

## BRIDGING CULTURES: THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF PESANTREN AND ITS CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Kamal Yusuf<sup>1</sup>✉

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya<sup>1</sup>

✉ [kamalyusuf@uinsa.ac.id](mailto:kamalyusuf@uinsa.ac.id)

### Abstract:

This article delves into the rich tapestry of cultures and languages within Islamic pesantren, traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. It examines the linguistic landscape of pesantren and its role in fostering cultural diversity. The focal point is the intricate interplay of various languages within the pesantren environment, including Arabic, the language of religion, Indonesian, the national language, and a myriad of local dialects and languages. Through qualitative analysis, the study explores how linguistic diversity reflects and contributes to the broader cultural mosaic within pesantren. It sheds light on how the use of different languages shapes social interactions, educational practices, and identity formation within these institutions. Moreover, the article discusses the dynamic nature of cultural diversity within pesantren, influenced by historical, geographical, and sociopolitical factors. By unpacking the complexities of language use and cultural diversity, this research offers insights into the multifaceted nature of pesantren as hubs of cultural exchange and preservation. Understanding the linguistic landscape and cultural diversity within pesantren is crucial for appreciating the richness of Indonesia's Islamic educational tradition and its significance in shaping national identity.

**Keywords:** Pesantren, Cultural diversity, Linguistic landscape, Language use

## INTRODUCTION

Although the existence and role of Pesantren in Indonesia cannot be ignored, the relationship between language use and cultural diversity in Pesantren has not been widely explored. The pesantren environment provides dynamic color from a linguistic perspective. In this case, Arabic, Indonesian and local languages are dynamically used side by side. The existence of these languages reflects the richness of Indonesian culture and religious diversity. However, the relationship between these languages and their impact on the cultural mosaic in Pesantren is still something that needs to be studied in more depth.

This article aims to fill this gap in research by attempting to explore the linguistic landscape of pesantren and their role in fostering cultural diversity. Using qualitative analysis, this article describes how the use of languages shapes social interactions, educational practices, and identity formation in pesantren.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Linguistic Landscape*

Linguistic landscape is a relatively new study in the map of linguistic studies in general compared to other branches of linguistic scientific disciplines. This study first appeared in 1997 through a study conducted by Landry and Bourhis (1997). Both of them provide the understanding that linguistic landscape is a branch of linguistic studies which discusses all kinds of linguistic phenomena displayed in public spaces, such as traffic signs and road signs. This understanding opened the study of linguistic landscapes which later became a reference for subsequent researchers in similar studies such as those conducted by Spolsky (2008), Shohamy et al. (2010).

Shohamy and Gorter (2009) stated that every language displayed in public places acts as a sign that indicates something. Therefore, linguistic landscapes, which are language phenomena displayed in public places, can also describe existing contexts, or at least indicate everything that is related to the context in which the landscape is located.

Apart from the linguistic landscape itself being a sign that can become a major framework for studying the socio-cultural conditions that exist in society, the linguistic

landscape will also be a framework that can lead to conclusions about the diversity of that society, including the condition of populism and religious identity. Even further, it will become a medium for cultural and social construction or development itself. So it is not impossible that religious moderation and issues regarding anti-radicalism can be developed through the medium of the linguistic landscape.

In religious spaces, it can be clearly seen how the scattered linguistic landscape displays linguistic phenomena that lead to values that represent the context as the presence of a language and its absence in the linguistic landscape convey messages about the status, value and relevance that exist in society (Lanza & Woldmariam, 2009), including its relevance to religion. These landscapes influence, inspire and invite people to the values that the sign wants to convey, as found in research conducted by Pitina (2020) on the influence of English on the linguistic landscape in modern Russian cities, and Beatriz Lado (2020) (2011) about the linguistic landscape that reflects ideological and linguistic conflicts in Valencian society.

### ***Diversity of Culture and Language among Pesantren***

The large archipelago that is Indonesia supports a varied cultural environment, which is reflected in the student body of pesantren. Santri from all racial, geographic, and cultural origins get together and contribute their own languages, traditions, and customs. With its exposure to many viewpoints and promotion of tolerance and understanding, variety enhances the educational process. The many methods and viewpoints of different pesantren increase cultural variety even further. While some pesantren concentrate in certain Islamic schools of thought, including Sufism or Quranic recitation, others highlight specific Islamic knowledge domains. This range reflects Indonesia's rich Islamic heritage.

Cultural variety is promoted and celebrated in large part by the usage of many languages among pesantren. Santri who can communicate themselves easily in local languages feel more at home and integrate into the pesant community more easily. Studying Arabic, the language of Islamic scholarship, also helps santri to stay connected to a larger Islamic world that cuts over national and cultural barriers. Pupils are inspired to value the depth of Islamic customs and civilizations outside of their own by this bilingual setting (Yusuf, 2022, Yusuf et al., 2022). Cultures can also be bridged by the way languages interact. Santri can use code-switching to move between languages, bringing

words or phrases from their home tongues into talks with others and thus promoting mutual understanding and cross-cultural interaction.

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach to explore the linguistic landscape to see the cultural diversity within the Indonesian pesantren. The data were taken from two pesantren in Madura, i.e., pesantren Al Mujtama Pamekasan and pesantren An Nuqayah Sumenep. Data collection techniques use digital cameras. Data in the form of photos or visual images of linguistic landscapes.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Within pesantren, language is essential in determining social relations and educational activities. Knowing how language works illuminates how santri learn, interact, and negotiate in pesantren environment. The following landscape categories can be found in pesantren. This section explains the findings in the form of linguistic landscape images taken from the two pesantren. Based on these findings, the linguistic landscape in pesantren can be categorised into three types, namely social interaction, educational practices, and learning and learning implications. The following is the explanation.

