

## Language Choice and Preference in The Linguistic Landscape of Teluk Batik, Malaysia

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### Abstract

The study of linguistic landscape (LL) is an interdisciplinary field that examines the visible presence and use of languages in public space. However, studies on LL in Malaysia are still scarce and have yet to be conducted extensively, especially in the tourism context. To address the lack of LL research in Malaysia, the present study seeks to explore the representation of language use in the public space of Malaysian tourism context. Based on a quantitative approach, pictorial data (64 pieces of signage) along the coastline of Teluk Batik beach were photographed and analysed as data samples. The frequency of language use was collected using the frameworks described by (Huebner, 2009; Cenoz and Gorter, 2010). This study also looked into the language choice and preferences, as well as the type of sign employed in Teluk Batik. The research identifies Teluk Batik as a tourism destination with multilingual inequality. The LL of Teluk Batik is still dominated by Bahasa Melayu (BM), even though it is known to be one of the most famous tourist sites in Perak. English, occupying a secondary position in monolingual signs is still lacking in its presence as the number is limited, whereas bilingual signs incorporating Mandarin and Arabic are comparatively less numerous. The findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding of the LL and tourism readiness in Teluk Batik, which are vital for a successful and sustainable tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Linguistic Landscape, Tourism, Signage, Language Preference

### Introduction

Linguistic landscape (LL) involves examining the written language visible on public signs within a specific area (Gorter, 2006). This relatively new linguistic approach examines the selection of languages used in public signage (Backhaus, 2007; Gorter, 2006). Gorter (2006) emphasized the close connection between human lives and signs. Various information can be shared with the public through signs such as displays on shop windows, office notices, posters, business signs, traffic signs and so forth. However, the information on these signs can only be transmitted to the public successfully if the languages used on them can be understood. The most quoted definition of LL is by Landry and Bourhis (1997), "The language of public road

signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration” (p.25). However, over the years, many scholars have broadened the scope of LL by including other views and aspects that are visible in public space. Thus, the concept of LL has broadened to encompass additional elements like graffiti, slogan, icons, and visual representation exhibited or engraved in public spaces.

Although there have been numerous studies conducted on LL, research on its own theme (e.g., healthcare, education, and tourism) somehow is regarded as relatively new. LL are mainly studied in urban settings around the world, as these areas are well known for their massive number of signs and other linguistic information. However, current LL studies have demonstrated a multi-faceted phenomenon which creates a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches (Gorter, 2018; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). The LL approach has been utilized across diverse research domains, including societal multilingualism (Backhaus, 2007), language policy (Dal Negro, 2009), language vitality (Supramani et al., 2013), ethno-cultural identity in relation to colonial influences (Taylor-Leech, 2012), the establishment of tourism areas (Thongtong, 2016), and identity construction in multi-ethnic and multilingual countries (Curtin, 2009; Wang et al., 2017).

As for Malaysia, LL is still considered under-researched, although there have been an increasing number of existing research works done. Topic investigated include the vitality of Tamil language in Malaysia Supramani et al (2013); the LL of religious sites in Kuala Lumpur Coluzzi & Kitade (2015); examination of Kuala Lumpur’s LL through political, economic, and identity lenses Syed et al (2015); identity construction through the LL of non-native languages like Chinese and Tamil in Kuala Lumpur Wang et al (2017); the presence of Italian within Kuala Lumpur’s LL Coluzzi (2016); LL analysis in commercial areas of Putrajaya Ariffin et al (2019); and LL investigation exploring multilingual billboard advertising practices and language policy in Malaysia (Aini, 2017). Most of the studies mentioned merely focus on the urban or metropolitan areas, commercial buildings, and places of worship. Rural or semi-rural regions like Teluk Batik have not received as much attention. Investigating the LL in smaller, non-urban settings is essential to understanding the linguistic dynamics in diverse contexts. With the aim of broadening the scope of LL research in Malaysia, this paper focuses on the interplay between LL and tourism, particularly within Teluk Batik, to unveil the sign patterns and language situations in the chosen area. This area is selected since it has become one of the top three most visited places in Perak, according to the data retrieved from the 2019 domestic tourism survey conducted by the Department of Statistics Malaysia. As a tourist destination, Teluk Batik experiences a constant influx of visitors from various linguistic backgrounds. Investigating how tourism influences the LL can provide insights into language contact and language attitudes in the area. Moreover, considering the ongoing evolution of Teluk Batik's linguistic landscape, which mirrors the shifts in demographics and cultural influences in the area, there exists a significant level of multilingualism and language mixing. This dynamic and vibrant linguistic environment is vital to be analysed further. Therefore, this study delved into the examination of languages featured on public signage within Teluk Batik. The objective of this study is to document and explain the patterns of languages represented on current public signs, as well as language preferences in the LL of Teluk Batik, Perak, Malaysia. It is also to assess how well the LL has been developed and to see the readiness of the area in welcoming both local and international visitors. Documenting these patterns will also help provide a baseline for further analysis.

