

Language representation in the linguistic landscape of Islamic higher education campuses in East Java

ABSTRACT - Campus signage functions not only as a navigational and informational tool but also as a semiotic medium through which language, identity, and institutional values are communicated and internalized within the quotidian fabric of academic life. Although scholarly discourse has increasingly addressed issues of national integration, global engagement, and the use of religious language in higher education, these linguistic patterns remain insufficiently examined within the context of Indonesian Islamic universities. This study addresses this gap by investigating how language choices on university signage reflect broader ideological, pedagogical, and institutional orientations. Focusing on the linguistic landscapes of three Islamic higher education institutions in East Java, the research maps the display patterns, combinatory strategies, and functional differentiation of Indonesian, English, and Arabic across campus signs. Employing qualitative methods, including the documentation of 147 signs and semi structured interviews with campus stakeholders, the study examines how multilingual signage is interpreted and internalized by its users. The findings indicate a patterned coexistence of the three languages: Indonesian ensures communicative accessibility, English signals global academic aspirations, and Arabic invokes religious and intellectual heritage. These languages do not operate in isolation but interact in layered and symbolic configurations that reflect each institution's distinct identity and educational mission. The study underscores the need for intentional signage design to reinforce institutional identity, enhance communication effectiveness, and support informal language learning. Future research may extend these findings by examining multilingual signage in other educational contexts or by assessing the impact of sign redesign on user interpretation and engagement.

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1. Introduction

Indonesian universities are currently experiencing increasing linguistic pressure as internationalization, Islamic identity, and local multilingual realities intersect within campus public spaces. In Islamic higher education institutions, these intersections become particularly significant because the linguistic landscape functions not only as a medium of communication but also as an ideological mirror that reveals institutional identities, language policies, and cultural orientations. Although these institutions host students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, the languages displayed in campus public areas often fail to represent this diversity adequately (Yusuf, 2022). This situation highlights the importance of examining how languages are selected, prioritized, and visually presented in university environments in East Java, a region known for its sociolinguistic richness (Yusuf, 2022).

Studies conducted in various Indonesian regions demonstrate that linguistic landscape phenomena extend beyond matters of signage design and reflect broader sociocultural processes. Research in Yogyakarta shows that language choice in public signs is shaped by the interaction between local languages, the symbolic authority of Bahasa Indonesia, and the prestige associated with English (Silva et al., 2021). Additional studies from Yogyakarta (Andriyanti, 2019), Maluku Province (Iye et al., 2023), Mojokerto (Rohmah & Wijayanti, 2023), and Lembang, Bandung (Mubarok et al., 2024) reveal a consistent dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and English in public signage. Arabic, despite its central position in Islamic education, tends to appear mostly in religious contexts where it symbolizes Islamic values rather than serving as a tool for everyday communication (Napu, 2024). Local languages such as Javanese and Sundanese are even less visible, which raises concerns about the marginalization of regional linguistic heritage (Sudarmanto et al., 2023). These patterns underline the necessity of sustaining linguistic diversity and developing inclusive language policies that recognize the linguistic identities of local communities.

In the context of universities, the absence of formal policies governing signage often produces inconsistencies in language representation. Institutions aiming for international visibility frequently incorporate English into campus signage alongside Bahasa Indonesia (Pradita & Arimi, 2024). However, the quality of English displayed on public signs often contains grammatical and lexical errors, indicating challenges in meeting global language expectations (Rohmah et al., 2024). International findings echo these complexities. Studies from universities in Norway and South Africa reveal discrepancies between officially promoted multilingualism and the linguistic realities seen in public signage, exposing underlying hierarchies among languages (Abongdia & Foncha, 2014; Motschenbacher, 2024). These patterns illustrate how linguistic landscapes serve as ideological spaces where issues of representation, power, and identity come to the surface (Adekunle et al., 2019; Abrar-ul-Hassan, 2021).

Despite the growing body of research on linguistic landscapes in Indonesia, investigations focusing specifically on Islamic universities in East Java remain limited. This gap is noteworthy given that these institutions are shaped by highly diverse student populations whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence campus life. Existing studies have

examined language displays in schools and public spaces, yet little attention has been given to how Islamic universities visually present Indonesian, English, Arabic, and local languages in their public environments. Studies that address ideological, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions of university linguistic landscapes in this context are still relatively scarce (Fakhiroh & Rohmah, 2018; Harahap et al., 2020). This indicates the need for more focused research that captures the linguistic identities and symbolic meanings encoded in the signage of Islamic universities in East Java.

This study examines the distribution, visual organization, and communicative and symbolic functions of multilingual signage in the linguistic landscapes of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, UIN KHAS Jember, and UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. The analytical framework synthesizes key perspectives from linguistic landscape research and critical spatial theory. It draws on foundational work on language visibility and ethnolinguistic vitality (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and extends to the conceptualization of linguistic landscapes as sites of language policy and identity construction (Shohamy, 2006; Piller, 2003). Geosemiotic approaches further inform the analysis by emphasizing the spatial and visual organization of meaning (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), while research on multilingualism in public spaces highlights patterns of language distribution and interaction (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space provides a critical lens for interpreting how signage reflects institutional and social practices. These perspectives are complemented by more recent empirical studies demonstrating how linguistic landscapes index ideological meanings and de facto language policies in educational settings (Alisaari et al., 2019; Neokleous, 2023).

Collectively, these perspectives provide a coherent analytical foundation for interpreting linguistic landscapes not merely as visible language displays, but as socially and ideologically embedded practices. Building on this perspective, this research argues that the linguistic landscape of Islamic universities in East Java represents an interpretive space where institutions negotiate their local, national, religious, and international identities. The languages displayed in public signage reveal institutional priorities, cultural orientations, and implicit language policies that influence everyday academic life. Through this examination, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic landscapes shape the identity and communicative environment of Islamic universities within the wider Indonesian sociolinguistic setting

2. Literature review

2.1. Linguistic landscape as a sociolinguistic and ideological space

The concept of the linguistic landscape (LL) has become an important analytical lens in sociolinguistics for understanding how language, space, and social meaning intersect in public settings. Linguistic landscape research focuses on the ways languages are made visible through signs, inscriptions, and spatial arrangements, offering insights into patterns of bilingualism, multilingualism, and language hierarchies within a society (Gorter, 2013). Rather than simply recording which languages appear, this body of research shows how public signage reflects social relations, institutional authority, and underlying ideological positions (Amin & Zarrinabadi, 2022).

In educational settings, linguistic landscapes are especially revealing because they bring institutional language policies and identity construction into the everyday spaces of academic life (Kamwendo & Seretse, 2014; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014). Campus signs, announcements, and symbolic displays indicate which languages are recognized, valued, or sidelined, thereby making institutional language ideologies visible in concrete ways (Clorion, 2024; Meis & Kashima, 2017). These signs operate on two levels. On the one hand, they have a practical role in supporting orientation and access. On the other hand, they carry symbolic meanings that point to institutional values, cultural affiliations, and power relations (Altbach, 2015). Together, these communicative and symbolic roles shape the academic environment and influence how students experience, navigate, and interpret campus space (Riadi & Warti, 2021).

