



Language Visibility and Vitality of Lampung Language in Public Signage: A Linguistic Landscape Study

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Abstract

The visibility of a language in public spaces not only reflects local identity and the presence of an Indigenous community but is also often seen as a key indicator of its vitality. This case study examines that assumption through an analysis of 1,431 linguistic landscapes (LL) collected from six streets in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia and supplemented by follow-up interviews with creators and viewers. It focuses on the presence of the Lampung language alongside other languages in the LLs; on its role in shaping the identity of the Lampung people, affirming the existence of their community; and on its contribution to the vitality of their language. Additionally, it explores how such visibility may help reverse language shift and encourage community participation in revitalization efforts. The findings revealed that although the Lampung language remained less prominent than Indonesian, English, and Arabic, it was still highly visible in public spaces in Bandar Lampung. Efforts to enhance its visibility involved government initiatives, community engagement, and contributions from non-governmental sectors. Despite this presence, language shift persisted, with most Lampung families and communities favoring Indonesian in daily interactions. These results highlight that visibility in public spaces does not necessarily guarantee

vitality but serves as an important first step toward collaborative, strategic, and sustained efforts among stakeholders to bring back Lampung language use within the families and communities. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on LL, language vitality, and Indigenous language revitalization strategies.

Keywords: Endangered language, Indigenous language, Lampung language, language revitalization, linguistic landscapes

Introduction

The presence of an Indigenous language in linguistic landscapes (LL)—defined as the “visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 23)—reflects the cultural, historical, and social processes of self-identification of the land, its people, and its community. It serves as a symbol of existence, legitimacy, and belonging to the region where an Indigenous community lives, practices their culture, and uses their language. In addition to Landry and Bourhis (1997), Shohamy and Gorter (2008) emphasize that the presence of an Indigenous language in public spaces is closely related to its vitality. Shohamy and Gorter emphasize that linguistic presence in public spaces is not merely symbolic but also functions as an indicator of a language’s legitimacy and vitality within society. Similarly, Baker (2011) underscores that both the visibility of a language in public spaces and the level of institutional support (i.e., how the language is promoted, maintained, and legitimized) are critical indicators of Indigenous language vitality. However, this perspective becomes more complex in large urban contexts where populations are linguistically and culturally diverse and where Indigenous communities are often minoritized within their own homelands. Previous studies, such as those conducted in Singapore (Cavallaro & Ng, 2014; Leimgruber, 2018; Tang, 2020), highlight that although Malay is recognized as an official language and remains highly visible in public spaces, language shift within the Malay community persists and even expands under the growing dominance of English. Such complexities highlight the importance of further exploring how Indigenous languages in public spaces and everyday life interact with broader sociolinguistic realities, in order to gain deeper insights into their vitality—a question this study addresses through the case of the Lampung language in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia.

The Lampung language is an endangered Indigenous language from the Province of Lampung, Indonesia, located in the southern region of the Island of Sumatra. According to Eberhard et al. (2023), it has an estimated 1,107,000 speakers, comprising 827,000 speakers of dialect *Api* and 180,000 of dialect *Nyo*. Most speakers reside in coastal areas and in several major cities across Lampung. Based on the 2010 Census, Lampung people made up only 13.56% of the province’s population, compared to 64.17% Javanese and other ethnic groups. This demographic shift was largely shaped by transmigration policies during Dutch colonization and after Indonesian independence. Previous studies, however, have reported that not all Lampung people speak their language at home and in their community due to the dominance of Indonesian language in the domains of education, media, and government as well as Javanese in the daily neighborhood and traditional market interactions (Gunarwan, 1994; Hasan, 2004; Hasan & Sutarsyah, 2014; Putra, 2018). In Bandar Lampung, the capital city of the Province of Lampung, the diversity of the population, the dominance of Indonesian and Javanese, and the increasing roles of English and Arabic in education and businesses create an even more complex challenge for the survival of the Lampung language. Various top-down and bottom-up initiatives have sought to reverse this shift and to create spaces where the language can be learned and used. Nonetheless, challenges remain. For example, although the local government has introduced Lampung language instruction in public schools, there is still a gap regarding where students can use the language outside the classroom (Putra, 2018). This perspective highlights not only the urgency of examining government intervention in the LL, but also the need to understand how such interventions shape the everyday vitality of the Lampung language.

Previous studies have also explored the ways LLs are connected to Indigenous language shift, endangerment, and revitalization efforts. For instance, Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias (2023) found that while Indonesian and English dominated the LLs in Semarang and Yogyakarta, the

presence of Javanese reflected local government efforts to preserve local identity and raise awareness of Indigenous language endangerment. They further argued that LLs can foster pride and reinforce local identity, legitimize Indigenous languages, and support revitalization efforts in urban contexts. In New Zealand, similar studies have also been conducted to see the fragility and the revitalization of Te Reo Māori. Macalister (2010) found that Māori was used in the LL mainly in temporary signage or community-driven contexts, while absent from permanent and official signage, suggesting a symbolic rather than bilingual function. Similarly, Davies and Maclagan (2006) found a limited and patterned presence of Māori vocabulary in print media, reflecting restricted domains of use rather than widespread bilingual practice. Harlow (2005) cautioned that such symbolic use may serve as a marker of identity but does not necessarily reflect genuine revitalization efforts, particularly given the limited government support for the language. In other contexts, studies by Pietikäinen (2013) in Norway, Blackwood (2011) in France, and Moriarty (2013) in Ireland similarly found that the visibility of Indigenous or regional languages legitimized local identities, fostered pride, and challenged marginalization in a globalized world, although it did not necessarily reverse language shift or lead to greater community use of these languages. These studies also highlighted that government intervention plays a crucial role in shaping Indigenous language visibility in the LL, and such visibility, while not sufficient on its own, represents a promising ongoing effort toward language revitalization. Altogether, these studies show that although the visibility of LL can help establish local identity and support revitalization efforts, they often remain symbolic and insufficient to reverse language shift on its own. However, little is known about how such potential can be materialized in practice and how LLs could play a role in this effort.