**Literature Review****Linguistic Landscape and Tourism**

Tourism has become one of the most important economic pillars in Malaysia, and it brings a significant impact on both the tourists as well as destinations. The presence of written signs in tourist areas is said to be important in the long run, particularly for economic and social implications that benefit the country's economy. The multifunctionality of language in tourist spaces has been the subject of substantial sociolinguistic study over the last decade, since the language used in tourist spaces provides numerous critical viewpoints from which the influence of sociocultural brought by tourists may be viewed and examined over time. This believes to provide a significant impact on the LL (Shang, 2018).

In the context of tourism, language is crucial to convey information about various aspects of locations to both local and foreign tourists. Language displayed in tourist spaces is capable of influencing tourists' experience when visiting certain locations (Bruyel-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009). Most importantly, language is used to provide information or direction during visits, especially when describing new sites. This includes determining the best route and navigating to hotels, restaurants, and other areas. Due to the importance of language in tourism, a set of standardized public signs is created by the (World Tourism Organization, 2001). It is known to be an information system that covers symbols for disabled people, routes, outdoor activities, warnings, and safety considerations to promote a sense of security and contentment among tourists (Kallen, 2009). Nevertheless, the responsibility of providing clear and informative signs is also shared by the local authorities in each tourist site.

The unique construction of LL of tourist sites is crucial, especially in tourism development. Not only it represents the reality, but also the current relationships and conflicts between the displayed languages (Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009). Moreover, LL is recognised as the primary symbolic resource of tourists' visual consumption of a particular site, and it is thought to be the most impactful aspect of tourists' experiences (Lu et al., 2020). When an area experiences significant tourism growth, it often leads to a more diverse LL (Kallen, 2009). This is because tourists bring their own languages and cultures with them, leading to a greater variety of languages and scripts being visible in public spaces, such as signs, advertisements, and information boards. This phenomenon is known as LL diversification. The use of foreign languages, particularly English, has increased significantly in tandem with the growth of tourism. Furthermore, LL in tourism can demonstrate how a language is often used, particularly in terms of exoticism and authenticity (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). This offers some insights into how the community's language(s) are stylized, recontextualized, and commodified in service of the tourism sector.

So far, studies on LL in the area of tourism have been limited but a few have been carried out in different areas: Algarve in Portugal Torkington (2009), Mallorca Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau (2009), Lithuania and Poland (Ruzait, 2017), Dingle in Ireland (Moriarty, 2014), Chiang Mai in Thailand Thongtong (2016), Jakarta, Sukarta, Malang, Banyumas, and Yogyakarta in Indonesia (da Silva, 2016, 2017; Sartono, 2018; Sari, 2018; Ika et al., 2020; Anna et al., 2021). Despite growing academic interest in LL research, the impact of tourism on LL, particularly in Malaysia, has not been thoroughly explored. Previous studies in tourist areas have primarily focused on the value of local languages as symbols of authenticity, as well as the importance of English as a global communication tool. It's worth noting that conflicting language policies at different levels of government can lead to inconsistencies in the linguistic landscape, as language use in business and tourism transcends nationalistic and cultural boundaries (Zaini et al., 2021). This potential issue may be reflected in the LL of Malaysian tourist sites.

Therefore, the researcher is motivated to investigate how the LL of Teluk Batik is represented, with a focus on linguistic aspects. Understanding these features and relevant variables is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of the Malaysian LL.

### **Research Site**

Malaysia is known to be a multilingual country. 134 languages, of which 112 indigenous and 22 non-indigenous, are spoken in Malaysia. As a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, the principal languages spoken are BM, English, Mandarin, and Tamil. Based on the 2020 census, Malaysia has a total population of 32.5 million people. This includes multi-ethnic citizens such as Malays/indigenous tribes (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%), and Others (0.7%) (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2020). The national and official language of Malaysia is Bahasa Malaysia, also known as the Malay language.

