

Exploring Religious and Cultural Identity through the Linguistic Landscape of Pesantren in Situbondo

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Abstract: This study is motivated by the lack of research on the linguistic landscape within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Situbondo, East Java. As a field of language study that explores language use in public spaces, the linguistic landscape plays a crucial role in uncovering social, cultural, and religious phenomena represented visually. In the context of pesantren, the linguistic landscape functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium for expressing Islamic values and local cultural wisdom. This research aims to classify the forms of language varieties and examine how religious and cultural values are represented through public signs, such as name boards, announcements, posters, directional signs, banners, billboards, and religious or motivational quotes, within the pesantren environment. A qualitative method was employed, with data collected through observation and documentation conducted in five selected pesantren in Situbondo. The data were analyzed in three stages: reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis focused on the patterns of language used and the representation of religious and local cultural values. The findings are expected to advance linguistic studies, particularly in religious and cultural contexts.

Keywords: cultural identity, linguistic landscape, pesantren in Situbondo, religious identity

INTRODUCTION

Situbondo is a regency with hundreds of pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) within it. This is reflected in the nickname given to the area, which is "City of Santri" (Azkatoro, 2024). Santri is a term given to someone who studies in a pesantren. Meanwhile, a pesantren is a religious institution where Islamic religious knowledge is taught (Yusuf et al., 2022). Besides being a place for spreading religious knowledge, the pesantrens in Situbondo also play a role as centers for preserving local culture. These religious and cultural values are among those represented in the linguistic landscape found in the pesantrens in the Situbondo area.

The concept of linguistic landscape, first introduced by Landry and Bourhis, examines the use of language in public spaces, such as road signs, billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, government building names, and other public displays (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). The linguistic landscape can serve as an indicator of the relationship between language and society (Cenoz and Gorter, 2006). Language plays a crucial role in presenting the identity and culture of a nation or community, as well as reflecting the cultural proximity and the influence of continuously evolving global symbols (Aqila and Efendi, 2024). In this context, the linguistic landscape functions as a visual medium that not only reflects the diversity of a region's identities but also contributes to shaping the sociolinguistic context that influences it (Peng and Strijker, 2020). Therefore, the study of linguistic landscapes has the potential to uncover social phenomena related to the role of language as manifested in linguistic landscape texts.

Situbondo, a city with numerous Islamic boarding schools and a Madurese and Javanese cultural background, serves as an ideal setting to demonstrate the relationship between religious values and local cultural values. The use of languages such as Arabic, local languages

(Madurese/Javanese) and Islamic symbols reflects the social identity of the community and also serves as a means of conveying religious values visually and linguistically.

Based on the description, this study aims to investigate the patterns of language represent religious identity and local culture in the pesantren environment in Situbondo. This study holds particular significance as it explores how Islamic values and local wisdom are communicated and expressed through visual-linguistic forms within the pesantren environment in Situbondo.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach focusing on natural settings, in which the researcher acts as the key instrument (Sugiyono, 2020). Such an approach enables the researcher to observe, comprehend, organize, classify and interpret data within its contextual framework. This research investigates the linguistic landscape within Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) in Situbondo, specifically examining the patterns of language use which represent religious as well as local cultural values. Five pesantren were selected as research samples, namely: Nurul Iman, Nurul Wafa, Sabilal Muhtadin, Darul Muhtadi'in, and Burhanul Abror. These pesantren are geographically spread across the eastern to the western part of Situbondo. The data of this study comprise linguistic elements in the form of texts displayed on signboards, information and announcement boards, posters, directional signs, billboards, banners, as well as religious and motivational quotations that are present within the pesantren context.

Data collection was carried out through observation, documentation, and interviews (Sugiyono, 2020). The researcher conducted direct documentation by taking pictures using a digital camera (smartphone). Furthermore, interviews were employed to explore the information and perceptions of pesantren administrators and students regarding language use and the symbolic values, both Islamic and cultural embedded in the linguistic landscape of the pesantren environment. The selected data were subsequently analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1992).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an analysis of the linguistic landscape of five Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo Regency, two types of values were found: religious and cultural identity, reflecting the identity of the Situbondo community. The linguistic landscapes are identified as monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual.

Religious Identity

Based on the data, the linguistic landscape found in Islamic boarding schools in the Situbondo area combines Arabic, Indonesian, Madurese, Javanese, and English. This landscape is represented in monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual forms. Linguistic landscape with religious identity at Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo in monolingual form using Indonesian, Madurese, Arabic, and English. Figure 1 is a religious wall quote written in Indonesian: *"Doa tanpa belajar akan menjadi doa yang kosong, Belajar tanpa doa akan menjadi usaha yang buta"* (Prayer without learning will be an empty prayer, learning without prayer will be a blind effort.) The quote includes the word *"doa"* (prayer), which refers to religious activities, namely asking for God's help. In the quote, the word *"doa"* is associated with one of the main activities in Islamic boarding schools, namely *"belajar"* (learning). The quote states that prayer and learning are interdependent activities that must be carried out together. This quote intends to motivate students to carry out both activities, not just do one or the other.