The current study aims to explore how Indigenous language visibility in the LL can serve as an entry point for collaborative and sustained revitalization efforts, particularly in Bandar Lampung, a context where the Indigenous language remains underexplored and where intergenerational transmission failure continues to persist. More specifically, this study explores the presence of the Lampung language in the LL, its presentation alongside other languages, and people's perspectives on its visibility in shaping Lampung identity, affirming community existence, and contributing to the language's vitality. Additionally, it examines how this visibility can support language shift reversal and foster community participation in revitalization efforts. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing development and discussion of how LL functions as a mechanism for Indigenous language revitalization.

Literature Review

Linguistic landscapes are often described as battlegrounds of competing language identities, ideologies, and powers. In addition to practically serving a particular communicative function, it also symbolically represents the hierarchical structure and contestation between the most dominant and the least dominant languages in public spaces. Drawing on Landry and Bourhis (1997), LLs serve two primary functions—symbolic and informational—through both top-down (governmental/institutional) and bottom-up (individual/commercial) signages. The informational function refers to the role of LL in providing information about the sociolinguistic situation of a given territory or region, such as direction on street signs and product information on advertising posters. The symbolic function refers to the role of LL as a marker of identity, cultural values, power dynamics, and social meaning within a community or a region. For instance, the use of an Indigenous language in LL is a form of acknowledgement of the existence of an Indigenous

community within a particular region. Following this framework, official languages will typically dominate the top-down signage symbolically by displaying state authority and national unity and legitimizing particular language ideologies and informationally by ensuring that the communication reaches a wider audience. On the other hand, the bottom-up signage will represent the multilingual diversity of the population and global influence in the region by serving various symbolic and informational functions.

In the context of endangered and minority Indigenous languages, it is important to distinguish between visibility and vitality. It is the context in which a certain degree of a community preference for using a dominant language instead of Indigenous languages across various domains and generations (Fishman, 1991), or language shift, has taken place. Visibility refers to the appearance of a language in public spaces through signage and other written forms (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy & Gorter, 2008), while vitality refers to its sustained everyday use, intergenerational transmission, and communicative functions within the community (Fishman, 1991; Wayne & Baker, 2025). While the visibility of the language in LL symbolically represents the acknowledgement of the people's existence with their historical and cultural significance, it does not necessarily ensure its vitality (Harlow, 2005). Shohamy and Gorter (2008) noted that, when connected to everyday use, such presence might reflect Indigenous language vitality. Wayne and Baker (2025) also clarified that only intergenerational transmission and the regular use of the language within lower domains (i.e., as the home, neighborhood, and traditional markets) and higher domains (i.e., government offices, business offices, educational institutions, and the media) can truly sustain vitality. In other words, without use in practice the visibility of the language in LL is not the same as the vitality.

Similarly, previous studies pointed out that the presence of an Indigenous language in LL did not necessarily represent its vitality. The presence of Indigenous language in LL is often temporary, context specific, merely symbolic, and not genuinely intended for Indigenous language revitalization, nor does it address the complex challenges of language shift and endangerment (Harlow, 2005). Previous studies in Ireland (Moriarty, 2013), Wales (Heller, 2010), and New Zealand (Macalister, 2010) similarly found that LL often commodified Indigenous languages as cultural labels rather than using them as mediums of communication, and their presence was frequently limited to tokenism—greetings, slogans, and transliterations—which created symbolic recognition without contributing to intergenerational transmission. Therefore, such efforts require a clear articulation of the objectives, strategies, and target audiences of the LL in Indigenous languages as well as the inclusion of the language not only as a heritage symbol but also as a revitalization mechanism (Pietikäinen, 2013; Shohamy, 2006). In addition to drawing on Landry and Bourhis (1997), this study also builds on critical LL perspectives (Blackwood, 2011; Pennycook, 2010; Shohamy & Gorter, 2008), which view LL not as neutral communication but as contested spaces where hierarchies, ideologies, and the commodification of language are produced and challenged.