Perak, a state on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula in Malaysia, is the focal point of this study. It became one of the most popular tourist destinations in 2019, recording 10.1 million tourist arrivals, surpassing other states. Teluk Batik, located in the sub-district of Lumut, is among the top three most visited places in Malaysia. This renowned beach spans 62 acres and is home to an estimated 247,000 residents as of the 2020 census. The population is diverse, with approximately 58.8% Malay, 28.5% Chinese, 12.4% Indian, and 0.3% from other ethnic groups. Teluk Batik boasts a distinctive linguistic landscape due to the presence of local dialects and Creole languages. Perak Malay, a regional dialect, is widely spoken and possesses its own unique characteristics. Additionally, Baba Malay, a Creole language blending Malay and Chinese, is used by some members of the Chinese community in Teluk Batik. The linguistic diversity in Perak leads to ongoing evolution in the linguistic landscape of Teluk Batik, reflecting shifts in demographics and cultural influences. This dynamic environment is characterized by a high degree of multilingualism and language blending. Given the diverse range of visitors and tourists, it is anticipated that signs and information in Teluk Batik will be displayed in multiple languages to accommodate this multilingual audience.

### **Methodology**

The study aimed to investigate the LL of Teluk Batik, Perak using the quantitative approach. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: i) what are the patterns of language use on current public signs in Teluk Batik?; ii) what are the preferred language(s) in the LL of Teluk Batik?; and iii) what are the types of LL found in Teluk Batik?.

The study adopts a descriptive approach, utilising textual analysis to explore language choices and preferences within the designated tourist site. This study delves into the languages utilised in various types of signage in Teluk Batik. It aims to identify the prominent languages featured on multilingual signs, along with the functions of the different languages on the signs.

To explore the actual use or preference of available languages, the researcher adapts the definition by Backhaus (2007), which states that LL refers to "...any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame" (p.66). Photographs taken along the coastline of Teluk Batik Beach on March 2022, which include public road signs, names of sites, streets, buildings, places, advertising billboards, commercial shop signs, as well as flyers and advertisements posted on walls and poles were analysed. Only written forms of signs were taken as data samples. The researcher chose not to examine any semiotic signs such as icons, indexes, and symbols as they were beyond the purview of the study. Out of 98 signs found in the public spaces in Teluk

Batik that had been photographed, only 64 signs were analysed. This is because there were many identical signs; therefore, they were counted as one.

The signs were categorised using a coding framework derived from studies by Huebner (2009) and Cenoz and Gorter (2010). This framework included categories such as the number of languages used in the signs, the prominence of each language found in the signs, the type of signs, and authorship. Authorship pertains to the origin of signs, distinguishing between those created by government entities (top-down) and those by private entities (bottom-up). 'Top-down' signs originate from national or public institutions, usually visible on public sites, announcements, buildings, and street names. On the other hand, 'bottom-up' signs are produced by individuals, social actors, shop owners, and businesses, including shop names, commercial signs, and personal announcements. The analysis framework is detailed in the following Table 1

Table 1

*Framework for Analysis*

Subcategories & Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sign category (Huebner, 2009)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Type/Function of sign</i> (e.g., directional, informational, identification, regulatory, advertising etc.).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Language features (Cenoz &amp; Gorter, 2010)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Combinations of languages</i> (monolingual or multilingual) and <i>authorship</i> (government or private).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Findings

To answer the research question on how signs in Teluk Batik tourist attractions are constructed, the data were analysed in terms of the language used on signage, the combinations and the visual prominence of the various languages used on the different categories of signs available. It is shown that the language distribution in the public spaces of Teluk Batik reveals the four languages used including BM, English, Mandarin, and Arabic. Although Jawi script was also discovered, it is not considered as another language. It is simply a linguistic scripture used to write BM-transliteration. Monolingual and bilingual signs are noticeable in the research area.

