes* is commonly associated with flexibility, friendliness, and the ability to adapt. In this context, the name helps create a positive image of the store as welcoming and easy to approach. It suggests that the store provides friendly service and can adjust to customers' needs. This gives a comfortable impression to potential buyers. The use of Javanese in a commercial space also shows that regional language still plays an important role in public life. Instead of using Indonesian or English to appear more modern, the store chooses a local term to build familiarity and trust with the surrounding community. Therefore, the name *luwes* not only functions as a label, but also as a strategy to construct a friendly, locally connected, and culturally rooted business identity.

Data 11 Monolingual Regional Language



Image Description: *Podomoro*

The word *podomoro* is an example of monolingual use of a regional language, specifically Javanese. The word *podo* means same, while the word *moro* means come. When

combined, *podomoro* means come together. The use of regional language shows the preservation of local elements in public spaces. Functionally, *podomoro* has a symbolic function as a marker of place or business. The meaning of this name represents social and cultural values that are in harmony with the lives of the local community. The name *podomoro* was chosen to give the impression of Javanese culture so that it would be easily recognized by the local community. The owner chose this name for the store to emphasize cultural identity and create a sense of closeness with the surrounding environment. In addition, the name *podomoro* presents a positive image associated with hopes for goodness and good fortune. The name *podomoro* also represents the store owner's hope that the business will always be busy and successful.

Data 12 Monolingual Regional Language



Image Description: *Sego N'deso*

Based on this data, the term *sego n'deso* refers to the monolingual use of regional languages. This term refers to rural foods typical of certain regions that emphasize the full use of regional languages. The symbolic function arises from the commercial side because it attracts consumers with the image of simple and traditional food. In addition, this name shows cultural identity through the authenticity of local cuisine. The name *sego n'deso* was chosen so that buyers can imagine simple rural food. The word *sego* in Javanese means rice and *n'deso* means village. When combined, the words *sego n'deso* mean village rice. This name describes the simplicity of food that is inherent in Javanese culture. Shops with the name *sego n'deso* reflect the shop owner's hope that the dishes will taste delicious

and that buyers can feel the warm and comfortable atmosphere of the countryside.

Data 13 Monolingual Regional Language



Image Description: *Tjan*

The name of the shop, written as *tjan*, reflects the use of a monolingual language influenced by old characters or spelling. The word *tjan* comes from the Chinese ethnic clan name *chen* in Mandarin. This shows the acculturation of local and Chinese cultures while emphasizing the unique character of the Chinatown area. The name *tjan* has a symbolic function as a name or trademark that reflects the history, ethnic identity, and cultural heritage of the Chinese community in the Chinatown area of Magelang City. This name was chosen to emphasize the Chinese ethnic identity and provide uniqueness so that it is easily recognizable by consumers. The short form of the name makes it easy to remember and reinforces the store's distinctive character. From a Chinese cultural perspective, the word *tjan* is an old romanization of a Chinese family name or surname, as well as a way of introducing traditional cultural values to consumers.

Bilingual Language Variations in the Linguistic Landscape of Magelang City's Chinatown

Bilingual data was found on store signs, promotional banners, and facility information boards. The use of two languages in one sign indicates a communication strategy that combines clarity of information with cultural or commercial branding. The data was selected based on the clarity of the language variation and its relevance to the function of the linguistic landscape.

Indonesian-English Bilingualism in the Chinatown Area of Magelang City

This study found 17 data points that used two languages, namely Indonesian and English, bilingually. The selection of data analyzed was based on the level of relevance to the theory, clarity in the use of language variation, and linguistic function suitability. This was done so that the analysis could be more focused and align with the research objectives. The research data was sourced from signboards and store advertisements.