In the context of the Lampung language in Bandar Lampung, initiatives to increase the visibility of the Lampung language in the LL in public spaces have been initiated by the local government. Such top-down signage appears on street signs, government institution signboards, educational institution signboards, and signboards in other public places such as traditional markets, public cemeteries, hospitals, airports, bus terminals, and train stations. They use the Lampung script, which is commonly written beneath Indonesian in the Latin alphabet, highlighting the hierarchy of power of Indonesian as the national and official language of Indonesia. On the other hand, the Lampung language does not hold official status, but it is recognized by the local

government as part of acknowledging Bandar Lampung as the homeland of the Lampung people. This echoes previous studies that documented hierarchies of power in LLs in multilingual societies (Blackwood, 2011; Pietikäinen, 2013), where the most dominant language typically appears at the top or is displayed in a larger font. However, the focus on symbolic visibility through the transliteration of Indonesian into Lampung script rather than through contextual communicative purposes raises questions about whether this initiative contributes to language revitalization efforts. This study is therefore necessary to explore how the Lampung case contributes to broader discussions in LL research on visibility, vitality, and the contested politics of Indigenous language representation shaped by power, identity, and ideology. By critically examining LL in the Lampung case, this study demonstrates how to move beyond symbolic recognition toward meaningful language revitalization, with implications for Indigenous language visibility and vitality in other multilingual societies worldwide.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Bandar Lampung, a diverse urban area in the southern part of Sumatra. It is the capital city of Lampung Province, Indonesia and the homeland of the Lampung people. As clarified earlier, the city historically became a transmigration destination for Javanese and Sudanese people from Java as well as from other regions of Indonesia during the British, Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese colonial periods and after Indonesia gained independence (MacAndrews, 1978). Over time, this significantly changed the demographic composition of the province, with the Javanese becoming the dominant ethnic group and the Lampung people a minority. While most Javanese people continue to speak their language at home and within their communities, the Lampung people have undergone a massive and ongoing language shift to Indonesian.

In this study, in addition to the data of pictures of linguistic landscapes in the city, we also conducted a series of follow-up semi-structured interviews with creators and viewers of the LL. The pictures were used to show the distribution and the use of different languages in the monolingual and multilingual LL of the city. Additionally, they were also used to see the frequency of the appearance of the Lampung language and how it was presented. The interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives on the appearance of the Lampung language in the LL and its relationship to language vitality. The pictures of the LL were taken from six streets in three focused areas in the city: an academic area, a government area, and a business area. The categories were based on the landmarks inside the three areas. In total, we took 561 monolingual pictures and 870 multilingual pictures and interviewed eight people (four creators and four viewers of the LL). All participants were voluntarily recruited based on their availability and provided signed consent forms before the interviews. They were also assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The numbers of participants were balanced between Lampungnese and non-Lampungnese participants in each group of four. Below are the details of the participants taking part in interviews.

Table 1

Participants Taking Part in the Follow-up Interviews

No.	Names (Pseudonyms)	Age	Roles	Ethnicities	Jobs
1	Sultan	40	Creator	Lampungnese	Government Employee
2	Wiranata	35	Creator	Batakese	Clothing Store Owner

3	Intan	37	Creator	Lampungnese	Restaurant Owner
4	Melati	38	Creator	Javanese	Government Employee
5	Puspita	35	Viewer	Lampungnese	University Lecturer
6	Cahya	27	Viewer	Lampungnese	Bookstore Assistant
7	Saburai	21	Viewer	Palembangnese	University Student
8	Muharawan	38	Viewer	Javanese	School Teacher

The data consisting of pictures of linguistic landscapes were analyzed according to the following categories: location (academic, government, and business areas), creators (top-down and bottom-up), languages (Indonesian, English, Lampung, etc.), number of languages (monolingual and multilingual), and messages conveyed (functional and symbolic meanings). The signs were then quantified and ranked to identify the most and least dominant languages within each category. The interviews with the creators and viewers were transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase approach to thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and reporting findings. The coding process was conducted manually and cross checked by all authors to ensure the consistency and systematic categorization of the data.

Findings and Discussion

The Representation of Lampung Language in the Linguistic Landscapes

Five languages appeared consistently in the monolingual linguistic landscapes of Bandar Lampung, namely Indonesian, English, Arabic, Lampung, and Chinese. Indonesian dominated both monolingual top-down signs (50%) and bottom-up signs (45%) used across a wide range of formal domains in society, which reflects its role as Indonesia's national and official language. The use of the Indonesian language in both top-down and bottom-up signs is regulated under the Indonesian Constitutional Law No. 24/2009, which mandates the use of Indonesian in public spaces, including public signage, government and educational institutions, official documents, and public service environments. The regulation aims to strengthen national identity, reinforce state legitimacy, and ensure administrative clarity. English was in the second position, highlighting the importance of the language for tourism, businesses, and education and symbolizing modernity and global connectivity in the city. In the bottom-up signs, signage in English was found in the shops, hotels, restaurants, advertisements, and private schools and universities. Arabic ranked third, appearing in 12% of top-down signs and 16% of bottom-up signs. This reflects the large Muslim population in the city, with Arabic signs commonly found in mosques, Islamic schools and universities, political campaign banners, and other public spaces. Lampung followed Arabic, appearing in 10% of top-down signs and 8% of bottom-up signs. This suggests that government intervention has played a role in making the language visible in the LL and in encouraging community participation in revitalization efforts, though its presence remains marginal compared to the dominant languages. Finally, Chinese came in the fifth position, which, regardless of the number, still reflected the presence of the Chinese community in the city. Altogether, these languages illustrate how power, identity, and ideology are negotiated in the city—Indonesian as the state's legitimized language of authority, English as the

marker of global modernity, Arabic as the symbol of religious identity, Lampung as the representation of local identity, and Chinese as the representation of minority community presence.

