

# Language Variations On Signboards in the Berastagi Tourism Area

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## **A B S T R A C T**

This study aims to describe the use of language variations on signage in the Berastagi tourism area. This research method uses descriptive qualitative data collection techniques, using observation and photography. The data in this study are the texts appearing on signage in the Berastagi tourism area. The analysis of 32 data points revealed variations in monolingual language (Indonesian and English), bilingual (Indonesian–English and Indonesian–Karo), and multilingual (Indonesian–English–Karo). Indonesian dominates the language use on signage, demonstrating its status as the primary language and primary means of communication for visitors. English represents a global orientation, and Karo reflects local identity and culture.

### **Keywords:**

*Linguistic Landscape, Berastagi Tourism Area, Language Variation*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is a multilingual and multicultural country with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and languages. This diversity is reflected in various aspects of social life, one of which is through the use of language in public spaces. In the context of public spaces, language use can be observed through signage, banners, billboards, and various other forms of writing known as the linguistic landscape. Landry and Bourhis (1997) explain that the linguistic landscape reflects the sociolinguistic conditions of a region and indicates the presence, power, and prestige of a particular language within society. Therefore, studying the language on signage is crucial for understanding the social and linguistic dynamics of a region, including tourism areas. Tourism areas are dynamic social spaces with a high level of language variation. According to Holmes (2013), language variation arises as a result of differences in speaker backgrounds, communication goals, and the situations in which language is used. In tourism areas, the use of national and foreign languages often coexists with regional languages in various forms of communication, such as signage, advertisements, and service interactions. This phenomenon demonstrates the existence of language variation influenced by social, economic, cultural, and globalization factors. Berastagi, one of the leading tourism areas in Karo Regency, North Sumatra, has distinctive linguistic characteristics. The presence of the Karo ethnic group with its regional language, along with the high number of domestic and international tourists, influences the use of language on signage in public spaces. Signage serves not only as a means of information but also as a symbolic and economic strategy. Previous research on the linguistic landscape of tourist destinations has been conducted by several researchers in Indonesia. Wulansari (2020) found that English dominates signage in tourist areas on the island of Bali. This dominance is related to the high number of international tourists, which makes English preferred to facilitate tourists' understanding of information in public spaces. This variation in language use is influenced by several factors, including economic, social, and cultural factors. Although English dominates in tourist areas, local communities continue to use Balinese script on street signs as an effort to preserve the regional language and script to prevent extinction.

Another study by Sari et al. (2022) examined variations in the linguistic landscape of bilingualism in museums in Magelang. The results of this study indicate that the most common form of bilingual linguistic landscape is found in museum environments, where it is used to anticipate readability for visitors from outside the region. Furthermore, two main functions of the linguistic landscape in Magelang museums were identified: an informative function that includes prohibitions, signage, and directions, and a symbolic function that represents political and cultural relations.

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This study shares similarities with those of Wulansari (2020) and Sari et al. (2022), both of which discuss the linguistic landscape in tourist destinations. The differences between this study and the previous studies lie in the object of study and the addition of a discussion on the creators of linguistic landscape signs in tourist destinations. Wulansari (2020) examined public spaces on the island of Bali, while Sari et al. (2022) used museums in Magelang as the research object.

Based on these descriptions, research on the linguistic landscape in tourist destinations remains relevant for further study, particularly by highlighting the language variations on signage in the Berastagi tourism area. This is due to the diverse use of language on signage in the area, ranging from monolingualism, bilingualism, to multilingualism. The aim of this research is to obtain a description of the language variations used on signboards in the Berastagi tourism area.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method. This method was chosen to describe and explain the language variations on signboards in the Berastagi tourism area. This qualitative descriptive study draws on data collection through literature review and photographic documentation (Sa'diyah & Prabaningrum, 2023). One characteristic of linguistic landscape research is the use of photography as the primary data collection medium (Gorter, 2018). In line with this, Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasized that qualitative research relies heavily on text and image data, with unique analysis techniques and diverse writing styles.

The data in this study were lingual texts appearing on signboards in the Berastagi tourism area. The research data source was signboards containing text in the Berastagi tourism area. Observation and documentation techniques were used in data collection. The analysis method was classified according to the language used on the signboards using the determining element separation (PUP) technique. The PUP technique is used to categorize language variations with advanced techniques in the form of the connecting, comparing, and differentiating (HBB) technique, which is used on boards in the Berastagi tourism area into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual uses (Mahsun, 2017).

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe the language variations on signage in the Berastagi tourism area. The signage classified based on the language variations used are signs for tourist attractions, accommodations, restaurants, shops, as well as warning and prohibition signs located in the Berastagi tourism area in Medan City.

Based on the analysis of 32 data sets, variations in language were found: monolingual (Indonesian and English), bilingual (Indonesian-English and Indonesian-Karo), and multilingual (Indonesian-English-Karo). Indonesian dominates the language used on signage, demonstrating its status as the primary language and primary means of communication for visitors. Meanwhile, English represents a global orientation, and Karo reflects local identity and culture. The following is a detailed explanation, presenting several image data as examples of language used in public spaces in the Berastagi tourism area, representing the overall data set.