Data 14 Indonesian-English Bilingual

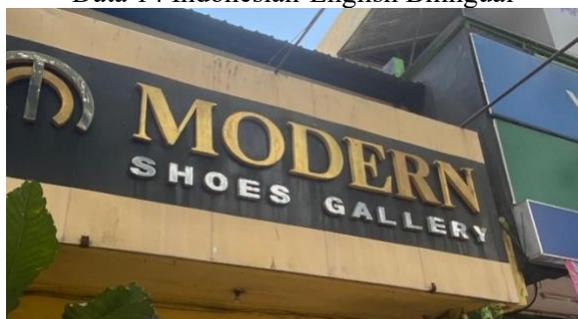


Image Description: *Modern Shoes Gallery*

This data presents a bilingual language variation in the store name *Modern Shoes Gallery*, combining Indonesian in the word *modern* and English in the phrase *shoes gallery*. The combination of these two languages reflects a strategic choice rather than simply describing the products being sold. The use of English in *shoes gallery* creates an impression of modernity, trendiness, and global orientation. English is often associated with prestige and contemporary lifestyle, especially in urban commercial areas. By using English, the store positions itself as fashionable and up-to-date, which may attract younger consumers and middle-class buyers who associate English with higher quality and modern taste. Meanwhile, the presence of the word *modern* strengthens this image by emphasizing innovation and relevance to current trends. The bilingual structure also signals openness to wider audiences beyond local customers. In the context of the Chinatown area, this language choice

reflects how business owners use language not only to inform but also to construct a certain social image and economic positioning. Therefore, the signage functions not merely as a product label, but as a marketing strategy that builds a modern, prestigious, and competitive identity in an urban commercial environment.

Data 15 Indonesian-English Bilingual



Image Description: *KFC Free WiFi, Mushola, Parkir halaman belakang*

The store name *KFC free WiFi, mushola, parkir halaman belakang* showcases variations in English and Indonesian. The phrase *free WiFi* reflects the use of English as an international brand name, while Indonesian is used to refer to supporting facilities. This variation in language reflects a linguistic strategy that combines local and global elements in the public space of the Chinatown area of Magelang City. The use of language serves an informative function in conveying information about the facilities available to visitors. The services available at this location include free internet access, a place of worship, and a parking area at the back of the store. In addition to conveying information, the sign also serves a commercial purpose by highlighting the convenience and comprehensiveness of the services to attract consumers.

Data 16 Bilingual Indonesian-English



Image Description: *Service Tas Makmur*

The data labeled *Service Tas Makmur* shows the use of bilingual language variation combining English and Indonesian. The word *service* is taken from English, while *tas makmur* comes from Indonesian. This combination reflects a deliberate language choice in a commercial context. From an informative function, the word *service* clearly indicates that the shop provides repair services, while *tas* specifies the object being repaired. Through this naming, customers can immediately understand the type of service offered. The use of English in the word *service* also suggests technical skill and professionalism, which strengthens the clarity of the business identity. From a symbolic function, the word *makmur* expresses hope for prosperity and business success. In Indonesian cultural context, business names often contain positive expressions or prayers, reflecting the owner's aspirations. By combining English and Indonesian, the shop constructs a dual identity: modern and professional on the one hand, and locally rooted and culturally meaningful on the other. Therefore, the shop name does not only function as information about repair services, but also as a symbolic representation of business values, aspirations, and identity within the public space of the Chinatown area.

Indonesian-Regional Language Bilingualism in the Chinatown Area of Magelang City

This study identified 12 data points showing the bilingual use of Indonesian and regional languages. Some of the data were selected based on the level of relevance and clarity of language

variation use so that the analysis was more focused and in line with the research objectives. The use of Indonesian and regional language variations was commonly found in traditional culinary businesses and store names.