Table 2

Language Use in Monolingual LL in Bandar Lampung

Languages	Top-Down	Bottom-Up
Indonesian	120 (50%)	144 (45%)
English	60 (25%)	80 (25%)
Arabic	29 (12%)	51 (16%)
Lampung	24 (10%)	26 (8%)
Chinese	7 (3%)	19 (5%)
Total	240	321

In multilingual LLs, Indonesian still dominated and consistently appeared alongside other languages. Indonesian and English were the most common combination in both top-down and bottom-up signages. It reached 54% in the bottom-up signages (see Table 3). Businesses used Indonesian and English to comply with government regulations while also projecting modernity in their branding and products. In top-down signages, the government used both Indonesian and English to reach wider audiences while adhering to the regulation requiring Indonesian words to appear above or in larger font than the English words. This was followed by signages in Indonesian and Arabic, reflecting the strong religious values upheld by both the government and society. Interestingly, Lampung appeared twice in the multilingual signages: once alongside Indonesian, with 22% in the top-down signages; and 16% in the bottom-up signages, and once together with Indonesian and English, with 8% in the top-down signages and 6% in the bottom-up signages. The top-down multilingual signages that included Lampung were commonly found on school signboards, government signboards, street signs, monument names, and market signboards. In contrast, bottom-up signages appeared mainly in tourism and business centers. Notably, while top-down signages emphasized the use of the Lampung script, bottom-up signages predominantly used the Latin alphabet (see Figures 2 and 3 below). While the government used it symbolically, society aimed to ensure that the message could be understood even by visitors unfamiliar with the alphabet. Finally, Indonesian and Chinese appeared together in 4% of bottom-up signages but in none of the top-down signages. These signages were found in business centers, private Christian schools, and religious centers. As in the monolingual LLs, its presence in bottom-up signages underscored the visibility and continued existence of the Chinese community in the city. Altogether, the multilingual LL in Bandar Lampung reflected a hierarchy of language use: Indonesian dominated, English marked global influence, Arabic signified religious identity, Lampung remained largely symbolic in top-down signages but served informational functions in bottom-up signages, and Chinese marked minority community presence.

Table 3*Language Use in Multilingual LLs in Bandar Lampung*

Languages	Top Down	Bottom Up
Indonesian, English	144 (45%)	297 (54%)
Indonesian, Arabic	80 (25%)	110 (20%)
Indonesian, Lampung	70 (22%)	88 (16%)
Indonesian, English, Lampung	26 (8%)	33 (6%)
Indonesian, Chinese	0 (0%)	22 (4%)
Total	320	550

In both monolingual and multilingual LLs, the appearance of different languages highlights the city's diversity, a feature common to many urban settings such as Beijing (Zhang & Zhang, 2024), Lisbon (Rovira, 2025), Tokyo (Backhaus, 2008), Seoul (Kim et al., 2025), and Tel Aviv (Ben Rafael et al., 2006). However, the hierarchical frequency of language use also signifies inequality of multilingualism (Tupas, 2015) shaped by power, identity, and ideology. Certain languages are dominant in visibility, legitimacy, and authority, while others remain minoritized and largely symbolic. Such a pattern was also found globally (Delmas et al., 2025), where multilingual signs in urban areas reproduce inequalities by privileging more powerful languages over marginalized ones. A study by Tang (2020) in Singapore aligns with this situation, showing that although four official languages are recognized, English dominated the LL over Chinese, Tamil, and Malay. However, this finding also points to a promising future for the Lampung language, as government intervention has increased its visibility in the LL and encouraged community participation, allowing the language to be used not only symbolically but also for specific informational functions. It opens up possibilities for more collaborative and participatory language revitalization efforts jointly implemented by the government, by communities, and by other stakeholders.

The Functions of Lampung Language in the Top Down and Bottom-up Linguistic Landscapes

Drawing on Landry and Bourhis (1997), this section provides an in-depth analysis of the common symbolic and informational functions of the LLs in Bandar Lampung, where the Lampung language appeared in various top-down and bottom-up LLs, serving both functions. The symbolic function refers to the identity and power dimension that the languages display. The informational function refers to the practical communicative role of the languages on signs. In what follows, we show that the appearance of Lampung alphabet in the LL was often symbolic rather than informational. Additionally, they were also not genuinely intended for language revitalization purposes. It established regional identity and recognized the historical existence of the land and the community but did not provide people with exposure to the practical communicative function of the language.

Symbolic Functions in the Top-Down Signs *Welcoming People to the City*

Figure 1

Entrance Gate of Bandar Lampung Featuring a Trilingual Welcoming Message (Indonesian, Lampung script, and Arabic), Symbolizing Hospitality and Reinforcing the City's Religious, Cultural, and Linguistic Identity



Figure 1 above shows a picture of an entrance gate of the City of Bandar Lampung, where three alphabets—Arabic, Indonesian, and Lampung—are used. The three alphabets do not express a similar message. The Arabic alphabet on the top is used to write *shahada*, or the Islamic declaration of faith. The text “*La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadan rasul Allah.*” is written in Arabic and can be translated as “There is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” The Indonesian text in the middle “SELAMAT DATANG DI KOTA BANDAR LAMPUNG” can be translated as “Welcome to the City of Bandar Lampung.” The Lampung alphabet in the bottom is used to transliterate the Indonesian text and is not written in the Lampung language. There is also a *siger*, a traditional crown-shaped ornament that symbolizes the cultural identity of the Lampung people. It is commonly worn by brides during wedding ceremonies and is considered a marker of grace, beauty, and regional pride. There is also a logo of the Province of Lampung on the right, a logo of the City of Bandar Lampung on the left, and two “PGN” (National Gas Company) logos, likely indicating corporate sponsorship of its construction.

