

Constructing Meaning of Linguistic Landscape in Commercial Spaces: Signages at Mall of Serang, Banten

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the linguistic landscape of commercial signage at the Mall of Serang in Banten. The research focuses on identifying the languages used on the signage, analyzing their semantic and pragmatic meanings, and examining the social and symbolic functions represented through language use in commercial spaces. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques involving documentation through photographing signage found within the shopping mall area. The results indicate that signage at the Mall of Serang is dominated by the use of Indonesian and English, both in monolingual and bilingual formats. English is used to convey a sense of modernity, prestige, and globalization, while Indonesian is used to clarify information for local visitors. Semantically, signage carries lexical, contextual, and associative meanings, while pragmatically, it functions as an informative, persuasive, and symbolic medium to attract consumer attention and build brand identity. This study demonstrates that the linguistic landscape at the Mall of Serang reflects the relationship between local identity, marketing strategies, and the influence of globalization within commercial public spaces.*

INTRODUCTION

The language used in public spaces plays a crucial role not only as a means of communication but also as a representation of social and cultural identity and power relations within society. The presence of public signs—such as store names, advertisements, billboards, and directional signs—forms what is known as the linguistic landscape. In multilingual societies, the linguistic landscape reflects how languages are displayed, prioritized, and interpreted in everyday life. According to (Fakhroh & Rohmah, 2018; Gorter, 2018b; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009), the linguistic landscape serves not only to convey information but also to represent social identity, cultural values, and social dynamics within a community. Therefore, linguistic landscape analysis is important because the languages displayed in public spaces often reflect broader social,

cultural, and economic conditions. In commercial spaces such as shopping malls, the use of language in signage becomes more strategic and persuasive. Language is not only used to provide information about products or services, but also to build a modern image, attract consumers, and shape public perception of a business or brand. Commercial signage often combines local and foreign languages, particularly English, to create symbolic meanings associated with prestige, globalization, and modernity. This phenomenon indicates that the choice of language on public signs is closely linked to marketing strategies and identity construction (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Lou, 2017; Mulyawan & Erawati, 2019; Piller, 2016). Furthermore, research conducted in shopping mall environments indicates that multilingual signage, particularly the combination of English and local languages, is commonly used to attract customers and reinforce a modern commercial image (Lestari, 2019). Thus, language on commercial signage serves not only an informative function but also symbolic and persuasive functions.

Research on linguistic landscapes has been conducted extensively across various regions and contexts, particularly focusing on language visibility, multilingualism, and social representation in public spaces. Previous research indicates that linguistic landscapes reflect social, political, cultural, and economic dynamics within a society (Backhaus, 2007; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Gorter, 2018a; Malinowski, 2015). Furthermore, linguistic diversity in public signs is often associated with multicultural identity and multilingual practices within society (Blommaert, 2013; Mensel et al., 2016; Tufi & Blackwood, 2016). Research also indicates that public signs generally serve informative and symbolic functions that not only represent communicative purposes but also the construction of identity and social meaning (Prasetyo et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2022). Some previous studies have specifically examined linguistic landscapes in commercial contexts. For example, (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006) analyzed multilingual public signage and emphasized that the linguistic landscape reflects the sociolinguistic composition of society, while (Backhaus, 2007) highlighted that language selection on signage is influenced by economic, political, and social factors. Furthermore, (Blommaert, 2013) explains that the linguistic landscape is closely linked to globalization and social mobility, while (Tufi & Blackwood, 2016) demonstrate that multilingual signage represents cultural identity and social diversity. Research by (Lou, 2017) also indicates that language on commercial signage is used strategically to attract consumers and negotiate cultural representations. In line with this, (Malinowski, 2015) states that public signs possess literal and contextual meanings shaped by the surrounding sociocultural environment.

Although research on the linguistic landscape continues to evolve, studies specifically focused on the construction of meaning in commercial signage within shopping mall environments in Indonesia remain limited. Most previous research has primarily addressed language visibility and multilingualism, while studies examining how meaning is constructed semantically and pragmatically through public signage in commercial spaces are still relatively scarce. Therefore, this study focuses on signage at the Mall of Serang in Banten to analyze how meaning is constructed through the use of language on commercial public signs. The study aims to identify the types of language used on signage, analyze the semantic and pragmatic meanings contained within them, and explore the social and symbolic functions represented through the linguistic landscape in the shopping mall environment. By analyzing signage at the Mall of Serang, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how language functions strategically in commercial spaces and how the linguistic landscape reflects social identity, modernity, and consumer-oriented communication.