Data 17 Bilingual Indonesian-Regional Language



Image Description: *Apotik Waras*

The store name *Apotik Waras* shows the use of bilingual language, combining Indonesian and Javanese. The word *apotik* indicates that the place sells medicine, while *waras*, a Javanese word commonly used in daily conversation, refers to the idea of being healthy or recovered. Although the spelling *apotik* does not follow the standard form in Indonesian orthography, its use reflects common practice in public signage. From an informative function, the word *apotik* clearly identifies the type of business, allowing customers to immediately recognize that the store provides medicine. The addition of *waras* strengthens the association with health and recovery, making the purpose of the store even clearer. From a symbolic function, the use of the Javanese word *waras* reflects local cultural identity and emotional closeness to the community. In the context of Magelang, where Javanese is widely spoken, this choice creates familiarity and warmth. Rather than using a more formal or purely Indonesian term, the owner chooses a local expression that feels personal and culturally meaningful. Thus, the store name not only serves as information about pharmaceutical services, but also constructs a locally rooted identity and expresses hope for customers' well-

being within the public space of the Chinatown area.

Data 18 Bilingual Indonesian-Regional Language



Image Description: *Pucung Toko Poetjoeng*

The name of the store *pucung toko poetjoeng* shows the use of two languages, namely Indonesian and a regional language, specifically Javanese. The name of this store consists of three words, with the word *toko* coming from Indonesian, while the words *pucung* and *poetjoeng* come from the regional language. The word *toko* describes the type of business. Meanwhile, the words *pucung* and *poetjoeng* are *tembang macapat* that have the meaning of death. The spelling of *poetjoeng* uses the old spelling "oe" and the new spelling "u." According to the spelling and rules of EYD edition V, the correct spelling is *pucung*. Based on Javanese culture, the word *pucung* refers to one of the *tembang macapat*, which contains philosophical values. The naming of *toko pucung* represents Javanese culture, giving a traditional classic impression. In terms of function, the choice of this shop name has a symbolic function as a local cultural identity. In addition, it serves as a distinctive feature or uniqueness of the shop so that consumers can easily find shops that sell funeral supplies.

Data 19 Bilingual Indonesian-Regional Language



Image Description: *Es Ce Hun Tiau & Bongko Ny. WENDY Asli Pontianak*

The business name *Es Ce Hun Tiau & Bongko Ny. Wendy Asli Pontianak* shows the use of bilingual language through Indonesian and regional languages. *Es Ce Hun Tiau and Bongko* are typical foods of Pontianak, West Kalimantan. The word *es* comes from Indonesian, which indicates a type of cold dish, while *Ce Hun Tiau* comes from Chinese, with *ce* meaning sweet potato, *hun* meaning flour, and *tiau* meaning long block. The mention of *Ny. Wendy* indicates the identity of the business owner, while the phrase *asli Pontianak* (authentic Pontianak) emphasizes the origin of the cuisine. The naming of this business represents Chinese cultural identity through Pontianak's unique culinary traditions and conveys an impression of authenticity. The inclusion of the owner's name adds a personal touch and affirms ownership of the business, while the phrase *asli Pontianak* serves as a marker of authenticity and product quality. From a linguistic perspective, this name serves a symbolic function through the representation of cultural identity and an informative function through the communication of the type of business, the identity of the owner, and the origin of the product.

Bilingual Japanese-English Chinatown Area of Magelang City

This study found data showing the bilingual use of Japanese and English. Variations in Japanese and English were found on alternative health service boards.

Data 20 Japanese-English Bilingual



Image Description: *Nakamura Holistic Therapy*

The data labeled *nakamura holistic therapy* shows the use of bilingual language variation through Japanese and English in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City. This phrase consists of three words, namely *nakamura* as a family name in Japanese culture and *holistic therapy* from English, which means comprehensive treatment. Overall, the name of this business refers to a health therapy center with a traditional Japanese approach. The use of the word *nakamura* gives an authentic impression related to Japanese culture, while the phrase *holistic therapy* builds an image of modern health services. The combination of the two languages represents the identity of the business as an alternative therapy center that emphasizes tradition, health, and trust. In terms of the linguistic landscape, this name serves a symbolic function through its representation of traditional Japanese medicine and an informative function through its description of the types of services offered.