Altogether, the multilingual and symbolic features of the gate illustrate how religious, national, and local identities are layered and negotiated in the city’s public space to welcome people to Bandar Lampung. Located on the main road connecting the airport in Bandar Negara and the seaport in South Lampung to the city center, as well as to the bus terminal and train station within the city, the texts on the gate may shape visitors’ first impressions of the people and the city. The presence of the *siger* on the gate, as well as on government offices, stores, restaurants, schools, and universities in the city, establishes the symbolic identity of the Lampung people. The use of Arabic may serve to emphasize the Islamic values upheld by the government and to reflect the city’s majority Muslim population. Similar signs were found in Middle Eastern countries, where many street signs or stickers on buildings serve as reminders of God (Alsaif & Starks, 2018; Jarrah et al.,

2025; Tuzlukova & Mehta, 2020). The message written in Indonesian ensures that everyone, regardless of their ethnicities and linguistic backgrounds, can understand the welcoming statement, which reflects its role as a national and official language and as a unifying language for the people of Indonesia. The transliteration in the Lampung alphabet signifies the government's efforts to showcase regional identity and cultural heritage while at the same time reminding people about its historical and cultural significance as well as affirming the presence of the Lampung people in the city. In this way, the gate functions not only as a physical entry point to Bandar Lampung but also as a symbolic space where religious faith, national unity, and local identity intersect to define the city's sociocultural landscape.

Honoring Local Heroes

Figure 2

The Statue of a Local Hero in Bandar Lampung Featuring Both Indonesian and the Lampung Alphabet, Symbolizing Respect for History and Cultural Identity



Figure 2 above shows a picture of a statue of a local hero, Radin Inten who historically led the war against the Dutch colonization in Lampung from 1851 to 1856. The hero's name is also used for a local airport (Raden Inten International Airport) and a public university (Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Inten Lampung) as well as the street where the statue in Figure 3 is located. The statue in Figure 2 is situated strategically in the city center across from the shopping centers and the business district, making it highly visible to residents and visitors. The statue stands on a black rectangular pedestal, decorated with gold-colored *tapis* patterns—a traditional Lampung woven cloth—and texts in Indonesian and the Lampung alphabet, along with a logo of the city of Bandar Lampung. The text at the top reads “RADIN INTEN” and serves as an identification of the historical figure represented in the statue. Under the text “RADIN INTEN,” there is a transliteration written in the Lampung alphabet. The text “PAHLAWAN NASIONAL PROVINSI LAMPUNG”—translated as “National Hero of the Province of Lampung”— identifies Radin Inten as a national hero from the region. Similar to the *siger*, the gold-colored *tapis* patterns are iconic cultural ornaments widely displayed across the city on road medians, government buildings, business centers, restaurants,

schools, and universities. Altogether, like the entrance gate, the statue embodies symbolic features of national unity, regional identity, and local history and culture.

Reflecting Local Identity in a Street Sign

Figure 3

A Bilingual Street Sign in Bandar Lampung Written in the Latin Alphabet and Lampung Script Blending National Identity and Local Linguistic and Cultural Identity



Figure 3 shows an example of a bilingual street sign in Bandar Lampung written both in the Latin alphabet and Lampung script, a common sight in the city. The top text is in Indonesian using the Latin alphabet, while the bottom is its transliteration in the Lampung script. The hierarchical placement of the Latin alphabet above the Lampung script highlights the dominance of Indonesian as the national and official language, as well as its role as a unifying language for the people of Indonesia. In this way, the use of Indonesian in the Latin alphabet serves to reinforce national identity. At the same time, similar to the gate and the statue, the inclusion of the Lampung script in the street sign reflects the local government's efforts to preserve linguistic and cultural identity. However, it is worth noting that the use of the Lampung script in the gate, statue, and street sign—all of which are top-down signs—is merely a transliteration of Indonesian. This highlights the local government's ambiguous focus in language revitalization efforts, raising the question of whether the emphasis is on the Lampung language itself or merely on the Lampung script. This concern has also been raised by Putra (2018), who questioned the teaching of Lampung in schools that emphasized the Lampung script rather than the Lampung language for communicative purposes. Therefore, the visibility of the Lampung language in top-down signs was largely symbolic, failing to adequately address the complex challenges of language shift and endangerment, and not genuinely intended as a strategy for Lampung language revitalization. In this sense, the use of the Lampung script in public signage serves more as a cultural display of heritage than as a practical strategy to ensure the intergenerational transmission and everyday use of the Lampung language.