Table 2  
Language Distribution in Teluk Batik

Language Pattern	Language	Number of Signs
<b>Monolingual</b> -single language	BM	38 (59.3%)
	English	13 (20.3%)
	BM (Jawi transliteration)	4 (6.3%)
<b>Bilingual</b> -combining two languages in the same sentence -writing the main sign in one language, followed by its translation/transliteration in another language	BM & English	6 (9.4%)
	English & BM	1 (1.5%)
	English & Mandarin	1 (1.5%)
	BM & Arabic	1 (1.5%)
<b>Multilingual</b> -three or more languages are used		0

**Language Features and Code Preference**

Table 2 displays the distribution of languages in the LL of Teluk Batik's area. The findings demonstrate a distinct pattern of language use within the area which constitute of monolingual (55 or 85.9%) and bilingual (9 or 14%) signs. It is noted that only the main languages like BM and English appeared on the monolingual signs. In other words, most signs employed one language to convey a message. It was found that multilingual signs were non-existent in this area. Samples of signs are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.



*BM-only sign*



*English-only sign*

Figure 1: Monolingual Signs in Teluk Batik



*BM and English bilingual*



*BM and Arabic bilingual*



*English and Mandarin bilingual*

Figure 2: Bilingual Signs in Teluk Batik

### *Monolingual Signs*

Based on the findings, BM constitutes the biggest element in the LL of Teluk Batik with 59.3% (38) of the total. It could be implied that BM was given precedence in terms of placement by the sign creators (e.g., advertisers, shop owners) as they wanted to depict themselves as Malaysians who recognised BM as the country's official language. This aligns with Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) notion that sign creators tend to create signs in their native language or in a language they wish to associate with. Writing in BM can also be viewed as a way of asserting identity and presence within the Malaysian LL, marking ownership of public space and expressing a connection to the language and culture. It also demonstrates adherence to the language policy of featuring BM on signs. Shohamy (2006) mentioned that the appearance of languages in public areas communicates symbolic implications regarding the importance, power, significance, and relevance of a particular language over others. Furthermore, this is another strategy to maintain the Malay language's position, mostly for patriotic and political reasons (Omar, 1987, as cited in Mansoor et al., 2023). Apart from that, it is important to note that the choice to display texts in BM also implies a readership skilled in the language (Omar et al., 2020). Writing in BM presumes that the intended readers will be able to comprehend and engage with the text. This sense is echoed with 'presumed reader condition' highlighted

by Spolsky and Cooper (1991), who claims that sign creators, '...prefer to write signs in the language(s) that intended readers are assumed to read' (P. 81-84).

It is worth mentioning that the LL of Teluk Batik is not exclusively dominated by the Malay language. As could be seen in Table 2, the prevalence of English as the second-highest language used on the signs was apparent in the public space, accounting for 20.3%. English, being the global language, plays an essential role among Malaysians in disseminating their message and meaning. Besides its secondary prevalence in the country and widespread comprehension among the population, English is also preferred within the realms of commerce and tourism (Zaini et al., 2021). The growth of tourism industry as well as international businesses, have contributed to the prevalence of English in signage. It is common to see tourist sites prominently display English in various signage as it is easier for tourists and visitors to navigate and understand important information, such as directions, services, or attractions. The use of English not only denotes socioeconomic position and prestige (Lawrence, 2012), but also indicates the popularity of the area as a tourist destination, which has a global viewpoint (Manan et al., 2015).

### *Bilingual Signs*

In terms of bilingual signs, English and other minority languages, such as Mandarin and Arabic, also had a visible presence. However, Tamil was non-existent during the observation as there is only a small population of Indians in the area. Out of 64 signs available, BM and English appeared to be the most preferred languages in the LL of Teluk Batik (7 or 10.9%). This is followed by only one sign (1.5% of the total number of signs) that opted for a combination of English-Mandarin as well as BM-Arabic. The findings revealed that the LL of Teluk Batik contributes to Malaysia's overall sociolinguistic fabric. This could be seen in the existence of bilingual signs that display the linguistic identity of the area and showcase the linguistic diversity that exists in Malaysia. It reflects the country's multicultural heritage and the coexistence of different linguistic communities. Even though bilingual signs did not exceed the number of monolingual signs, their existence is considered important, especially in tourist areas. As a tourist destination, it is essential to have bilingual signs to cater to visitors who may not be familiar with the local language or dialect (Madrurnio & Djonda, 2023). By incorporating few languages on signs, sign creators and businesses demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity and accommodating diverse linguistic communities. The presence of additional languages also signifies the ethnic-linguistic status of the community and reflects the owners' identity and attitude towards the languages (Shang & Gua, 2017). Although several bilingual signs appear to be present, BM still occupies a prominent place on most of the signs, which is not unexpected given that BM is the official language. This demonstrates that most sign creators adhered to the language policy, which states that the national language should be prominently displayed whether by itself or with any other language(s).