2.2. Linguistic landscape as language policy in practice

A major strand of LL scholarship conceptualizes public signage as a form of *language policy in practice*, where decisions about language use are enacted spatially rather than formally legislated. This perspective emphasizes the frequent gap between official multilingual aspirations and their uneven implementation in public spaces. Gorter and Cenoz (2016) argue that linguistic landscapes often expose tensions between language policy goals and everyday practices, especially in multilingual environments.

Studies conducted in Indonesian universities consistently indicate that campus signage is dominated by Bahasa Indonesia and English, while Arabic and local languages tend to appear in more limited or largely symbolic contexts (Pradita & Arimi, 2024). This pattern reflects implicit language hierarchies in which national and global languages are granted greater visibility and authority, whereas minority or regional languages remain marginal. The presence of particular languages on public signs not only shapes students' access to information but also influences their perceptions of linguistic legitimacy and identity (Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2023; Preece, 2019). Similar tendencies have been identified in research on linguistic landscapes across Indonesian public spaces, including transportation hubs, border areas, tourist destinations, and urban centers, where patterns of dominance, negotiation, and exclusion are closely linked to institutional priorities and broader socio-political considerations (Widiyanto, 2020; Sahril et al., 2019; Sudarmanto et al., 2023; Abdullah & Wulung, 2021; Mubarok et al., 2024; Rohmah & Wijayanti, 2023; Nenotek et al., 2024; Andriyanti, 2019; Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias, 2023).

However, LL research also reveals persistent challenges in implementation, including spelling errors, grammatical inconsistencies, and lack of standardization across multilingual signage. These issues signal institutional struggles with language planning and undermine efforts to promote inclusivity and linguistic quality (Tamtomo & Goebel, 2022; Nuswantara et al., 2021; Hadiati et al., 2023; Hamied & Musthafa, 2019). The continual negotiation between Bahasa Indonesia, English, and local languages ultimately shapes which linguistic identities are made visible and which remain peripheral (Goebel, 2020; Degaf et al., 2026).

2.3. *Linguistic landscape as pedagogical and experiential space*

Another important dimension of LL research views signage as a pedagogical resource that supports incidental and informal language learning. Cenoz and Gorter (2008) argue that linguistic landscapes function as an additional source of linguistic input, exposing learners to vocabulary, registers, and scripts beyond the classroom. In educational institutions, this exposure can foster familiarity with foreign languages and normalize multilingual practices in everyday routines.

Empirical studies show that multilingual signage enhances accessibility while simultaneously reinforcing cultural and linguistic identities (Clorion, 2024; Bernardo-Hinesley, 2020). English in particular is frequently associated with prestige, modernity, and global engagement, serving both symbolic and pedagogical functions (Nuswantara et al., 2021). At the same time, Arabic operates as a marker of religious tradition and scholarly authority, especially in Islamic educational settings (Husein, 2023). These pedagogical and symbolic dimensions of LL highlight how students navigate multilingual environments shaped by institutional decisions and lived linguistic practices.

2.4. *Linguistic landscape in Islamic higher education*

Islamic universities in Indonesia present a distinctive linguistic landscape shaped by the intersection of national language policy, religious identity, global academic aspirations, and regional diversity. Bahasa Indonesia dominates academic and administrative communication due to its role as the national unifying language (Degaf et al., 2026). Arabic holds a central symbolic and functional position in religious, theological, and Islamic studies contexts, reinforcing institutional legitimacy and faith-based identity (Husein, 2023). English has become increasingly visible in response to international collaboration, academic mobility, and global competitiveness (Thoyib et al., 2025).

These multilingual configurations reflect ongoing efforts by Islamic universities to balance heritage and innovation in constructing institutional identity (Yusuf, 2022; Abbas et al., 2023). Broader developments such as the Islamization of knowledge and global academic integration further encourage the strategic use of international languages within curricula and campus spaces. Nevertheless, regional languages such as Javanese often remain marginal in formal signage, despite their vitality in everyday interaction (Artawa et al., 2023). The prestige and perceived utility of English frequently elevate its status above local languages, reinforcing broader patterns of linguistic marginalization (Anjanillah et al., 2021; Irham et al., 2022; Pradita, 2024).

2.5. *Conceptual framework for the present study*

Drawing on the reviewed literature, this study views the linguistic landscape of Islamic universities as a complex space where language policy, teaching practices, and institutional identity intersect. Following Landry and Bourhis (1997), campus signage is understood as serving both informational functions, such as guiding movement and communicating rules, and symbolic functions that signal institutional values and identities. From Shohamy's perspective,

the linguistic landscape also operates as a form of implicit language policy, in which institutional priorities are communicated through visible language choices rather than through formal policy documents. In line with Cenoz and Gorter (2008), signage is further approached as a pedagogical environment that supports incidental language learning through repeated exposure in everyday campus life. Lefebvre's notion of space adds another dimension by distinguishing between space as conceived by institutions and space as lived by students, making it possible to examine how multilingual signage is interpreted, internalized, and negotiated by campus users.

This framework allows the study to move beyond a purely descriptive account of language distribution and to develop an integrated understanding of how linguistic choices operate at structural, symbolic, and experiential levels. At the structural level, the framework guides the analysis of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signage to reveal patterns of dominance, hierarchy, and visibility among Indonesian, English, Arabic, and other languages. At the symbolic level, it enables an examination of how these language choices reflect broader ideological orientations, such as national cohesion, global academic aspirations, and Islamic religious legitimacy, as indicated by the spatial placement and visual prominence of particular languages. At the experiential level, the framework foregrounds students' interpretations of signage in their everyday navigation of campus space, highlighting how multilingual signs function not only as sources of information but also as markers of institutional identity and as resources for informal and incidental language learning. Integrating these dimensions, the framework conceptualizes the linguistic landscape as a site where institutional intentions and lived student practices intersect, allowing a systematic examination of how campus signage in Islamic higher education institutions in East Java materializes language policy, enacts pedagogical values, and constructs layered identities within the physical and symbolic space of the university.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the linguistic landscapes of three Islamic universities in East Java. This design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of how meanings are constructed through the spatial organization of signs and how different languages function within specific institutional contexts (Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013). To support and contextualize the qualitative interpretations, basic descriptive quantification was used to summarize language distribution patterns, particularly in terms of the frequency of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signage. Each sign was identified according to the presence of Bahasa Indonesia, English, Arabic, and other languages where applicable, and then categorized accordingly. These classifications served to enrich the interpretive analysis of language practices in the university setting (Borgstede & Rau, 2022; Suparwa et al., 2023).

3.2. *Research sites and sampling*

The fieldwork was conducted at three Islamic universities in East Java, namely UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, and UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. These institutions were selected purposively because they represent Islamic higher education institutions that combine strong religious traditions with modern academic orientations and multilingual aspirations. Each campus also exhibits distinct linguistic environments shaped by institutional history, language policy, and spatial design.