Multilingual Language Variation in the Linguistic Landscape of the Chinatown Area of Magelang City

This study identified one piece of data showing the use of multilingual language variation in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City. The data was found on a business promotional banner and combined Indonesian, English, and Javanese. Although the amount of data is limited, it was selected because it is relevant and represents the practice of using more than two languages in a single public sign.

Data 21 Multilingual Indonesian-English-regional



Image Description: *Gempar Discount Geden HUT Mac Mohan*

The advertisement reading *Gempar Discount Geden HUT Mac Mohan* represents multilingual language use in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area. The Indonesian elements in this banner are *gempar* and *HUT*. These words frame the promotion within a national context and signal that the event is related to a celebratory occasion. From an informative perspective, they indicate that the promotion is linked to the company's anniversary. Symbolically, the word *gempar* creates a dramatic and sensational effect, suggesting that the promotion is extraordinary and not an ordinary sale event. The English element appears in the word *discount*. Informatively, this word directly communicates a price reduction, making the purpose of the advertisement immediately clear to consumers. Symbolically, the use of English adds a modern and commercial tone, as English is often associated with urban retail culture and contemporary marketing strategies. It positions the company as dynamic and competitive in a broader market context. The Javanese element can be seen in the word *geden*, which is commonly used in everyday local speech to express something large or significant. Informatively, it reinforces the scale of the discount being offered. Symbolically, the use of Javanese creates familiarity and emotional closeness with the local community in Magelang. By combining Indonesian, English, and Javanese in one banner, the advertisement not only conveys promotional information but also blends national identity, global commercial style, and local cultural expression within the public space.

DISCUSSION

Based on an analysis of several data points in the linguistic landscape, language use in the Chinatown area of Magelang City shows two main functions, namely informative and symbolic functions. These two functions often appear

simultaneously in a single sign, although one function is more dominant than the other. The informative function is the most prominent. This function is seen in signs that aim to convey information clearly and in a way that is easily understood by the public, such as official government posters, road signs, prohibition signs, public facility nameplates, and business nameplates. The dominance of the informative function shows that language use in public spaces in this area prioritizes clarity of message over the affirmation of linguistic identity.

However, this dominance is also related to power relations in the Chinatown context. Indonesian, as the national and official language, holds institutional authority and is strongly supported by government regulations. Its prominent use in official and public signs reflects the government's control over public space and language policy, even in an area historically associated with Chinese ethnic identity. At the same time, identity negotiation can be observed. Although Chinatown represents a particular ethnic and cultural background, the stronger presence of Indonesian suggests a tendency toward wider social integration and effective communication. Other languages, such as Chinese, Javanese, or English, may still appear, but they function more as cultural or commercial symbols rather than as dominant identity markers. This shows that identity in public space is not fixed, but continuously negotiated between national authority, local culture, and economic interests.

On official signs and public facilities, Indonesian is used predominantly because it is considered the most effective for conveying directions, rules, and spatial identity to people from diverse backgrounds. This is different from business and service nameplates, where the informative function is evident through the mention of the type of business, product, or service offered. On bilingual Indonesian-English signs, Indonesian serves as the primary

explanation, while English acts as a supplement and a marketing strategy to attract consumers' attention. In addition, some persuasive signs, such as those encouraging cleanliness, still display an informative function because they clearly convey the expected action.

Although the informative function is more dominant, the symbolic function is still present in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City. The symbolic function is evident through the choice of language that reflects social, cultural, and economic identity. The use of Indonesian on official plaques represents the government's authority in the arrangement of public spaces. The Javanese language that appears on traditional business signs serves to reinforce local cultural identity and build closeness with the local community. Meanwhile, the use of English serves to build a modern and commercial image, even though it is not always necessary for understanding the information.