THEORICAL BASIS

The theoretical framework of this study discusses the concept of linguistic landscape as the visible use of language in public spaces, such as store signs, advertisements, and traffic signs. This concept was first introduced by (Landry, R., & Bourhis, 1997), who explained that language on public signs shapes the landscape of a region while representing the social identity of the community. In addition to serving as a means of communication, language in public spaces also reflects social, cultural, and power relations. According to (Gorter, 2018), the linguistic landscape reflects the multilingual nature of a society, while (Blommaert, 2013) emphasizes that language use in public spaces is linked to globalization and social change. Therefore, studies of the linguistic landscape focus not only on the visible forms of language but also on the social meanings embedded within them.

Semantic theory is used to understand how meaning is formed through words or phrases in public signs. According to (Leech, 1981), linguistic meaning can be distinguished into lexical, contextual, and associative meanings. Lexical meaning relates to the basic definition of a word; contextual meaning arises based on the situation in which the language is used; while associative meaning relates to the values or feelings attached to the word. In the study of the linguistic landscape, semantic analysis helps explain that the meaning of public signs is not merely literal but is also influenced by the surrounding social and cultural context. This is reinforced by the view of (Malinowski, 2015), who states that the meaning of public signs is formed through the relationship between language and the social environment in which the sign is situated.

In addition to semantics, this study also employs a pragmatic approach to examine the functions and purposes of language use in public spaces. (Yule, 1996) states that pragmatics examines how meaning is understood based on the context of language use and the speaker's intent. Meanwhile, (Halliday, 1978) explains that language serves various communicative functions, such as informative, persuasive, directive, and identity-forming functions. In the context of public signage, language is not only used to convey information but also to attract attention and build a specific image. According to (Lou, 2017), signs in public spaces are often used to construct and negotiate social identities within society. Therefore, this study integrates linguistic landscape, semantic, and pragmatic analyses to understand the construction of meaning and the functions of language in signage within commercial spaces.

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Methodology

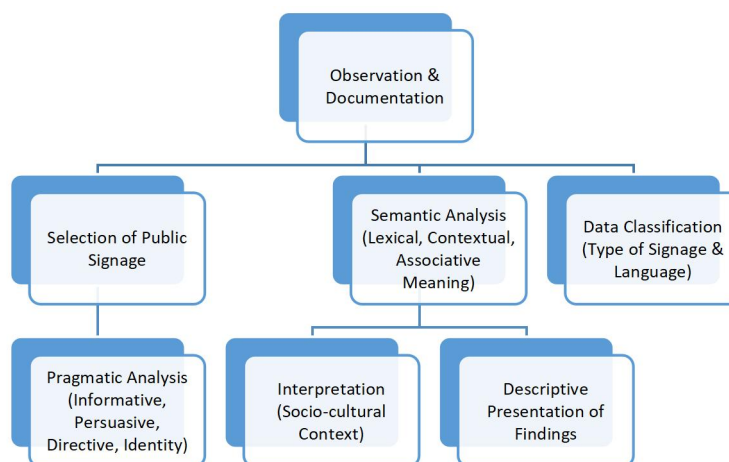
This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the construction of semantic meaning and pragmatic functions within the linguistic landscape of commercial spaces. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because this study aims to explore and interpret linguistic phenomena within their natural context. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research is used to understand the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or humanitarian issue. In line with this, (Sugiyono, 2013) states that qualitative descriptive research is used to describe and analyze phenomena in their natural state without manipulation.

The subject of this study is the public signage found at the Mall of Serang in Banten, which includes store name signs, promotional signs, and directional signs. The research data consists of visual documentation, namely photographs of selected signage that represent various forms of language use in a commercial environment. In linguistic landscape studies, public signs are considered primary data because they reflect visible language practices in society (Landry, R., & Bourhis, 1997; Rustan et al., 2023). The research instruments used include observation sheets,

smartphones or cameras for documentation, and field notes to record contextual information related to each sign, such as its location, purpose, and surrounding environment. These instruments were used to ensure systematic and comprehensive data collection. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative researchers generally use a variety of instruments to obtain rich and in-depth data.