Signage data were collected from high-visibility campus locations, including faculty buildings, classrooms, libraries, administrative offices, language centers, mosques, and other frequently accessed public areas where institutional messages are most prominently displayed (Riani et al., 2021). Both permanent and temporary signs were included in order to capture long-term institutional representations as well as short-term communicative practices related to services, events, or announcements (Kusumahwati, 2023).

3.3. *Data collection methods*

3.3.1. *Signage documentation*

A total of 147 signs were documented across the three campuses, including 36 signs from UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, with the remaining signs distributed across UIN KHAS Jember and UIN SATU Tulungagung. Each sign was photographed and systematically recorded with information on its location, language composition, sign type, and visual features such as font size, layout, and placement. A structured coding system (for example, UIN M/001) was applied to ensure that each sign could be traced back to its attributes and consistently analyzed in relation to visual identity, signage function, and wayfinding practices (Bowrey et al., 2019; Iftikhar et al., 2020; Clorion, 2024). Descriptive field notes were cross-checked with photographic data to minimize duplication and omission. All documentation procedures were conducted with prior institutional consent and followed ethical considerations related to cultural and institutional representation (Bowrey et al., 2019; Clorion, 2024).

3.3.2. *Student interviews*

To complement the signage data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 18 students, consisting of six students from each university. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting students from different faculties and year levels who regularly interacted with campus signage, particularly in areas where multilingual signs were highly visible. Each interview lasted approximately 10 - 15 minutes and consisted of focused questions exploring students' perceptions of the use of Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic on campus signage, their views on the visibility or absence of local languages, and their reflections on the perceived communicative, symbolic, and educational value of multilingual signs. All interview notes and transcripts were anonymized, and participant initials were used to ensure confidentiality in line with standard research ethics.

3.4. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through two complementary stages combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first stage involved thematic qualitative analysis of both signage and interview data, beginning with data familiarization through repeated reading of field notes, photographs, and interview transcripts. Codes were generated using a primarily inductive approach that allowed themes to emerge from the data, while remaining informed by key theoretical concepts in linguistic landscape studies. These codes were subsequently organized into broader analytical themes related to institutional identity, language hierarchy, pedagogical value, and student interpretation within the cultural and religious contexts of each university. Throughout this stage, the analysis was guided consistently by established theoretical frameworks, including the informational and symbolic functions of linguistic landscapes (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), the distinction between conceived and lived space (Lefebvre, 1991), geosemiotic analysis of spatial and visual features (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), the symbolic status of English as a prestige language (Piller, 2003), norms of visibility and display (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006), signage as implicit language policy (Shohamy, 2006), and the pedagogical effects of repeated language exposure (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). The second stage consisted of descriptive quantitative analysis of the signage data, in which language combinations and sign types were manually tabulated to identify frequency patterns of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signage across campuses; this quantitative overview served to support and contextualize the qualitative findings by highlighting patterns of dominance, visibility, and underrepresentation that might not be immediately evident through qualitative analysis alone.

3.5. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations

The credibility of this study was enhanced through systematic data triangulation, which involved the integration of multiple data sources, including photographic documentation of campus signage, field observations, student interview data, and relevant institutional materials. This triangulation strategy allowed findings to be cross-checked across different forms of evidence, thereby reducing the risk of single-source bias and strengthening the overall validity of the interpretations (Carter et al., 2014; Noble & Heale, 2019; Donkoh, 2023). In addition, peer debriefing was employed throughout the analytical process to discuss emerging themes, question preliminary interpretations, and ensure consistency in coding decisions. This collaborative review process contributed to methodological rigor by helping to identify potential researcher bias and by refining analytical categories through critical dialogue (Carter et al., 2014; Donkoh, 2023).

Ethical considerations were treated as an integral component of the research process. All interview data were fully anonymized, with participant identities replaced by initials to protect confidentiality. Sensitive institutional information was handled with care and reported only in ways that did not compromise the participating universities. Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants, and data collection procedures were conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for qualitative research in educational settings (Noble & Heale, 2019; Jawaldehy, 2023). Through these measures, the study sought to ensure that both

methodological trustworthiness and ethical responsibility were upheld throughout the research process.

4. Findings

This section outlines the findings related to sign patterns, language usage, and the broader language situation as represented in the linguistic landscapes of three Islamic higher education institutions in East Java. The analysis is based on a corpus of 147 campus signs collected from UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember (UIN KHAS Jember), UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung (UIN SATU), and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (UIN Malang).

4.1. Sign patterns in the campus linguistic landscape

The signs were categorized into three principal patterns based on their language composition: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Table 1 presents a summary of their distribution. The analysis of campus signage across the three Islamic universities reveals three dominant linguistic patterns: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. These patterns are identified based on the combination of languages visible on the signs. Table 1 below presents the frequency and proportional distribution of each pattern.

Table 1

Distribution of sign patterns.

Sign Pattern	Number of Signs	Percentage
Monolingual	83	56.5%
Bilingual	50	34.0%
Multilingual	14	9.5%
Total	147	100%

Monolingual signage accounts for more than half of the dataset, making it the most prevalent type across the three campuses. These signs are predominantly written in Bahasa Indonesia, emphasizing its function as the central medium of institutional communication in academic, administrative, and public contexts. Examples such as *Perpustakaan* (Library), *Maklumat Pelayanan* (Service Notice), *Area bebas asap rokok* (No-smoking area), *Jalan satu arah* (One-way Road), and *Dilarang masuk kecuali seizin pengawas ujian* (No entry without invigilator’s permission) illustrate the core informational role that such signage performs. In line with Landry and Bourhis (1997), these signs contribute to territorial legibility and promote clarity for a linguistically diverse academic community.

Bilingual signs represent approximately one third of the total data and reflect points of linguistic convergence between Bahasa Indonesia and other languages, mainly English and Arabic. Two common formats are observed. The first involves full parallel translation, where the same content is rendered in two languages, such as *Ruang Rapat / Meeting Room*, *Keluar / Exit*, *Loket 1 / Student Services Center*, and *Wanita / Ladies* or *Pria / Gents*. The second is partial integration or code-mixing, in which Indonesian remains the base language and foreign elements

are embedded without complete translation. Examples include *Matikan lampu dan AC saat tidak digunakan* and *Hemat Energi - Matikan AC dan alat elektronik lainnya*. These bilingual strategies support comprehension while simultaneously signaling modernity, internationalism, and Islamic identity.

Multilingual signs are the smallest category (9.5 percent) yet carry considerable symbolic weight. These signs usually combine Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic within a single frame, for example *Wanita / Ladies / النساء*, *Ruang Kepala UPT Bahasa / Head of Language Center / رئيسة مكتب اللغة مركز*, *Ruang SAC / Self Access Center / الذاتي الوصول مركز*, and *Ruang Laboratorium Bahasa 1 / Language Laboratory 1 / اللغات معمل ١*. At UIN Malang, multilingual signage is particularly systematic, as seen in *Ruang Administrasi / Administration Room / الإدارة غرفة*, *Informasi / Information Center / مركز المعلومات*, and *Lab Media dan Publikasi / Media and Publication Lab / مختبر الإعلام والنشر*. Occasional signs at the Chinese Language and Culture Center incorporate Mandarin alongside Indonesian and English, further extending the multilingual repertoire. These triadic and sometimes quadrilingual compositions articulate the universities' efforts to be at once national, international, and religious, supporting Shohamy's (2006) view that linguistic landscapes operate as de facto language policies.