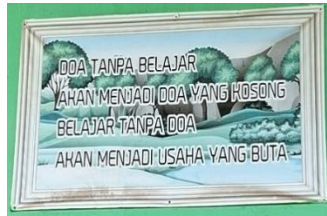


Figure 1. Religious wall quotes in the Burhanul Abror Islamic Boarding School

Linguistic landscape with religious identity at the Islamic boarding school in Situbondo in bilingual form using a combination of Arabic-Indonesian and English-Arabic. Figure 2 shows the Arabic-Indonesian combination on the Sabilal Muhtadin boarding school gate. On the gate is written the name of the boarding school in Arabic on the first line, “Ma’had Sabilal Muhtadin Al-Islami At-Tarbiyah Wal ‘Ulum”, and the name of the boarding school in Indonesian on the second line, “Pondok Pesantren Sabilal Muhtadin”, and the address of the boarding school on the third line, namely “Pasir Putih Bungatan Situbondo”.



Figure 2. The Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School gate

Linguistic landscape with religious identity in Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo in multilingual form using a combination of Javanese-Arabic-Indonesian, Madurese-Arabic-Indonesian, Arabic-English-Indonesian, and Indonesian-English-Arabic-Javanese. Figure 3 shows a direction written in a combination of four languages, namely Indonesian in the words “*asrama*” (dormitory) and “*selatan*” (south), English in the word “Queen”, Arabic in the word “*Nurul Wafa*” (light of loyalty), and Javanese in the word “*dalem*” (house). The direction shows the direction to a group of rooms called “Queen”.



Figure 3. Direction in the Nurul Wafa Islamic Boarding School

Cultural Identity

Based on the data, the linguistic landscape found in Islamic boarding schools in the Situbondo area combines Madurese, Indonesian, and Arabic. This landscape is represented in monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual forms. Linguistic landscape with cultural identity at a monolingual Islamic boarding school in Situbondo using Indonesian and Madurese. Figure 4 shows instructions for disposing of trash properly. The instructions are on a poster affixed to the boarding school wall to remind students to maintain cleanliness, especially when disposing of leftover food. The poster reads in Madurese, “*Mon tao ngakan patao muang rombuna*” (If you can eat, you can also throw away your trash).



Figure 4. Instruction in the Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School

Linguistic landscapes with cultural identity at Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo are bilingual, combining Indonesian-Madurese, Arabic-Indonesian, and Arabic-Madurese. Figure 5 shows the combination of Madurese and Indonesian used on a room nameplate. The nameplate reads “Jeding/Toilet.” “Jeding” is the Madurese translation of the word “toilet.” The Madurese translation facilitates students and visitors who do not understand the meaning of the word “toilet” and only understand Madurese.



Figure 5. Room nameplate in the Nurul Iman Islamic Boarding School

Linguistic landscape with cultural identity at Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo in multilingual form using a combination of Madurese, Arabic, and Indonesian. Figure 6 shows a prohibition using Indonesian for the phrase “*dilarang meminjam tanpa izin*” (prohibited from borrowing without permission), Madurese for “*kan lah padhe andik*” (all of us have it), and Arabic for “*Haram*”. This sentence is unified by combining the use of the three languages. Overall, the sentence prohibits students from borrowing other people’s belongings because each student already owns the same item. Then, the sentence also emphasizes the word “*Haram*,” which means that if done, it will result in a sin that God punishes directly.



Figure 6. Prohibition in the Sabilal Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School

The data on religious and cultural identity illustrate that the language used in the linguistic landscape found in Islamic boarding schools in the Situbondo area shows that the Situbondo community is a multilingual society, consisting of the use of regional languages (Madurese and Javanese), the use of the national language (Indonesian), and the use of international languages (Arabic and English). It is in line with Landry and Bourhis (1997) who stated that the use of language in linguistic landscapes, especially in institutional settings, shows their language behavior community. Yusuf et al. (2022) said that Arabic is a language that shows religious elements. So it is unsurprising to find much use of Arabic in monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual forms in the linguistic landscape data found in Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo, especially in data that shows religious identity. Furthermore, Mulyawan et al. (2022) said that the use of regional languages in linguistic landscapes represents the

community's culture in that environment. In this study, Madurese was dominant in showing cultural elements in Islamic boarding schools in the Situbondo area. It indicates that the majority of Situbondo's population is Madurese. Finally, the linguistic landscape used reveals that the religious and cultural identities used in Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo are Arabic to indicate religious identity and Madurese to indicate cultural identity.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Using linguistic landscapes in Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo is a means of communication and a medium for demonstrating Islamic values and cultural wisdom. It is demonstrated by the use of Arabic to demonstrate religious identity, as well as the use of Madurese to demonstrate the culture of the Situbondo community. These languages are not only used monolingually but also bilingually and multilingually, namely by combining the regional language (Madurese), the national language (Indonesian), and international languages (English and Arabic). Furthermore, the suggestion that can be given from this research is to explore further the function of each linguistic landscape used in Islamic boarding schools in Situbondo. Finally, the gratitude extends to DPPM-Kemdiktisaintek, which supports the funding for this research.

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