Data collection was conducted through direct observation and photographic documentation. The researcher observed the linguistic landscape at the study site and selectively photographed signage relevant to the research focus. This approach aligns with (Sugiyono, 2013) assertion that observation is the primary technique in qualitative research for obtaining data directly from the field.

The data analysis procedure was conducted in several stages. First, the collected data was classified based on the type of signage and the language used. Second, a semantic analysis was conducted to examine the types of meaning contained therein, such as lexical, contextual, and associative meanings, as proposed by Geoffrey (Leech, 1981). Third, a pragmatic analysis is conducted to identify the communicative functions of language, such as informative, persuasive, directive, and identity functions, based on the frameworks of George (Halliday, 1978; Yule, 1996). Finally, the analysis results are interpreted by considering the social and cultural contexts underlying the existence of the signage. The results of the analysis are then presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive understanding of how meaning is constructed and how language functions within the linguistic landscape of commercial spaces.



Gambar 1. Research Procedure Flowchart

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data of this study consist of various public signages found at the Mall of Serang, Banten. These signages are classified into four main categories: informational, directional, promotional, and commercial or brand signages. Each category is analyzed based on language use, semantic meaning, and pragmatic function. The classification of informational signages is presented in Table below.

Tabel. 1 Informational signages

No.	Signage	Language	Meaning	Function
1.	Kasir	Indonesian	Lexical	Informative
2.	ATM Center	English	Lexical	Informative
3.	Pick Up	English	Contextual	Informative
4.	Lobby Barat	Indonesian	Lexical	Informative
5.	Silahkan Ambil Troli	Indonesian	Contextual	Directive
6.	Dilarang Bersandar Di Sepanjang Kaca, Please/ Do Not Lean On The Glass	Bilingual	Contextual	Directive



Figure 1 Informational signages

The first category consists of informational signages such as “Kasir”, “ATM Center”, “Pick Up”, “Lobby Barat”, “Silahkan Ambil Troli”, and “Dilarang Bersandar Di Sepanjang Kaca / Please Do Not Lean On The Glass”. These signs are not merely neutral carriers of information; rather, they actively participate in constructing meaning within the commercial environment by guiding how visitors interpret space, behavior, and interaction.

In terms of forms and variations of linguistic landscape, the data reveals the coexistence of monolingual (Indonesian and English) and bilingual signage. This variation is not random but reflects a deliberate linguistic choice that constructs a layered communicative environment. Indonesian is primarily used to ensure accessibility for local visitors, while English introduces a sense of modernity and global orientation. The bilingual form, as seen in warning signage, further constructs inclusivity by addressing multiple audiences simultaneously. Thus, the variation in language form contributes to shaping how the space is perceived as both locally grounded and globally oriented.

From the perspective of semantic meaning construction, meaning in these signs is not simply inherent in the words themselves but is constructed through their interaction with context. While signs such as “Kasir” and “ATM Center” appear to convey straightforward lexical meanings, their interpretation is reinforced by their placement within the spatial organization of the mall. Meanwhile, expressions such as “Pick Up” and “Silahkan Ambil Troli” rely heavily on contextual meaning, where visitors interpret them based on shared knowledge of shopping practices. This demonstrates that meaning in the linguistic landscape emerges from the relationship between linguistic form and situational context, rather than from isolated words alone.

In terms of pragmatic functions, informational signages do more than provide information; they regulate behavior and structure interaction within the commercial space. Signs like “Silahkan Ambil Troli” and “Please Do Not Lean On The Glass” function as directives that subtly control visitor actions. Here, meaning and function are interconnected: the way a message is phrased influences how it is interpreted and followed. This reflects a pragmasemantic process in which linguistic choices are used strategically to achieve specific communicative goals, such as maintaining order, efficiency, and safety within the environment.