In sum, the distribution of sign patterns demonstrates a stratified semiotic order. Bahasa Indonesia functions as the unmarked and default communicative code, ensuring institutional clarity and inclusiveness. Bilingual signs serve as bridges between practicality and symbolic projection, while multilingual signage becomes a strategic tool for articulating a university's composite identity that spans national, global, and religious domains.

4.1.1. Language use in monolingual signs

Monolingual signage constitutes the largest portion of the dataset, with 83 out of 147 signs (56.5 percent). The findings indicate that Bahasa Indonesia overwhelmingly dominates this category across the three institutions, highlighting its official role as the national language and its practical function as the primary medium for administrative and academic communication. This prevalence aligns closely with Indonesia's national language policy, which frames Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying tool and the central vehicle for educational literacy (Landry and Bourhis, 1997).

At UIN KHAS Jember, monolingual signs in Indonesian are particularly concentrated in formal, regulatory, and institutional spaces. Examples such as *Area bebas asap rokok untuk semua*, *Jalan satu arah*, *Matikan perangkat yang tidak digunakan*, *Dasacita UIN KHAS Jember 2023-2027*, *Ruang Direktur*, *Perpustakaan*, and *Ketentuan Pelayanan Persuratan* illustrate how signage is used to manage behavior, communicate institutional values, and ensure administrative order. The prominence of these signs indicates that Indonesian is not only a medium of instruction but also functions as a legitimating code that embodies institutional authority.

A similar pattern is evident at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. Signs such as *Maklumat Pelayanan*, *Dilarang masuk kecuali seizin pengawas ujian*, *Ruang Laktasi*, and *SATU Press* support the organization of academic activity, student welfare, and institutional initiatives. Additionally, panels displaying the *Visi Misi Tujuan Program Studi Hukum Tata Negara* and

Hukum Ekonomi Syariah rely exclusively on Indonesian, reinforcing the use of the national language for communicating academic goals, transparency, and program identity. At UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, common monolingual signs such as *Perpustakaan*, *Ruang Administrasi*, and *Toilet* provide direct guidance and reinforce the normalcy of Indonesian in routine campus interactions.

Although less frequent, monolingual signs written solely in English convey strong symbolic messages. At UIN KHAS Jember, signs like *Media Corner*, *Welcome to Media Corner*, *Feel Before Thinking*, *Think Before Speaking*, and *Charging Corner* suggest associations with innovation, digital literacy, and academic modernity. At UIN SATU, signage such as *Room 5 Parallel Session 15 Oktober 2024* reflects efforts to contextualize academic events within a global academic framework. Likewise, UIN Malang utilizes English in signs such as *Information Center* and *Language Center* to highlight its global academic aspirations. These cases support Piller's (2003) argument that English in public signage often performs a prestige-related role rather than serving as a tool for primary communication.

Arabic-only signage is the least common, but it carries substantial symbolic weight. At UIN SATU, some Arabic instructions encourage language use in designated areas, drawing upon Quranic phrases to reinforce religious identity and learning values. At UIN KHAS Jember, Arabic is found in naming spaces related to religious education, marking it as a language tied to sanctity and scholarly tradition. Across all three universities, monolingual Arabic signage operates as a visible affirmation of Islamic identity and reflects the institutions' alignment with religious legitimacy.

The use of monolingual signage reveals a functional hierarchy of linguistic roles. Bahasa Indonesia functions as the core language of communication and institutional legitimacy. English, although quantitatively limited, serves as a symbolic medium associated with global engagement and technological progress. Arabic, while sparse in distribution, reinforces the religious and scholarly ethos of the institutions. Taken as a whole, these linguistic choices reflect how Islamic universities construct a layered identity through strategic use of monolingual signage.

4.1.2. Language use in bilingual signs

Out of the total 147 signs analyzed, 50 (34 percent) are bilingual. Although these signs are fewer in number compared to monolingual ones, they serve a vital strategic function by merging practical communication with symbolic meaning. Across the three universities, the most prevalent bilingual combinations are Indonesian with English and Indonesian with Arabic. At UIN KHAS Jember, bilingual signs using parallel translation are especially prominent. These signs present the same message in both Indonesian and English, ensuring clarity for domestic users while also accommodating foreign visitors. Examples include *Ruang Rapat / Meeting Room*, *Keluar / Exit*, and gendered restroom labels such as *Wanita / Ladies* and *Pria / Gents*. This pattern reflects an institutional interest in presenting an image of openness and international readiness.

A similar approach is observed at UIN SATU Tulungagung, where signs such as *Loket 1 / Student Services Center*, *Receptionist / Welcome*, and *Room 5 Parallel Session 15 Oktober*

2024 appear in bilingual format. These signs not only facilitate navigation but also enhance the university's profile as a globally engaged academic environment. At UIN Malang, bilingual signage like *Ruang Administrasi / Administration Room* and *Informasi / Information Center* is widely distributed in both academic and administrative areas. This systematic use of parallel bilingualism at UIN Malang suggests a deliberate and institutionalized commitment to multilingual visibility rather than isolated or decorative usage.

In addition to parallel translation, code-mixing is another prominent bilingual practice. In this format, Bahasa Indonesia serves as the base language while selected terms in English or Arabic are inserted to enhance stylistic appeal or to convey specialized meanings. For instance, the phrase *Matikan lampu dan AC saat tidak digunakan* includes the English abbreviation "AC" within an Indonesian directive. Other examples, such as *Ayo Hemat Energi - Matikan AC dan alat elektronik lainnya* and *Charging Station* at UIN SATU, demonstrate how English technological vocabulary is seamlessly embedded into Indonesian contexts.

At UIN Malang, blended bilingual expressions such as *Lab Media dan Publikasi / Media and Publication Lab* or *Language Center* are commonly found in learning and service environments. These patterns support Piller's (2003) perspective that bilingual signage often serves as a stylistic marker of cosmopolitanism and modernity. They also align with Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) claim that such signage can serve as a tool for incidental language learning, offering students real-world exposure to foreign languages beyond formal classroom settings.

Bilingual combinations of Indonesian and Arabic, though less numerous than those involving English, carry important religious and cultural significance. At UIN KHAS Jember, signage such as *Ma'had Al-Jamiah Office* and *Murobbi's Room* incorporates Arabic titles into institutional naming conventions, reinforcing Islamic dormitory traditions and mentorship systems. At UIN SATU and UIN Malang, Arabic frequently appears in trilingual signage found in academic or administrative spaces, further enhancing the visibility of Islamic scholarship alongside Indonesian and English.

Bilingual signage across these Islamic universities functions as a bridge between effective communication and symbolic expression. Bahasa Indonesia provides a familiar and accessible foundation, while English and Arabic contribute layers of global and religious identity. Collectively, these signs enable institutions to engage with multiple audiences, communicate institutional values, and position themselves within both international academic discourse and the traditions of Islamic learning.