Informational Functions in the Bottom-Up Signs *Using Lampung Language in Commercial Signage*

Figure 4

A Local Custom Clothing Store Signboard Using the Lampung Language Written in the Latin Alphabet, Inviting Passersby to Visit the Store



Figure 4 above shows a local custom clothing store signboard located in front of the shop. Three visible signboards display similar texts: “SINGGAH PAY,” meaning “stop by,” and “KAOS LAMPUNG” or “Lampung t-shirts,” along with an Instagram account and a phone number. From an informational perspective, the sign serves practical functions to invite customers to visit the store, advertise products, and to provide contact information. Symbolically, the text “SINGGAH PAY” represents the hospitality of the Lampung people by inviting passersby to come and visit the store. Culturally, it reflects the practice in Lampung communities where people, when outside their homes, greet others by inviting them to stop by with the phrase “Singgah pay.” The use of this informal and familiar expression as a brand clearly shows an example of bottom-up creativity in LL that blends a cultural tradition with modern consumer practices. The text “KAOS LAMPUNG” describes the brand associated with Lampung identity and transforms such identity into a commodified cultural product for locals and tourists. The text also evokes an emotional attachment, allowing those who wear the products to feel pride and a sense of belonging to Lampung. The products help increase the visibility of the Lampung language through everyday fashion and allow people to express pride in their identity. At the same time, they also reveal a tension: the appropriation of the Lampung language is limited to the Latin alphabet and used merely as a marketing label rather than as a means of authentic revitalization and a medium of daily communication. However, it should also be appreciated as a form of community participation in increasing the visibility of the Lampung language in public spaces and in raising awareness and positive attitudes toward the language and culture.

Using Lampung Language in Restaurant Signage

Figure 5

A Local Restaurant Signboard Featuring the Lampung Language in the Latin Alphabet, Symbolizing Hospitality and Reflecting the Cultural Identity of the Lampung People



Similar to the clothing store signboard, Figure 5 shows a text in the Lampung language written in the Latin alphabet on a local restaurant in Bandar Lampung. The text “TABIK PUN...,” meaning “Hello,” is deeply rooted to Lampung traditions and is used as a sign of hospitality to greet customers coming to the restaurant. It is an expression commonly used in both formal and informal occasions by the Lampung people to show respect to elders and other people, to welcome guests, and to maintain social harmony. In the restaurant, it is not only used to welcome guests, but it also symbolically asserts Lampung cultural values in the urban landscape. The text “Mengan Dijow Mak Dapet Minjak Lagey,” meaning “Eat here, you won’t find it anywhere else,” conveys the message to the guests that the restaurant offers unique food unavailable elsewhere. Symbolically, it establishes the place’s identity as a local restaurant serving distinctive Lampung cuisine and reinforces Lampung identity by using the language as a marketing tool. Like in the clothing store signboard, the Lampung script in this restaurant signboard is also missing. While it provides accessibility for all guests, including domestic and international tourists, the absence of the Lampung script raises questions about authenticity and about whether efforts are being made to revitalize the script itself. The inclusion of both the Latin alphabet and the Lampung script would promote learning while providing both accessibility and authenticity.

Using Lampung Language in Restaurant Menu

Figure 6

A Local Restaurant Menu Featuring the Lampung Language in the Latin Alphabet and Lampung Script



Unlike the signboards in the clothing store and restaurant, Figure 6 shows a local restaurant's menu list written in the Lampung language using both the Latin alphabet and the Lampung script. Additionally, it uses colored and authentic pictures to help guests choose their food, which makes the menu more interesting, contextual, and engaging. Informationally, this multimodal combination ensures accessibility for both customers familiar and unfamiliar with the Lampung script, while also allowing them to learn about the language and the script through the contextual support of pictures. Symbolically, the use of the Lampung language in both a Latin alphabet and a Lampung script affirms cultural pride and authenticity by situating Indigenous identity within a practical everyday setting. Therefore, unlike in other settings where Lampung is used merely as a marketing tool or label, this restaurant integrates both the Lampung language and script for meaningful and functional purposes, which are important for language revitalization. In this sense, the menu illustrates how multimodal linguistic landscapes can balance accessibility with authenticity and move closer toward genuine revitalization efforts by embedding the Lampung language and Lampung script into everyday practices.

Perspectives of the Creators and Viewers of the Linguistic Landscapes

People's Perspectives on the Use of Lampung Language in the Linguistic Landscapes

1. Significant Value as a Source of Pride, Identity, and Legitimacy of the Lampung People.

The participants highlighted that the visibility of the Lampung language in the LLs served as a source of pride, strengthened regional identity as the homeland of the Lampung people, and legitimized their existence in the region. Amid the dominance of Indonesian, English, and Arabic, the presence of the Lampung language in the LL made them proud of their Indigenous identity. They emphasized that even with the limited visibility, it reminded people of the importance of the

Lampung history and culture. Such visibility is also an affirmation that the Lampung language still has a place in the city's public life. Puspita (a university lecturer and a native speaker of Lampung), for example, mentioned:

It feels good to see the Lampung language on the signages. It's like I can say to others, "Here you are in Lampung. This is the alphabet and this is how something is said in Lampung." It makes me proud to be Lampungnese.

Puspita's comment aligns with Landry and Bourhis (1997), who mention that one of the symbolic functions of a presence of a language in the LL is to foster identity, recognition, and belonging in a community. Similar findings were also found by Pietikäinen (2013) in her study of Sami languages in Norway and by Moriarty (2014) in the Irish context in Ireland. This finding suggests that the visibility of Lampung language in the LL is not only about the language itself but also about asserting historical significance and cultural identity in contested urban spaces. It also highlights how even symbolic representations can serve as a powerful resource and entry point for the Lampung people to reclaim their identity and visibility in public spaces.