Tabel. 2 Directional Signages

No.	Signage	Language	Meaning	Function
1.	Parkir Motor Pengunjung →	Indonesian	Contextual	Directive
2.	Cinapolis Cinemas →	English	Lexical	Directive
3.	Cinapolis, Timezone, Musholla, Nursery, Restroom →	English	Contextual	Informative
4.	Titik Kumpul / Assembly Point	Bilingual	Contextual	Directive



Figure 2 Directional Signages

The second category consists of directional signages such as “Parkir Motor Pengunjung”, “Cinepolis Cinemas”, “Cinepolis, Timezone, Musholla, Nursery, Restroom”, and “Titik Kumpul / Assembly Point”. These signs function to organize spatial movement within the mall; however, beyond their practical role, they also contribute to constructing how visitors navigate and interpret the commercial environment.

In terms of forms and variations of linguistic landscape, the data shows the use of monolingual Indonesian, monolingual English, and bilingual or mixed-language forms. Signs such as “Parkir Motor Pengunjung” represent local language dominance, while “Cinepolis Cinemas” reflects the use of English associated with branded or globalized entities. Meanwhile, mixed signs combining multiple place names and facilities demonstrate a complex linguistic composition that integrates both local and global elements. These variations are not merely functional but construct a layered spatial identity in which the mall is positioned as both locally accessible and globally aligned.

From the perspective of semantic meaning construction, the meaning of directional signs is largely constructed through context rather than isolated lexical items. For instance, “Assembly Point” or “Titik Kumpul” gains meaning not simply from the words themselves but from its association with safety procedures and emergency situations. Similarly, lists such as “Cinepolis, Timezone, Musholla, Nursery, Restroom” require visitors to interpret meaning in relation to spatial orientation and physical layout. This indicates that meaning in directional signage emerges from the interaction between language, visual symbols (such as arrows), and the physical environment, highlighting the contextual nature of meaning construction in linguistic landscapes.

In terms of pragmatic functions, directional signages primarily serve directive functions by guiding visitors' movement and behavior within the space. However, this directive function is often realized in a subtle and non-imposing way through the use of simple lexical forms and visual aids. The integration of arrows and concise wording constructs an efficient communicative strategy that minimizes ambiguity and ensures immediate understanding. This reflects a pragmasemantic relationship in which linguistic simplicity and clarity are strategically employed to achieve effective navigation and control of spatial flow.

From a socio-cultural interpretation, the coexistence of Indonesian and English in directional signage reflects the mall's positioning within a multicultural and globalized context. The use of Indonesian ensures accessibility for local visitors, while English contributes to an image of modernity and international standardization. Furthermore, the inclusion of facilities such as "Musholla" alongside global brands highlights the coexistence of local cultural values and global consumer practices. This demonstrates that the linguistic landscape not only reflects but actively constructs a socio-cultural environment where local identity and global influence intersect.

Finally, in terms of language choice and market orientation, the use of English in directional signage serves both practical and symbolic purposes. Practically, it accommodates non-Indonesian speakers; symbolically, it reinforces the mall's image as a modern and globally connected commercial space. At the same time, the presence of Indonesian ensures that the space remains inclusive and relevant to local consumers. Therefore, language choice in directional signage constructs a balanced market orientation, where accessibility, efficiency, and global appeal are simultaneously achieved.

Tabel. 3 Promotional Signages

No	Signage	Language	Meaning	Function
1.	Sale	English	Contextual	Persuasive
2.	Beli 1 Diskon 30% Beli 2 Gratis 1	Indonesian	Contextual	Persuasive
3.	Belanja Pertama Makin Seru Dengan Diskon 25%! Kode: NEW25 Shop Anywhere. Shop Everywhere Download Matahari App	Mixed	Contextual	Persuasive
4.	Ramadhan Xtra Fun! Free Takjil Teh Botol Sosro Minimal Pembelian 200.000 Di Semua Venue Timezone 6-9 Maret 2026 16:00-19:00	Mixed	Contextual	Persuasive
5.	CFC Dengan Ayam Terbaik Indonesia	Indonesian	Associative	Persuasive