4.1.3. Language use in multilingual signs and the broader language situation

Multilingual signage constitutes the smallest portion of the total dataset, with only 14 out of 147 signs (9.5 percent), yet these signs carry substantial symbolic and communicative significance. Typically composed of Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic, multilingual signs bring together national accessibility, global visibility, and Islamic identity within a single spatial display.

At UIN KHAS Jember, multilingual signs appear selectively in areas that combine symbolic relevance with practical utility. Gender-specific restroom signs such as *Wanita / Ladies*

/ النساء and Pria / Gents / الرجال serve diverse audiences including Indonesian-speaking students, international visitors, and Arabic readers. At the same time, they reinforce culturally appropriate spatial organization that aligns with Islamic principles. Other signs referencing *Ma'had Al-Jamiah* evoke Qur'anic education and residential Islamic life, reflecting an institutional identity that is more culturally grounded than oriented toward internationalization.

At UIN SATU Tulungagung, multilingual signage is primarily oriented toward educational and instructional objectives. Trilingual signs such as *Ruang Kepala UPT Bahasa / Head of Language Center / مركز اللغة مكتبة رئيسة*, *Ruang SAC / Self Access Center / مركز الوصول الذاتي*, and *Ruang Laboratorium Bahasa 1 / Language Laboratory 1 / معمل اللغات ١* are mostly located in language-focused facilities. These signs are designed not only to guide users but also to encourage students to engage with Arabic and English in their daily routines. Even signs in basic spaces like restrooms occasionally adopt trilingual formats, turning ordinary areas into platforms for incidental language exposure. This practice resonates with Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) assertion that the linguistic landscape can act as an informal pedagogical space that complements classroom instruction.

UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang demonstrates the most comprehensive and consistent use of multilingual signage, establishing what can be termed a trilingual semiotic ecology. Examples such as *Ruang Administrasi / Administration Room / الإدارة غرفة*, *Informasi / Information Center / المعلومات مركز*, and *Lab Media dan Publikasi / Media and Publication Lab / النشر الإعلام مختبر* illustrate the integration of Indonesian, English, and Arabic into the core functioning of the campus. Unlike the other two institutions, UIN Malang deploys multilingual signage not only in specialized locations but across its administrative offices, academic departments, and public service areas. This consistent presence of three languages supports the university's stated vision of becoming an internationally respected Islamic institution and aligns with its mandatory language programs, namely PKPBA (*Program Khusus Perkuliahan Bahasa Arab*), which is required for first- and second-semester students, and PKPBI (*Program Khusus Perkuliahan Bahasa Inggris*), which is compulsory for students in the third and fourth semesters. Through this system, the campus transforms into an extended language learning environment, effectively enacting Shohamy's (2006) view of the linguistic landscape as a practical form of language policy.

In addition to the core triadic pattern, UIN Malang also features signage that includes Mandarin, particularly within the Chinese Language and Culture Center. These signs pair Mandarin characters with Indonesian and English, creating multilingual combinations that extend beyond the typical Indonesian-English-Arabic grouping. The selective inclusion of Mandarin reflects efforts toward intercultural outreach and global engagement, highlighting UIN Malang's broader linguistic diversity in comparison to the other two universities.

Taken collectively, the linguistic landscapes of UIN KHAS Jember, UIN SATU Tulungagung, and UIN Malang reveal a complex and layered linguistic environment. Bahasa Indonesia remains dominant across all sign types and functions as the primary language for institutional clarity and cohesion. English, though less frequent, is visually prominent in contexts associated with technology, global academia, and international visibility. Arabic serves as a key

marker of religious identity and tradition, particularly in religious studies, Islamic housing, and select academic facilities. Notably, local and regional languages such as Javanese are absent from the landscape, suggesting a prioritization of national and international linguistic norms over regional heritage within these Islamic higher education settings.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the signage systems across the three campuses function as more than tools for information delivery. They operate as semiotic instruments through which universities articulate and negotiate power, religious identity, and global relevance. For students, the linguistic landscape becomes a lived experience of institutional values, where national, religious, and international identities are embedded into the physical and symbolic space of academic life.

4.2. Linguistic identities in the campus linguistic landscape

Interview data from the three campuses reveal that students discursively construct linguistic identities in ways that closely reflect the layered patterns observed in the linguistic landscape (LL). Indonesian is consistently recognized as the primary language of signage and everyday campus functioning. It is perceived as the code that "makes the campus work" by facilitating navigation, administrative communication, and routine interactions. In contrast, English and Arabic are understood as indexical resources whose prominence depends on institutional context and spatial domain. English is associated with modernity and global engagement, while Arabic signifies Islamic identity and scholarly heritage. Both languages are also valued for their pedagogical function, particularly when used in trilingual signs or embedded in language-learning infrastructures. Local languages, however, emerge as the most contested element within this linguistic ecology, fluctuating between expressions of cultural pride and concerns about potential exclusivity.

These patterns suggest that linguistic identities in the LL reflect institutional positioning and the semiotic hierarchies embedded within campus spaces, rather than directly mirroring individual language proficiency. This finding resonates with Landry and Bourhis's (1997) distinction between the informative and symbolic functions of linguistic landscapes, Shohamy's (2006) conceptualization of the LL as language policy in practice, and Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) analysis of visibility rules and presentational norms. It also aligns with Lefebvre's (1991) differentiation between conceived space and lived space, as students navigate environments whose linguistic design influences their perception of institutional identity.

4.2.1. Functional identity: Indonesian as the baseline

Students across all three universities consistently describe Bahasa Indonesia as the functional cornerstone of the campus linguistic landscape. It is perceived as the default medium that ensures clarity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for a heterogeneous student body. Indonesian is understood not only as a language of communication but also as an institutional identity code that stabilizes wayfinding, procedural access, and authoritative information. This echoes Landry and Bourhis's (1997) conceptualization of the informational function of the

linguistic landscape, in which the majority language guarantees territorial legibility and anchors communicative practices.

Excerpt 1. A. M., UIN Tulungagung

“Masih bahasa Indonesia... ada bahasa Inggris atau campuran, tapi belum banyak.”
 (“Still Indonesian... there is English or a mixture, but not much.”)

Excerpt 2. D. H., UIN Tulungagung

“Hampir semua tanda menggunakan bahasa Indonesia, jadi mudah dipahami mahasiswa.”
 (“Almost all signs use Indonesian, so they are easy for students to understand.”)

Excerpt 3. S. O., UIN Jember

“Kalau tanda seperti visi misi universitas... sempat membaca, tapi yang penting itu petunjuk ruang, layanan, larangan. Indonesia memudahkan.”
 (“For signs like the university vision and mission... I once read them, but what really matters are the signs for rooms, services, prohibitions. Indonesian makes it easier.”)