### **Top-down and Bottom-up Signs**

Concerning official official (top-down) and private (bottom-up) signage, the study revealed that 51.6% (33) of the signs were official, while the remaining were privately created.



Table 3  
*Official and Private Signs in Teluk Batik*

Language Pattern	Top-down Signs	Bottom-up Signs
<b>Monolingual</b>		
BM	21 (32.8%)	17 (26.6%)
English	7 (10.9%)	6 (9.4%)
BM (Jawi transliteration)	4 (6.3%)	0
<b>Bilingual</b>		
BM & English	3 (4.7%)	4 (6.2%)
English & Mandarin	0	1 (1.5%)
BM & Arabic	1 (1.5%)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 (57.8%)</b>	<b>28 (43.8%)</b>

The study's findings, outlined in Table 3, reveal that Bahasa Melayu (BM) dominates both official and private signs, accounting for 32.8% and 26.6% of the signs respectively. This dominance aligns with the expectation, given that BM is Malaysia's official language. It is noteworthy that BM also features prominently in private signs, indicating adherence to the stipulated language policy favouring BM in outdoor advertisements. Bilingual signs in BM-English are present in both official (6.2%) and private (4.7%) signs, indicating that creators consider English to be important for use in tourist sites like Teluk Batik. However, the findings suggest that both government and private entities may not adequately meet the linguistic needs of domestic and international tourists who might anticipate more signs in English. Furthermore, there is a limited presence of BM-Arabic signs in top-down signs (1.5%), mainly catering to a specific group of individuals using the language, in this case, it refers to the Muslims. English-Mandarin signs are the least common and can only be found in bottom-up signs (1.5%). This reflects the significance of the Chinese population which is known to be the second-largest ethnic group in Teluk Batik and has some merit in the language choice, particularly in bottom-up signs.

**Type of Sign****Table 4***Type of Sign in Teluk Batik*

Type of sign	Number of signs	Languages used
<b>Direction</b>	2	BM
	1	English
	1	BM (Jawi transliteration)
	<b>Sub-total: 4</b>	
<b>Informative</b>	9	BM
	3	English
	3	BM & English
	2	BM (Jawi transliteration)
<b>Sub-total: 17</b>		
<b>Regulatory</b>	6	BM
	2	English
	1	BM & English
	1	BM & Arabic
<b>Sub-total: 10</b>		
<b>Advertisement</b>	2	BM
	1	English
	1	BM & English
	1	English & Mandarin
<b>Sub-total: 5</b>		
<b>Identification</b>	19	BM
	6	English
	1	English & BM
	1	BM & English
	1	BM (Jawi transliteration)
<b>Sub-total: 28</b>		

Table 4 above sums the total number of monolingual and bilingual signs. The findings show that there were five different variations of signage in Teluk Batik. The direction sign appeared to have the least signage in Teluk Batik, with a total of 4 signs. Most of the 'direction' signs were monolingual. For instance, in Figure 3, the term 'Pantai' refers to the beach and the sign was coded in BM. It is expected for the direction signs to serve both local visitors and the Teluk Batik's community.



Figure 3: Direction Sign

Following that is the advertisement sign, which represented by a total of 5 signs. The majority of the advertisement signs in Teluk Batik were in BM which corresponds to the national

language policy. It indicates the importance of BM as the country's official language, and it is natural for signs to be in BM. Another important language identified for advertisement signs was English. It was utilised in both monolingual and bilingual signs. Figure 4 shows an example of an advertisement sign in English. It is a popular environmental and conservation slogan that encourages visitors to minimize their impact on natural environments. This demonstrates the importance of English for international tourists. It also indicates that the sign creators were conscious of the presence of both domestic and international tourists.



Figure 4: Advertisement Sign

Apart from that, there were 17 informative signs. As apparent in Figure 5, the bilingual sign in BM and English informs visitors about the boat services. This depicts the typical scenery for tourist destinations where bi/multilingual signs are typically used to cater to the demands of both local and international tourists (Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Marten et al., 2012; Madrunio & Djonda, 2023; Rong, 2018). Madrunio and Djonda (2023) emphasize the importance of informative signs being written in at least two languages to effectively communicate with both local and international visitors. In Teluk Batik, however, most informative signs prioritize Bahasa Melayu (Malay) over all other languages.