### Monolingual Indonesian Language Variation

The study found variations in the linguistic landscape, including monolingualism, on several signage sites in the Berastagi tourism area. Monolingualism is characterized by the use of a single language in its entirety without mixing or combining with other languages. Fifteen monolingual Indonesian language signage data were found in the Berastagi tourism area. The use of Indonesian as a single language within the linguistic landscape provides guidance that facilitates visitor understanding of the information presented without requiring additional interpretation. The following is a detailed explanation:

**Table 1. Monolingual English Variation Data**

| DATA | NO DATA |
|------|---------|
|------|---------|

|                                                          |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| SELAMAT DATANG DI<br>PEMANDIAN AIR PANAS<br>ALAM SIBAYAK | LL/KPB01 |
| AYO KE GUNDALING                                         | LL/KPB02 |
| DINDING CURHAT                                           | LL/KPB03 |
| BUANGLAH SAMPAH PADA<br>TEMPATNYA                        | LL/KPB04 |
| GUNDALING BERASTAGI                                      | LL/KPB05 |
| SELAMAT DATANG DI OBJEK<br>WISATA GUNDALING              | LL/KPB06 |
| LESTARIKAN ALAM KITA                                     | LL/KPB07 |
| PESONA                                                   | LL/KPB08 |
| PENGINAPAN MASTA                                         | LL/KPB09 |
| SANGGAR DAN GALERI<br>PENGRAJIN BAMBU<br>LEMBAH SIBAYAK  | LL/KPB10 |
| RUMAH MAKAN TIMUR                                        | LL/KPB11 |
| HATI HATI LOKASI RAWAN<br>KECELAKAAN                     | LL/KPB12 |
| AYAM PENYET CINDELARAS                                   | LL/KPB13 |
| AIR TEBU ASLI BERASTAGI                                  | LL/KPB14 |
| RUMAH MAKAN EROPAH                                       | LL/KPB15 |

Based on the data above, the use of a single language without any mixture of other language elements indicates that the signboard represents a single linguistic system, thus it is classified as monolingual. For example, the data “Selamat Datang di Pemandian Air Panas Alam Sibayak” shows a variation in the monolingual linguistic landscape, because all linguistic elements on the signboard use Indonesian consistently without any mixture of other languages. The use of a single language confirms that the signboard only represents one language, so it can be classified as a monolingual form in the linguistic landscape of the tourism area. The use of Indonesian as the national language serves as the main means of communication that is easily understood by most visitors, especially domestic tourists. The following is a picture of the data.



**Figure 1.** LL/KPB01 Data



Figure 2. LL/KPB06 Data

The "Selamat Datang Di Objek Wisata Gundaling" data demonstrates a monolingual linguistic landscape because all linguistic elements are in Indonesian without the use of other languages. This use of a single language signifies the representation of a single linguistic system, thus classifying it as monolingual. Indonesian serves as a means of communication easily understood by visitors, especially domestic tourists, as well as a marker of identity and initial information confirming the existence of the Gundaling tourist area.

#### Monolingual English Variations

The use of monolingual English is found on several signages in the Berastagi tourism area. Monolingualism is characterized by the use of one language entirely without mixing or combining it with other languages. Seven monolingual English signs were found in the Berastagi tourism area. The following is a detailed explanation:

Table 2. Monolingual English Variation Data

| DATA                          | NO DATA  |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| THE PARADISE OF KARO HIGHLAND | LL/KPB16 |
| WELCOME GUNDALING HILL        | LL/KPB17 |
| TOURIST INFORMATION           | LL/KPB18 |
| SAVE OUR EARTH                | LL/KPB19 |
| ASSEMBLY POINT                | LL/KPB20 |
| GUNDALING FARM                | LL/KPB21 |
| JUNGLE ZONE                   | LL/KPB22 |

Based on the data above, the use of a single language without any other language elements indicates that the sign represents a single linguistic system, thus classifying it as monolingual. For example, the data on "The Paradise of Karo Highland" demonstrates a varied monolingual linguistic landscape, as all linguistic elements on the sign consistently use English without any other language mixing. The use of a single foreign language confirms that the sign represents only one language, thus classifying it as monolingual within the linguistic landscape of the tourism area. The choice of English reflects the destination's orientation toward both international visitors and domestic tourists familiar with English.

The use of English on the sign reflects the destination's global orientation and internationalization. The terms "The Paradise" and "Karo Highland" were chosen to build the image of the Karo Highlands as an attractive and marketable destination for tourists, particularly international and domestic tourists familiar with English. The use of "Karo Highland" as a lexical unit also demonstrates the commercial naming process of the destination and tourism branding. The following data illustrates this.