Across these excerpts, Indonesian is framed as indispensable for intelligibility. For A. M., it is the dominant baseline against which English or mixed codes appear as minor additions. D. H. explicitly links Indonesian to practical clarity, making it the unmarked and most natural choice for students. S. O. highlights how Indonesian anchors the sign types that matter most in everyday life, such as directional signs, service information, and prohibitions, showing that communicative efficacy is inseparable from the reliability of Indonesian.

Taken together, these testimonies demonstrate how students enact Indonesian as the functional identity of the linguistic landscape. It is a language whose primacy is legitimized both quantitatively through its ubiquity and qualitatively through its communicative role. Even when respondents advocate expanding bilingual or trilingual signage, they rarely suggest replacing Indonesian. Instead, they imagine it as an anchor language, with English and Arabic layered on top for symbolic, pedagogical, or international purposes. This aligns with Shohamy’s (2006) insight that language landscape policies are negotiated. Dominant codes persist as non-negotiable defaults, while others function as supplementary layers.

Students also frame Indonesian as a neutral and unifying resource. Unlike local languages, which some respondents reject for fear of fragmentation or exclusion, Indonesian is consistently positioned as the common denominator across regional, religious, and disciplinary boundaries. This reflects Ben-Rafael et al.’s (2006) normative presentational principle, whereby the language most associated with authority and readability occupies the dominant position. In this sense, Indonesian’s functional centrality illustrates a distinction between identity as symbolic projection and identity as operational necessity. While English and Arabic enrich the symbolic repertoire of the campus, Indonesian guarantees the basic legibility of the space. It

embodies a pragmatic hegemony, serving as both a marker of national cohesion and the semiotic infrastructure on which other identities must be layered.

4.2.2. *Global and religious identities: English and Arabic in different registers*

English and Arabic appear less as tools for everyday communication and more as symbolic and pedagogical resources. Their visibility is closely aligned with each university's institutional orientation and with the functions that students attribute to them. While both languages enrich the semiotic repertoire of the linguistic landscape, they do so through different registers connected to global branding, religious mission, and language-learning aspirations.

At UIN SATU Tulungagung, English is described as a valuable addition that supports international outlooks and incidental vocabulary acquisition. Arabic, on the other hand, is associated with Islamic identity. Students frequently noted that bilingual signage in Indonesian and English could facilitate communication with foreign visitors and enhance students' vocabulary.

Excerpt 4. N., UIN Tulungagung

“Saya perlu sih tanda bilingual... mempermudah tamu dari luar negeri, dan membuat kita terbiasa dengan kosa kata asing.” (“I think bilingual signs are necessary. They make it easier for foreign guests and help us get used to foreign vocabulary.”)

Excerpt 5. M., UIN Tulungagung

“Tambah kosa kata mahasiswa secara tanpa sadar... bisa untuk wahana belajar juga.” (“They add vocabulary to students unconsciously. They can also serve as a learning medium.”)

These perspectives align with Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) interpretation of the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical resource offering authentic input beyond the classroom. English serves not only as a prestige language but also as a form of ambient teaching, facilitating incidental learning even without deliberate attention. Arabic at Tulungagung holds a more symbolic function, serving as a marker of institutional faith-based identity, though students admit that comprehension is still limited. This reflects Piller's (2003) distinction between symbolic and functional use of languages within the linguistic landscape.

At UIN KHAS Jember, Arabic holds greater prominence in student narratives. Respondents emphasized that Arabic signage, particularly in departments like Pendidikan Bahasa Arab, is not merely decorative but an essential affirmation of the university's Islamic character. English is appreciated for its modern and prestigious associations but remains secondary to Indonesian. It operates as a prestige code and a gateway to perceived global integration.

Excerpt 6. A. F., UIN Jember

“Perlu tanda berbahasa Arab di area prodi PBA... sesuai identitas kampus Islam.”

("Arabic signage is necessary in the Arabic Language Education department. It fits the identity of an Islamic university.")

Here, Arabic enacts what Landry and Bourhis (1997) describe as the symbolic function of the linguistic landscape. It expresses collective identity and institutional values, even in cases where its communicative function is limited. English, by contrast, is linked to academic prestige and global circulation, resonating with Piller's (2003) view of English as a prestige symbol.

The most elaborate semiotic configuration appears at UIN Malang. Trilingual signage in Indonesian, Arabic, and English is present across key locations, normalising the coexistence of the three languages and reflecting the university's vision as an internationally reputable Islamic institution. This multilingual environment is further supported by curricular programs such as PKPBA (*Program Khusus Perkuliahan Bahasa Arab*) and PKPBI (*Program Khusus Perkuliahan Bahasa Inggris*). In addition, the Chinese Language and Culture Center introduces Mandarin into selected signs, thereby expanding the multilingual repertoire beyond the common Indonesian-Arabic-English triad.

Excerpt 7. A. M., UIN Malang

"Di hampir semua lokasi, tanda ada tiga bahasa, Indonesia Arab Inggris... sesuai reputasi internasional kampus." ("In almost every location, signs are in three languages- Indonesian, Arabic, and English-in line with the university's international reputation.")

This systematic application reflects Shohamy's (2006) conception of the linguistic landscape as a de facto language policy. At UIN Malang, multilingual signage is routine rather than occasional, embedding English and Arabic into students' everyday spatial experiences. The presence of Arabic is supported by PKPBA, while English is institutionalised through PKPBI. Both languages therefore function simultaneously as pedagogical tools and as markers of identity.

In comparative terms, these findings reveal a dual pattern of identity construction. English signifies global modernity, academic mobility, and international engagement, whereas Arabic signals religious legitimacy and Islamic scholarly tradition. The intensity and purpose of their use vary by institution: students at Tulungagung express a desire for more English to support practical communication and learning, while Arabic is seen as largely symbolic. At Jember, Arabic carries stronger identity weight within the Islamic framework, while English is recognised for its prestige value. At Malang, both languages are elevated to institutional norms through consistent spatial and curricular integration.

4.2.3. *Symbolic and controversial identities: Local languages*

Local and regional languages, such as Javanese or Madurese, hold a more contested status within the linguistic landscapes of the three universities. While Indonesian, English, and Arabic are generally regarded as necessary or desirable, local languages are viewed ambivalently. They are appreciated as markers of cultural authenticity yet also questioned for

their potential to exclude non-local audiences. This tension underscores the dual role of the linguistic landscape as both a symbolic arena for identity expression and an informational tool for ensuring clarity and accessibility, as discussed by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and Ben-Rafael et al. (2006).

Excerpt 8. A. M., UIN Tulungagung

“Perlu Jawa Mataraman... terutama kromo, bisa sekaligus untuk pelajaran.”

("The Mataraman variety of Javanese is necessary, especially the krama register. It could also serve as a learning tool.")

A. M. frames local language signage as both pedagogical and symbolic. By proposing the inclusion of Javanese krama, he positions the linguistic landscape as a means of preserving cultural heritage and fostering local language acquisition. This aligns with Shohamy and Gorter's (2009) argument that linguistic landscapes can function as educational tools, and with Landry and Bourhis's (1997) view that signage fosters collective belonging.