Figure 5: Informative Sign

As for regulatory signs, the total number of signs discovered was 10. This includes warning notices and prohibitions for visitors to acknowledge. It serves as vital tools for ensuring safety,

promoting responsible behaviour, and protecting the natural and cultural resources of the area. These signs convey important messages that help both locals and international tourists understand the rules and guidelines that need to be followed. Most of the regulatory signs available in the public spaces of Teluk Batik were monolingual and inscribed in BM to make local visitors comprehend the meaning easily as they are intended for the local community and visitors. Furthermore, most of the signs available under this category were ‘top-down signs’ or known to be the ‘official signs’ which are managed by the local government. This is another reason why BM was frequently used as it complies with the government policy on the usage of BM as the country’s official language. Figure 6, for example, illustrates a smoking restriction sign within a tourist area that is strictly enforced for all visitors. The official sign also emphasises the consequences of violating the rules. However, the sign overlooks international tourists who may not be familiar with BM, despite the significance of the information being equally relevant to them.



Figure 6: Regulatory Sign

Apart from that, the site also appears to be dominated by identification signs, which account for 28 signs in total. It includes names of certain buildings and places. Figure 7 illustrates a bilingual sign displayed in one of the touristic areas. It contains a message written in two languages: BM (Selamat Datang ke Pusat Ekologi Vale) and English (Welcome to Vale Eco Centre). Asserting the local language to this ‘welcome’ sign is a commendable effort to introduce the local language as well as to showcase the identity of the place, especially to foreign tourists. As emphasized by Madrunio and Djonda (2023), it is important for identification sign to be bi/multilingual to meet the needs and demands from both local and international tourists.



Figure 7: Identification Sign

**Discussion**

Based on the overall findings, several key insights can be gained based on Teluk Batik's multilingual characteristics. First, the LL of Teluk Batik, like many multilingual regions, exhibits various inequalities in the representation of different languages. This coincides with most of LL studies conducted in the tourism context (Alomoush & Al-Na'imat, 2018; Bruyèl-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2015; Kallen, 2009; Ruzaité, 2017). In Teluk Batik's LL, both monolingual and bilingual signs prominently feature BM and English. Most of the signs were written in BM, which serves as the national language and is spoken by the majority of the population. It is also apparent that the language is the preferred language for the community. On the other hand, English appeared to be the second most prevalent, which shows that English holds secondary significance, following its status as the international language. It also indicates that English is still an important language despite its non-official status (Wang & Xu, 2018). Other recognised local languages with limited number of signs were Mandarin and Arabic. Tamil, on the other hand, was not visible in the public spaces of Teluk Batik. These disparities may be driven by socio-political, cultural, and economic factors that shape the language use in public spaces which corroborates with the LL study by (Mansoor et al., 2023).

The inclusion of local languages is believed to be largely intended for the Teluk Batik's community as well as local visitors, particularly to aid them in comprehending the message. Other than its informational value, it also has a symbolic purpose. For instance, in Figure 2, the use of Arabic indexes the community of Muslims residing in the area. This can be supported by Scollon and Scollon (2003) who mentioned that languages on signs can either index the community to which they belong or "symbolise something about the product or business which has nothing to do with the place in which it is located" (p. 119). Wang et al (2017) also observed that the utilization of ethnic languages in public areas is a direct way to exhibit ethnic identities in a diverse multilingual society. This observation is drawn from their study, which examined the inclusion of ethnic languages and scripts, particularly Chinese and Tamil, on shop signboards situated in two ethnic areas of Kuala Lumpur. BM in this case is employed only to convey national identity, serving a symbolic rather than informative role due to socio-political considerations (Wang & Xu, 2018).

Moreover, the dominance of BM over other languages, especially in top-down signs, is mainly due to government policies. It shows that sign creators strictly follow the rules and regulations even though the place is known to be a famous place for tourists. Aside from the regulations, bottom-up signs also reflect similar outcome where most of the signs were written in BM. Hence, the data reveal that preference for BM in most signs can also be influenced by personal freedom and choice rather than legislation which supports the notion made by (Zaini et al., 2021).