2. Concerns About Its Limited and Symbolic Presence Compared to Dominant Languages.

Participants also highlighted the limited presence of the Lampung language and its primary focus on symbolic functions, especially in top-down signage. Many signs—such as school signboards, government boards, street signs, monument names, and market signboards—were written in the Lampung script but merely as transliterations of Indonesian. Some participants thought that these uses were merely symbolic and did not truly represent the Lampung language. They also argued such uses would not help visitors learn the Lampung language, since many might be unfamiliar with the script. They proposed that if the Lampung alphabet were to be used, it should represent the Lampung language itself and be accompanied by a transliteration and a translation in the Latin alphabet. The participants also highlighted differences between top-down and bottom-up signage, noting that the latter used the Lampung language more for informational functions. In an interview, Muharawan (a school-teacher and a non-native speaker of Lampung) said,

It looks good, but it feels strange. It's written in the Lampung script, yet it's actually Indonesian. So, it doesn't really provide information in Lampung. As long as it is there, people will see it—but I think we need more signs that are truly informative and contextually relevant, using both Lampung and Latin alphabets, so that people can also learn from them.

Muharawan's comment reflected both his appreciation and his concerns about the Lampung language's symbolic presence in the LL, which he felt remained superficial rather than transformative for revitalization. He emphasized the need for more informative and contextual signs that would allow people to learn the language. Similar to Muharawan's points, in the context of Māori in New Zealand, Harlow (2005) and Macalister (2010) observed that while the symbolic use of an Indigenous language in the LL can enhance visibility and foster Indigeneity by legitimizing the land, people, history, and culture, it may also signal that such use is not genuinely directed toward revitalization. Córdova-Hernández and Yataco (2025), in their study in Mexico, also criticized Indigenous language signage that was predominantly symbolic and emphasized the need for signage that supports literacy and practical language use. Altogether, this finding suggests that

without moving beyond symbolic function, the visibility of an Indigenous language in LL risks becoming superficial. On the other hand, informative and contextual signage could transform it into a practical tool for learning and revitalization.

People's Perspectives on the Lampung Language Visibility and Its Vitality

1. Challenges of Massive Language Shift and Intergenerational Transmission Failure. The interviews revealed that in daily conversations within the home and community domains in Bandar Lampung, the Lampung language has largely been replaced by other languages, particularly Indonesian. As a national language, Indonesian is used widely in higher domains of language use in society. It is used in schools, universities, government institutions, business offices, modern markets, and media. Because parents want their children to adjust more easily to school, they usually begin using Indonesian at home. This cycle is repeated across generations, resulting in intergenerational transmission failure of the Lampung language. The widespread use of Indonesian in other domains, particularly in the media and diverse neighborhoods, further intensifies the challenge of bringing back the use of Lampung at home and within the community. Today, most native speakers of the Lampung language are elders—the grandparent generation—while the second and third generations in the family speak only Indonesian (Putra, 2018). In an interview, Cahya (a bookstore assistant and a native speaker of Lampung) mentioned,

Indonesian is used everywhere, especially in schools. So, when you have kids, you don't have a choice besides speaking in Indonesian with them at home. That will help your kids to study at school and to socialize with their friends.

Cahya's answer highlights the practical consideration of why the Lampung language shift took place massively within the home domains of the Lampung people. Similar patterns were also reported in several previous studies. Nicholas (2009), for example, reported that children from Hopi communities in the United States lost the ability to speak Hopi due to the English-only policy in schools. Students were even traumatized when asked to speak Hopi because they had been punished for using it (for more comparable descriptions, see Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; McCarty, 2002; Wyman, 2009). In Bandar Lampung, the Lampung language was competing in higher domains not only with Indonesian but also with English, Arabic, and Chinese. In the lower domains, such as traditional markets and neighborhoods, it competed with Indonesian and other dominant ethnic languages, including Javanese, Sundanese, Bataknese, and Bantenese. This highlights the complexity of the issue, as positive attitudes toward the Lampung language, resulting from its increased visibility in the LL, may not be sufficient to revitalize the language. There should be a follow-up commitment from parents to ensure successful intergenerational transmission of the language at home, and from elders to create community spaces where children can actively use the language in their neighborhoods. There should also be continued government language policy intervention, in collaboration with the community, to ensure that the use of the Lampung language in the LL works hand in hand with family- and community-based practices to sustain its use across generations.

2. Opportunities for Strengthening Lampung Language Vitality Through Various Initiatives. The participants in this study also pointed out that the visibility of Lampung in the LL opened up opportunities for strengthening Lampung language vitality through various language revitalization

strategies. As highlighted in the previous studies, the Lampung language has experienced three decades of on-going language shift (Gunarwan, 1994; Hasan, 2009; Putra, 2018), especially in Bandar Lampung where Indigenous youth lack exposure and spaces to learn and use the language (Putra, 2018). Various efforts and policies have been formulated, but they have not yielded positive outcomes. In addition to the powerful dominance of Indonesian, English, and Arabic, major challenges include shifts in language identity and ideology, as people question the relevance of Indigeneity and the role of Indigenous languages in today's modern world. However, as the vitality of the language has become more endangered and the visibility of the Lampung language has increased, public awareness of the challenges has also grown. It becomes an important entry point for more collaborative and sustained language revitalization efforts that involve various stakeholders such as local communities, educational institutions, policymakers, and cultural organizations. Sultan (a government employee and a non-native speaker of Lampung), for example, mentioned,

The appearance of the Lampung language on signage has been really positive. People feel proud and have a stronger sense of identity within the Lampung community. We also see more initiatives coming from the people themselves—for example, using Lampung for their stores, restaurants, and products. This could be just the beginning, and we hope it encourages more awareness of the challenges and inspires people to start using Lampung again at home and in their communities.