Excerpt 9. D. H., UIN Tulungagung

“Kalau bahasa daerah... tidak terlalu perlu... mahasiswa dari berbagai daerah.”

("For local languages, they are not really necessary because students come from many different regions.")

In contrast, D. H. emphasises inclusivity and argues that regional languages may not be suitable for a national university with a diverse student population. Her view reflects Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) notion of presentational compromise, where identity expression is moderated by the need for shared readability.

A similar pattern is observed at UIN Jember. While some students endorse the inclusion of Pandalungan or Madurese elements as expressions of regional pride, others express concern that such practices might alienate non-local students or reduce the clarity of key messages. At UIN Malang, local languages receive even less attention, likely due to a stronger institutional focus on Indonesian, Arabic, and English. The absence of local language signage in Malang may itself be interpreted as a form of implicit language policy, highlighting institutional preferences for national and global codes over regional ones, as suggested by Shohamy (2006).

Students appear to adopt a functional hierarchy of language use. Local languages are deemed appropriate for cultural, ceremonial, or artistic contexts, such as murals and festivals, but are viewed as less suitable for core signage related to safety, direction, and administration. In such contexts, Indonesian is clearly prioritised. This selective tolerance exemplifies the presentational compromise outlined by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), where the linguistic landscape serves as a negotiation space between identity, readability, and institutional order. Within this framework, local languages remain largely symbolic in the linguistic landscapes of these Islamic universities. They contribute cultural depth and regional pride, yet they are structurally constrained by institutional commitments to Indonesian and foreign languages.

4.2.4. *Visual hierarchy, consistency, and the credibility of identity*

Students do not only interpret the textual content of signage but also evaluate its visual and typographic presentation. Elements such as font size, layout, and internal consistency influence how students perceive institutional identity, legitimacy, and professionalism.

Excerpt 10. A. M., UIN Tulungagung

“Teks fontnya bisa lebih diseimbangkan... tidak harus besar kecil.” (“The font sizes could be more balanced. They do not need to vary so extremely between large and small.”)

A. M. identifies typographic imbalance as a hindrance to effective communication. Inconsistent font sizes reduce readability and may weaken the perceived seriousness of the institution. This observation reflects Ben-Rafael et al.’s (2006) discussion of visibility rules, where visual design creates hierarchies of meaning and enhances the legitimacy of the message.

Excerpt 11. N., UIN Tulungagung

“Kadang... satu ruangan ada dua penanda... yang membuat kebingungan.” (“Sometimes one room has two different signs, which creates confusion.”)

N. highlights problems arising from inconsistent naming and redundant signage. When multiple signs refer to the same space using different labels, students experience confusion, and the institution appears disorganised. Such inconsistencies disrupt the coherence of the signage system and undermine what Shohamy (2006) refers to as the implicit policy expressed through linguistic landscapes.

These reflections suggest that students regard visual design as integral to institutional communication. A signage system that is balanced and consistent conveys professionalism and reinforces institutional identity. In contrast, conflicting signs and disordered visual presentation diminish trust and authority. This perspective aligns with Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) geosemiotic framework, which emphasises that spatial placement and visual design are not merely aesthetic but essential to meaning-making.

In the context of Islamic universities in East Java, students’ attention to visual clarity and consistency reveals deeper institutional aspirations. A well-ordered visual landscape signifies a university that is organised, authoritative, and aligned with its identity as a national, religious, and internationally engaged institution. Conversely, inconsistencies in signage may signal a lack of coordination in language policy implementation and weaken the credibility of institutional representation. This suggests that visual design is not only a matter of presentation but also an expression of institutional governance and communicative intent. As such, the linguistic landscape becomes a site where visual order, language choice, and institutional identity converge, reinforcing the broader role of signage as both a communicative and symbolic infrastructure within academic space.

4.2.5. *Perceived space and lived pedagogy*

Students frequently interpret multilingual signage not merely as decorative elements but as a form of lived pedagogy. Signage functions as more than a tool for orientation or institutional authority. It also serves as ambient input that reinforces vocabulary, familiarises disciplinary registers, and normalises movement across languages in everyday campus circulation. This pedagogical interpretation of space helps connect Lefebvre's (1991) distinction between perceived space, which refers to planned and designed environments, and lived space, which refers to space as experienced in daily practice. In this sense, corridors, doors, and service points function as learning surfaces that extend classroom instruction into routine mobility.

Excerpt 12. M., UIN Tulungagung

“Bisa untuk wahana belajar... nambah kosa kata tanpa sadar.” (“It can serve as a learning medium and increase vocabulary unconsciously.”)

M. explicitly identifies signage as a resource for incidental vocabulary acquisition. This perspective aligns with Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) view of the linguistic landscape as a pedagogical tool. In this context, signs are understood as silent teachers that accompany students throughout their daily routes and routines.

Excerpt 13. A. S., UIN Malang

“Trilingual signage itu sinkron dengan PKPBA dan PKPBI... jadi yang di kelas ketemu lagi di kampus.” (“The trilingual signage is synchronized with PKPBA and PKPBI, so what is taught in the classroom is encountered again on campus.”)

For A. S., the alignment between trilingual signage and the PKPBA and PKPBI programmes demonstrates a deliberate integration of the linguistic landscape with the formal curriculum. Students encounter the same Arabic and English forms in textbooks, classrooms, and public campus spaces. This creates a reinforcing cycle in which instructional content and spatial experience support one another. Such integration illustrates Shohamy's (2006) argument that the linguistic landscape operates as language policy in practice by embedding pedagogy within institutional space.

At UIN Jember and UIN Tulungagung, students also view bilingual and trilingual signage as learning opportunities, although in more selective contexts. These include assisting visitors or supporting language related academic disciplines. In these situations, Indonesian continues to function as the primary medium for complex administrative communication, while foreign languages are welcomed as pedagogical and symbolic additions. This confirms a hierarchical arrangement in which Indonesian ensures clarity and authority, while other languages contribute to learning and identity construction.

Student perspectives suggest that campus signage functions simultaneously as infrastructure and instruction. Drawing on Lefebvre (1991), the linguistic landscape can be understood as a lived space in which ideologies of internationalisation and Islamic identity are

materialised and incorporated into students' everyday practices. Through repeated exposure, circulation, and routine interaction, students are socialised into a semiotic ecology where multilingualism becomes not only an identity marker but also a habitual mode of learning. This indicates that the linguistic landscape extends beyond a passive representational role, actively shaping how students experience, internalise, and reproduce institutional language ideologies.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study show three dominant patterns across the linguistic landscapes (LL) of the three Islamic universities examined: monolingual signage (83 signs, 56.5%), bilingual signage (50 signs, 34%), and multilingual signage (14 signs, 9.5%). Indonesian emerges as the principal medium for administrative and informational purposes, while English is used to project global orientation and Arabic reinforces Islamic identity. Institutional variation is prominent, with UIN Malang presenting a deliberate trilingual ecology aligned with its internationalization agenda, UIN SATU highlighting LL as a pedagogical stimulus, and UIN KHAS Jember applying multilingualism in selective contexts. Interviews echo these quantitative findings by consistently framing Indonesian as the anchoring language, while English and Arabic function as symbolic or pedagogical supplements. According to the Head of the Language Center at UIN Malang, *"Multilingual signs are part of the linguistic ecology we design... Indonesian ensures clarity, English reflects global orientation, and Arabic strengthens Islamic identity."*