Figure 3. LL/KPB16 Data

### Bilingual Indonesian-English Variations

Seven instances of bilingual Indonesian-English variation were found in the Berastagi Tourism Area. These variations were found in the linguistic landscape of signage. The following is a detailed explanation:

Table 3. Bilingual Indonesian-English Language Variation Data

| DATA                                                                                   | NO DATA  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| SELAMAT DATANG<br>PEMANDIAN AIR PANAS<br>WELCOME TO HOT SPRING<br>TAMAN WISATA SIBAYAK | LL/KPB23 |
| JEMBATAN KACA<br>GUNDALING SKY HILL                                                    | LL/KPB24 |
| KELUAR<br>EXIT                                                                         | LL/KPB25 |
| WELCOME TAMAN SERIBU<br>BUNGA                                                          | LL/KPB26 |
| GUNUNG SIBAYAK<br>HOME STAY<br>KANTIN<br>KOLAM VIP<br>PENGINAPAN                       | LL/KPB27 |
| SELAMAT DATANG<br>PEMANDIAN AIR PANAS &<br>PENGINAPAN KARONA<br>FAMILY                 | LL/KPB28 |
| WELCOME PEMANDIAN AIR<br>PANAS & PENGINAPAN<br>LAMEGOGO                                | LL/KPB29 |

Based on the data above, the use of two languages, or bilingualism, indicates that the sign represents more than one language system in a single medium. The simultaneous presence of Indonesian and English on the sign demonstrates a coexisting form of bilingualism. Indonesian is used as the national language, serving as the primary means of communication for domestic tourists, while English serves as the international language intended to reach international tourists. For example, data number LL/KPB23 "Selamat Datang/ Welcome to Hot Spring / Pemandian Air Panas Taman Wisata Sibayak" demonstrates a varied bilingual linguistic landscape, as it uses both languages: Indonesian and English.

Indonesian is used in the phrases "Selamat Datang" and "Pemandian Air Panas Taman Wisata Sibayak," while English is used in the phrase "Welcome to Hot Spring." The two languages are presented side by side without any mixing of linguistic structures, allowing each language to maintain its linguistic identity. Therefore, this data is classified as a form of Indonesian-English bilingualism within the linguistic landscape of the Berastagi tourism area. The following figure illustrates this.



Figure 4. LL/KPB23 Data

### Bilingual Indonesian-Karo Language Variations

Two instances of bilingual Indonesian-Karo language variation were found in the Berastagi Tourism Area. These variations were found in the linguistic landscape of signage. The following is a detailed explanation:

Table 4. Bilingual Indonesian-Karo Language Variation Data

| DATA               | NO DATA  |
|--------------------|----------|
| PENGINAPAN BULANG  | LL/KPB30 |
| Penginapan ulu lau | LL/KPB31 |

Based on the data above, the "Penginapan Bulang" data shows the use of two languages, namely Indonesian and Karo, thus being classified as a form of bilingualism in the linguistic landscape. The word "penginapan" comes from Indonesian and functions as a marker for the type of accommodation facility. Meanwhile, the word "bulang" is a Karo vocabulary word meaning grandfather. The use of Karo language elements not only functions as the name of the inn, but also represents the values of kinship and local cultural identity of the Karo people. Thus, this data reflects Indonesian-Karo bilingualism. The following is a picture of the data.



Figure 5. LL/KPB30 Data

### Multilingual Indonesian-English-Karo Language Variation

One instance of multilingual Indonesian-English-Karo language variation was found in the Berastagi Tourism Area. This variation was found in the linguistic landscape on signboards, as explained in detail below:

Table 5. Multilingual Indonesian-English-Karo Language Variation Data

| DATA                                     | NO DATA  |
|------------------------------------------|----------|
| WELCOME<br>SELAMAT DATANG<br>MEJUAH-JUAH | LL/KPB32 |

Based on the data above, the use of three languages, namely English, Indonesian, and Karo, shows that the signboard represents more than two language systems in one medium and is therefore classified as a form of multilingualism in the linguistic landscape. This can be seen in the data "Welcome - Selamat Datang - Mejuah-juah" which displays welcoming expressions in three different languages without any mixing of linguistic elements. English functions to reach foreign tourists, Indonesian as the national language is intended for domestic tourists, and Karo serves as a marker of local identity. Thus, the use of these three languages reflects global, national, and local orientations in the linguistic landscape of the tourism area. The following is a picture of the data.



Figure 6. LL/KPB32 Data

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the linguistic landscape in the Berastagi tourism area displays language variations influenced by globalization and tourism needs. From the 32 signboard data analyzed, variations were found in monolingual languages (Indonesian and English), bilingual (Indonesian-English and Indonesian-Karo), and multilingual (Indonesian-English-Karo). Indonesian dominates the language use on signboards, indicating its status as the primary language and primary means of communication for visitors. Meanwhile, English represents a global orientation, and Karo reflects local identity and culture. Thus, signboards in the Berastagi tourism area function not only as information media, but also as representations of national, global, and local identities in public spaces.

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