In Indonesian-English and Indonesian-Javanese bilingual signs, the symbolic function is evident through the combination of national and local identities. Indonesian represents national identity, while other languages reflect cultural identity or economic interests. Overall, the results of the analysis show that language in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a means of forming identity and social relations in public spaces.

The results of the study in the Chinatown area of Magelang City show the diversity of language variation in the linguistic landscape. Of the 72 data found, language variation includes monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual, and displays two functions of language in public spaces. These findings show that the area is a meeting place for various languages that reflect the everyday language practices of the community. The use of language in public spaces is influenced by the social, cultural, and identity backgrounds of the speakers. The linguistic

landscape data analyzed includes shop signs, banners, advertisements, road signs, and various other written signs.

The analysis shows that monolingual language variation dominates the linguistic landscape with 41 data points. The languages used include Indonesian, English, and regional languages, with Indonesian being the most dominant. This dominance indicates the role of Indonesian as the main means of communication to reach the wider community, in line with Landry & Bourhis (1997) theory which states that language in official texts serves to convey information clearly and effectively. Meanwhile, the use of English and regional languages in a monolingual manner shows the adaptation of language to the function of the sign and the target audience.

Bilingual language variation was found in 30 data sets, with combinations of Indonesian and foreign or regional languages. The use of two languages in one sign indicates an effort to broaden the reader's understanding. In most bilingual data sets, Indonesian serves as the main language, while the other language acts as a support to clarify meaning, broaden the reach of the message, or mark certain linguistic features in public spaces. This finding is in line with the research by Devina et al. (2024), which states that bilingualism in the linguistic landscape aims to improve the comprehensibility of messages. Multilingual language variation was only found in one data, which combined Indonesian, English, and Javanese. Although limited in number, this data shows the use of more than two languages in one sign to reach readers with different linguistic backgrounds.

Based on the function of language use, the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City displays informative and symbolic functions. The informative function is more dominant because most signs aim to convey information clearly, such as place names, directional signs, and business identities. This

finding is in line with the research by Puspitasari et al. (2025), which states that the informative function is generally more dominant in the linguistic landscape of public spaces. The symbolic function is seen in the choice of language that represents cultural and linguistic identity, especially in signs that combine national, regional, and foreign languages. This supports Landry & Bourhis' (1997) opinion that language in public spaces not only functions as a means of communication but also represents the social and cultural identity of the community.

Overall, the results of the study show that the choice of language in the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area of Magelang City prioritizes ease of understanding for the community. Language is used flexibly, whether monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, so that the message is conveyed clearly. This study also shows that even though the area is an ethnic area, language use is more oriented towards effective communication and clarity of message delivery than displaying broad linguistic diversity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown area in Magelang City reflects a dynamic interaction between communicative needs and identity representation. Although Chinatown is commonly associated with strong ethnic visibility and multilingual expression, the findings reveal that language use in this area is largely oriented toward communicative efficiency rather than symbolic assertion of ethnic identity. The dominance of Indonesian and the stronger presence of informative functions indicate that practical communication needs often take precedence over explicit ethnic marking in public signage.

This pattern suggests a form of identity negotiation in a secondary-city urban context. Rather than foregrounding Chinese linguistic symbols as dominant identity markers, business owners appear to prioritize accessibility, clarity,

and broader market reach. Symbolic elements such as the use of Javanese, Chinese, or culturally meaningful names are present, but they function in a complementary rather than dominant role. This reflects a pragmatic language ideology, in which language choice is shaped more by economic considerations and social integration than by ethnic display.

Theoretically, this study challenges the common assumption that ethnic enclaves necessarily emphasize symbolic identity in their linguistic landscape. In the case of Magelang's Chinatown, linguistic practices reveal a more subtle and negotiated form of identity construction. Practically, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how smaller urban centers manage multilingualism, local identity, and commercial communication within multicultural public spaces. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across Chinatowns in different Indonesian cities in order to explore whether similar patterns of communicative dominance and identity negotiation occur in other socio-cultural and economic contexts.

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