Apart from that, the dominance of English over other local languages in both monolingual and bilingual signs is attributable to economic factor, which many have agreed upon. English has become the global lingua franca for business and international communication. Using English on signage and in marketing materials can attract more diverse and global clients, potentially increasing revenue. Syed et al (2015) mentioned that English has become the most common language in the world, serving as a linguistic resource for mostly local elites, expatriates, and foreign tourists. The prominence of English in the tourism sector is indeed driven by its economic value as a global lingua franca, but this may also lead to conflict or tension between the existing languages. According to Madrunio and Djonda (2023), such tension can be alarming, however it may also potentially open up ways for empowering local languages. They further elaborated that tourist sites are valid places to showcase the unique culture and

linguistic heritage of a destination, especially at locations where tourists come to experience the local way of life, and part of this is done with the help of the linguistic resources available. For instance, bilingual or multilingual signs that combine the local language(s) with a global language (such as English) can facilitate communication with tourists while preserving the local language's visibility and enriching the tourist experience.

Furthermore, since the LL of Teluk Batik are predominantly presented on monolingual signs, notably BM-only signs, the LL appears to be limited in terms of multilingual signs. The development of the tourism sector in Teluk Batik should reflect the vitality of the LL in the region. Tourist attractions, like many other multicultural and multilingual places should be exposed to a variety of languages to ensure that tourists and visitors have access to critical information while respecting and celebrating the region's linguistic diversity. Emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and balance in the LL of Teluk Batik is vital, especially in tourism context. Prioritizing both BM and English, while also accommodating other codes of language, indeed has the potential to create a dynamic LL that aligns with the remarkable tourism development in the region.

### **Conclusion**

The study has provided insight into the language practices and social reality of a small region of tourist site in Perak. The findings reveal that the LL of Teluk Batik is still dominated by BM, even though it is known to be one of the most famous tourist sites. It is of great significance for BM to be extensively utilised as it is the official language and generally understood by the community and local visitors. English, occupying a secondary position in both monolingual and bilingual signs, is still lacking transparency as the number is limited. Nonetheless, the utilization of the language indeed reflects the level of assimilation and contributes to the economic growth facilitated by the tourism industry. The limited presence of Arabic also symbolises its culture, which is being practiced by the Muslims in the country, followed by the presence of Mandarin, which carries the value of minority people living in the community. Mandarin has a stronger presence compared to Tamil in public signage. This is attributed to Mandarin's significance in Chinese identity, and its high market value, especially in the commercial sector. Unlike Tamil, it is not used as the lingua franca across the Indian linguistic subgroups (e.g., Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi, and Punjabi). Additionally, there is a limited association between Tamil and Indian identity, leading to its lesser presence on public signs in comparison to Mandarin (Manan et al., 2015). According to Manan et al (2015), non-Tamilian Malaysians possess restricted incentive to acquire Tamil, and local universities do not provide it as a secondary language course. Due to this, Tamil has experienced a decline in relevance and visibility in public spaces.

It can be concluded that the linguistic choices available on the site are regulated by the language policy as well as the personal choice of sign creators. The inequalities occur may be driven by socio-political, cultural, and economic factors that shape the language use in public spaces. Even though BM is the preferred language choice for all types of signs, it is important to maintain transparency and inclusivity in multilingual signage, especially in tourist destinations like Teluk Batik. Providing information in multiple languages can enhance the experience for visitors from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This approach does not only enhance the visitors' experience but also promotes inclusivity, safety, and economic benefits for the destination and its local businesses. Therefore, it is recommended that the local authorities regulate language use on public signs with the inclusion of local languages and foreign languages. This proactive and inclusive approach will help to ensure the success of

this dynamic and evolving development in Teluk Batik. This study significantly advances existing theoretical frameworks in LL research by incorporating a dynamic perspective that explores how language is presented over time and within specific areas. The findings not only align with established theories on LL but also extend the theories by introducing a nuanced understanding of how linguistic elements in public spaces evolve and interact within specific geographical contexts. Furthermore, this study makes a substantial contextual contribution by delving into the linguistic nuances of a non-urban, touristic multicultural environment. By exploring this area, it uncovers the complex interplay between language use, cultural diversity, and community identity. This contextual understanding is believed to be crucial for guiding policymakers and state planning initiatives, providing stakeholders with valuable insights into fostering inclusive linguistic environments.

The current study, however, does have some limitations. The data collected were focusing on one specific location in Perak; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. There is a need for more comparative studies across different tourist destinations in order to identify commonalities and differences in language use and practices. Also, future research could utilize interviews or questionnaires as additional instruments to collect additional qualitative data to enhance LL research. Addressing these limitations will help researchers to better understand the complex relations between language and tourism.

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