As a government employee, Sultan's comment reflects his awareness of the importance of top-down and bottom-up collaboration to make Lampung language revitalization successful. An initiative done in schools, for example, was still not optimal, as it lacked support from parents and community members. As Hornberger (2008) highlights, schools cannot save Indigenous languages alone. While schools can make students fluent in the language, the vitality of the language depends on whether or not the parents and community members want to follow up by using it again at home and within their communities. Other scholars have also noted how grassroots efforts, combined with institutional support, are important in language revitalization efforts (Fishman, 1991; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004; Moriarty, 2013). Therefore, while previous instructions for business owners remained symbolic—limited to the use of siger and tapis patterns for decoration—their own initiatives to employ the Lampung language more functionally have opened opportunities for further collaborative discussions on using linguistic landscapes in revitalization efforts. Other stakeholders, including community members, also need to be invited to actively participate in creating and maintaining spaces where Lampung can be used authentically in daily life, ensuring that visibility in public spaces is supported by functional use in homes, schools, and communities.

Many foundational studies on linguistic landscapes emerged from the Global North (including Canada, Israel, Ireland, New Zealand, and Wales) where the Indigenous languages received stronger institutional support and were backed by collaborative initiatives and policy frameworks. The Lampung case extends this discussion by providing an example from the Global South, where the Indigenous language faces unequal multilingual competition, limited institutional support, and demographic marginalization in its homeland. Unlike in the other contexts, where the visibility of the Indigenous language through the use of its alphabet indicates vitality, the Lampung case demonstrates that such visibility is primarily superficial and decorative, providing limited communicative use and coexisting with the ongoing intergenerational transmission failure. The widespread transliteration of Indonesian into the Lampung alphabet in the LL highlights the

distinction between language visibility and language vitality which has not been discussed in existing LL studies. The study also shows how even in the absence of strong structural and institutional mechanisms for language revitalization, limited grassroots initiatives in urban spaces illustrate how symbolic and informational functions can blend and occur and therefore need to be supported and strengthened through collaboration. In this way, the Lampung case challenges assumptions that increased visibility equates vitality and instead underscores the need to recognize that visibility is contextually embedded within sociopolitical and intergenerational dynamics.

Conclusion and Implications

This study explores how linguistic landscapes can serve as a mechanism for Lampung language revitalization efforts in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The findings show that Indonesian dominated the LL, followed by English and Arabic, with the Lampung language appearing in fourth position in both monolingual and multilingual signs. While the Lampung language appeared in the LL, its presence remained largely symbolic, as it was mainly the transliteration of Indonesian into the Lampung alphabet. Although top-down signages in the language still dominated, bottom-up signages have begun to appear, highlighting community awareness and participation in the revitalization efforts. The study also found that participants held positive attitudes toward the appearance of the Lampung language in the LL. They noted that it fostered recognition of the region as the homeland of the Lampung people, affirmed the existence of their language and culture, and supported ongoing efforts to revitalize the language.

The findings of this study show that the visibility of an Indigenous language in LLs does not necessarily lead to the vitality of the language, particularly when such visibility remains symbolic rather than communicative. However, the visibility of an Indigenous language in LL can be transformative when certain conditions are met. First, the use of the Indigenous language should focus on practical communicative functions that provide meaningful exposure to its use rather than merely on the transliteration of another language. Second, the visibility of the language should be integrated with broader Indigenous language revitalization efforts at home, in schools, and in communities and be institutionally supported by key stakeholders, particularly governments. Third, LLs should help reposition the language as relevant to the contemporary urban life. Under such conditions, LLs may function not only as symbolic markers of identity but as ecological amplifiers that support efforts to reverse language shift and revitalize endangered Indigenous languages.

These findings highlight the importance of collaborative and sustained strategies to revitalize the Lampung language through linguistic landscapes that involve all relevant stakeholders. The government needs to continue supporting these efforts by formulating policies that not only increase the visibility of the Lampung language in the LL but also encourage active community participation. Additionally, initiatives should provide greater exposure to the language through performing arts, print and electronic media, and the creation of spaces where the Lampung language can be actively used. In addition to supporting LL initiatives, the Lampung people also need to begin reusing their language at home and within the community. The vitality of the Lampung language will not be achieved if the Lampung people themselves cease to use it at home and within their communities. Finally, the teaching of Lampung in public schools needs to be designed to help students communicate in the language, with full support from parents at home and elders in the community.

While this study documents the LL and explores the perspectives of its creators and viewers, further research is needed to examine, how the visibility of an Indigenous language in the LL

affects its vitality within communities through longitudinal studies. This will help us better understand how Indigenous language signage shapes people's language identity and ideology while also raising their awareness and participation in revitalization efforts. Additionally, there is a need to conduct participatory action research in which the government and communities jointly discuss, formulate, implement, and evaluate strategies of how LL can be used as a mechanism and entry point for broader language revitalization efforts. Such a collaborative and sustained approach will enable Indigenous communities to actively reclaim their language and indigeneity while ensuring that their voices and resources are fully recognized. By situating the Lampung case within wider debates, this study contributes to the global understanding of how linguistic landscapes function not only as symbolic markers of identity but also as practical mechanisms in Indigenous language revitalization. It highlights that visibility alone is insufficient, yet when combined with policy, community engagement, and education, LLs can play a critical role in sustaining endangered languages worldwide.

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