Rather than representing a neutral coexistence of languages, these patterns point to a structured hierarchy of linguistic power within campus space. The prominence of Indonesian aligns with the informational function of LL described by Landry and Bourhis (1997), ensuring accessibility for a diverse student body. Signs such as *Perpustakaan / Library* illustrate how Indonesian guarantees readability while English adds symbolic value. This arrangement reflects what Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) describe as a normative principle of visibility, where the language associated with institutional authority occupies the most stable and legible position. Graphic presentation norms, including typographic hierarchy and consistency, further reinforce Indonesian's dominance (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

English appears less as a communicative necessity and more as a prestige marker and medium of incidental learning, resonating with Piller's (2003) and Abrar-ul-Hassan's (2021) accounts of English in globalized higher education. As one student noted, *"When I see the sign Language Laboratory, I get used to the English term."* This illustrates how English operates as symbolic capital rather than as an egalitarian communicative resource, reinforcing global academic norms while remaining secondary to Indonesian in terms of authority. Arabic, meanwhile, fulfills a predominantly ideological and institutional role, affirming Islamic identity even where communicative need is limited (Shohamy, 2006). A lecturer at UIN Malang emphasized this symbolic dimension: *"Adding Arabic on the Information Center sign is not just a formality; it reflects the Islamic spirit that the university wants to highlight."*

These findings suggest that the linguistic landscape of Islamic universities functions as a layered sociolinguistic order shaped by power, legitimacy, and institutional positioning.

Indonesian operates as the operational backbone that guarantees administrative coherence and inclusivity, while English indexes global modernity and academic mobility, and Arabic conveys religious legitimacy and moral authority. Examples such as *Toilet / الحمام* and *Language Laboratory 1 / معمل اللغة ١* underscore this symbolic layering. Crucially, the near absence of regional languages signals not accidental omission but an implicit process of exclusion, where local linguistic identities are subordinated to national cohesion and international branding.

The Head of the Language Center at UIN Malang explicitly associated this choice with efforts to maintain unity, explaining that regional codes are “*not prioritized to avoid fragmentation and to maintain a consistent linguistic environment for all students coming from across Indonesia.*” This rationale highlights how inclusivity is discursively constructed through standardization, even as it simultaneously marginalizes local linguistic repertoires. In this sense, the linguistic landscape becomes a site where institutional authority negotiates belonging by privileging certain identities while rendering others symbolically peripheral. LL thus operates not only as a semiotic extension of the classroom but also as a mechanism through which institutional power is normalized and reproduced.

In relation to previous research, the findings reaffirm patterns identified by Andriyanti (2019), Iye et al. (2023), Rohmah and Wijayanti (2023), Mubarok et al. (2024), and Napu (2024) regarding Indonesian dominance and the symbolic deployment of English and Arabic. They also align with broader claims in global higher education studies that institutional multilingualism often conceals underlying linguistic hierarchies (Abongdia & Foncha, 2014; Motschenbacher, 2024). At the same time, this study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that such hierarchies are not merely reflective but actively produced through systematic spatial design, particularly in the case of UIN Malang. The integration of quantitative distribution with qualitative geosemiotic analysis deepens understanding of how the linguistic landscape functions simultaneously as a medium of communication, a pedagogical resource, and a mechanism for constructing institutional identity (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy, 2006; Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Lefebvre, 1991). This interpretation is further reinforced by the expert interview, which confirms that UIN Malang’s trilingualism is intentionally embedded within curriculum design through PKPBA and PKPBI, resulting in a coherent semiotic environment shaped by deliberate policy rather than chance.

This study also contributes to ongoing theoretical debates on linguistic landscape and language policy. The analysis reinforces the view of the linguistic landscape as a site where language policy is enacted spatially and ideologically rather than solely through formal regulation. Emphasis on hierarchy, visibility, and exclusion supports Shohamy’s (2006) argument that language policy is best understood as practiced and negotiated in everyday spaces. The results further demonstrate the analytical value of combining quantitative mapping with geo-semiotic interpretation to reveal how power relations are embedded in seemingly mundane signage.

From a practical perspective, the study points to implications for language planning and campus management. The analysis points to the need for a formal signage style guide that clearly defines language hierarchies and functional domains. Indonesian should be prioritized for

regulatory and safety information, while bilingual Indonesian-English signage is appropriate for public services and international-facing spaces. A strategic combination of Indonesian, English, and Arabic may be applied in academic and religious contexts. Further integration of signage with language curricula can enhance incidental learning, provided that linguistic audits are conducted regularly to ensure accuracy and consistency in English and Arabic (Carter et al., 2014; Noble & Heale, 2019; Donkoh, 2023). Regional languages may also be introduced selectively within cultural or symbolic zones to promote inclusivity without compromising functional clarity. Although this study is limited to three institutions during a single observation period, it opens avenues for broader comparative and longitudinal research, particularly concerning the role of regional languages and the evolution of language hierarchies across educational contexts.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the linguistic landscape of the three Islamic universities under examination is characterized by greater complexity than initial observations might suggest. While Indonesian predominates across campus signage, serving as the primary medium for clarity and communicative accessibility, the inclusion of English and Arabic transcends merely decorative functions. English facilitates the universities' international orientation and affords incidental language learning opportunities for students, whereas Arabic conveys Islamic scholarly identity through its strategic placement in both administrative and academic spaces. These linguistic practices reflect deliberate institutional strategies aimed at negotiating coherence, global engagement, and religious legitimacy within the visual environment of the university.

This study contributes to the broader field of linguistic landscape research by demonstrating how multilingual practices in Islamic higher education are materially instantiated through spatial arrangement, visual design, and the enactment of institutional language policy. It reinforces the view that language policy is most concretely realized in physical forms that shape everyday communication, wayfinding, and informal learning. The integration of quantitative mapping and geosemiotic analysis provides insights into how typographic features, spatial ordering, and visual consistency enhance institutional credibility. Although the study is confined to three Islamic universities in East Java and relies on a single observation period, these delimitations establish a foundation for future inquiry. Subsequent research may extend these findings by including universities from other geographical regions, undertaking comparative analyses between Islamic and secular institutions, or conducting longitudinal studies to examine temporal shifts in campus language practices. Further investigation into the role of regional languages and the effects of signage design on comprehension and student sense of belonging would also enrich scholarly understanding of how linguistic choices shape educational environments.

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Declaration on the Use of AI

The researchers declare that, as non-native speakers of English, they used AI-assisted tools such as *Grammarly* and *ChatGPT* solely to improve the readability and linguistic quality of the manuscript. These tools were employed for grammar checking, language refinement, and enhancing clarity of expression. However, the researchers affirm that all ideas, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this study are entirely original and the result of their own scholarly work. No generative AI was used to produce the research content, and the researchers take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the manuscript.

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