### ***Social Interaction***

Language used in pesantren has a big impact on social relationships. Depending on the situation, official contacts with Kyai usually take place in Arabic or Indonesian. Speaking Arabic encourages awe and respect for the sharing of Islamic knowledge. Conversely, greater involvement with difficult subjects and clearer communication are made possible by Indonesian. Informally, santri communicate in their mother tongues a lot, which promotes a feeling of unity and belonging. For example, a Javanese santri could converse informally, crack jokes, or relate personal experiences in Javanese. Within the pesantren community, this provides a forum for emotional connection and cultural expression.



Figure 1 Indonesian motivation in pesantren

Moreover, the way a pesant uses language might reveal the social order. When speaking with younger santri, senior santri may employ more sophisticated Arabic or Indonesian jargon to show their expertise. This can provide a situation in which language offers chances for growth and learning as well as perpetuates current social systems. A senior santri guiding a discussion group, for instance, may use a more formal Arabic register while urging junior santri to contribute and progressively improve their own proficiency.



Figure 2 Bilingual Arabic-Indonesian

## Educational Practice

Education techniques in pesantries are greatly impacted by language use. Because Arabic is so important, understanding religious writings and participating in academic conversation require a solid basis in the language. Pesantren teach Arabic via rote memory, grammatical exercises, and translation exercises. Even if these techniques offer a solid basis, they occasionally prevent vital interaction with the material. Santri with less Arabic language ability can learn Islamic ideas more deeply by including conversations and materials in Indonesian.



Figure 3 Arabic in school

The way that languages interact affects how pesantren are taught and learn as well. With little chance for student participation, traditional approaches frequently include lectures given by Kyai in Arabic. A few pesantren are, nonetheless, using more participatory techniques to promote conversations and debates in Indonesian. This change helps pupils develop their critical thinking abilities and enables them to address difficult problems in a language they are more at home with. The difficulty is in striking a balance between introducing new strategies that accommodate different learning styles and language proficiency with maintaining the fundamental knowledge transfer techniques.



Figure 4 Labelling Arabic at store

## Implications for Teaching and Learning

The way that language is used with pesantren has important ramifications for education. Teachers must adjust their teaching to the different degrees of linguistic ability among their pupils. This may need explaining ideas in a blend of Arabic, Indonesian, and even regional languages. More comprehension and critical thinking abilities may also be developed by using interactive teaching strategies that promote student involvement in Indonesian. Promoting multilingual literacy can also prepare santri to interact with Islamic knowledge in their mother tongues as well as Arabic.



*Figure 5 Language center*

Understanding the intricacies of language use among young children, teachers may provide a more welcoming and stimulating learning environment. This creates an environment where santri from all cultural origins may study well, improve their language abilities, and lay a solid basis in Islamic knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

The complex interrelationship between linguistic and cultural variety of pesantren was examined in this study. The results show a dynamic linguistic environment with some languages used, including Arabic and Indonesian. Within these institutions, language choices shape social relationships, educational procedures, and identity development. Respect is shown by language use, which also helps santri feel like they belong and represents the variety of cultures within the student body. While local languages offer a forum for cultural expression and communal development, Arabic language links santri to the larger Islamic world.

## REFERENCES

- Gorter, Durk. 2006b. "Introduction: The Study of The Linguistic Landscape as a New Approach to Multilingualism", *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3(1). Hlm. 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668382>.
- Handini, G. N., Nashihah, H., Al Khumairo, I. N., & Yusuf, K. (2021). Situasi Kebahasaan pada Lanskap Linguistik di Masjid Tiban Malang: Linguistics Lanscape in Masjid Tiban Malang. *Insyirah: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa Arab dan Studi Islam*, 4(2), 120-133.
- Lado, Beatriz. 2011. "Linguistic Landscape as a Reflection of The Linguistic and Ideological Conflict in The Valencian Community", *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 8(2). Hlm. 135–150  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2010.550296>.
- Landry, Rodrigue & Richard Y. Bourhis. 1997. "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study", *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1). Hlm. 23-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>.
- Lanza, Elizabeth & Hirut Woldemariam. 2009. "Language Ideology and Linguistic Landscape: Language Policy and Globalisation in a Regional Capital", *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding The Scenery*, Ed: Elana Shohamy & Duck Gorter. London: Routledge. Hlm. 229-245.
- Pitina, Svetlana. 2020. "English Influence on Linguistic Landscape of Modern Russian Cities", *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10(1). Hlm. 61-68.  
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n1p61>.
- Shohamy, Elana et al (Ed.). 2010. *Linguistic Landscape in The City*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 2009. "Prolegomena to A Sociolinguistic Theory of Public Signage", *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding The Scenery*, Ed: Elana Shohamy & Duck Gorter. London: Routledge. Hlm. 33-47.
- Yusuf, K. (2022). Language patterns in the linguistic landscape of pesantren. *AL LUGHAH Jurnal Bahasa*, 11(1).

Yusuf, K., Syaie, A. N. K., A'la, A., & Alomoush, O. I. S. (2022). Religious Identity Representation of Arab Diaspora in the Linguistic Landscape of Shop Signs in Sydney Australia. *Issues in Language Studies*, 11(1).