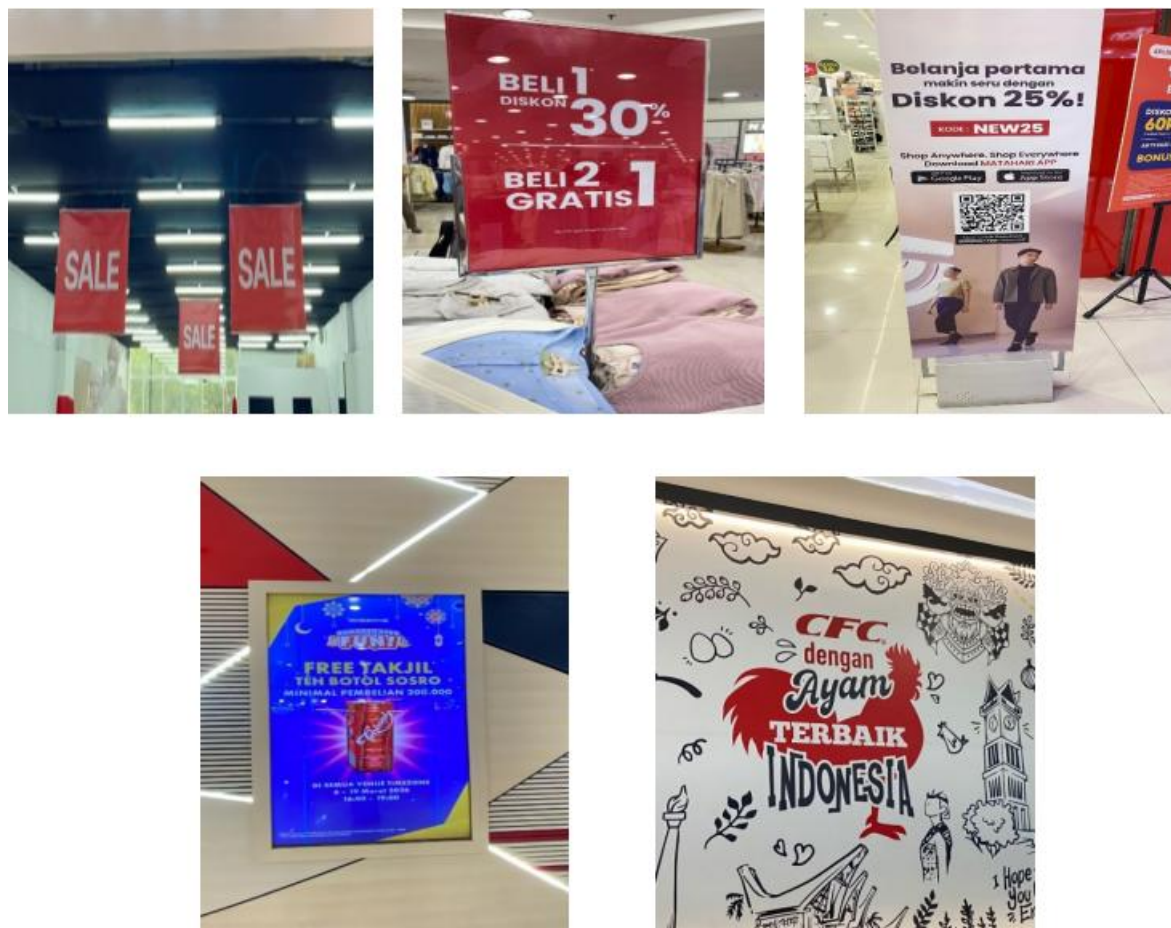


Figure 3 Promotional Signages

The third category consists of promotional signages such as “Sale”, “Beli 1 Diskon 30% Beli 2 Gratis 1”, “Belanja Pertama Makin Seru Dengan Diskon 25%! Kode: NEW25 Shop Anywhere. Shop Everywhere Download Matahari App”, “Ramadhan Xtra Fun! Free Takjil Teh Botol Sosro...”, and “CFC Dengan Ayam Terbaik Indonesia”. Unlike informational and directional signs, these signs are explicitly designed to influence consumer behavior, making them highly strategic in constructing meaning within commercial spaces.

In terms of forms and variations of linguistic landscape, promotional signages predominantly appear in multilingual and mixed-language forms, combining Indonesian and English within a single message. This hybrid linguistic form is not incidental; rather, it constructs a dynamic and attention-grabbing discourse that aligns with contemporary marketing practices. English is often used for key promotional terms such as “Sale”, “Shop Anywhere”, and “Download App”, while Indonesian is used to provide detailed explanations. This combination creates a layered communicative structure that simultaneously signals modernity and ensures comprehension.

From the perspective of semantic meaning construction, meaning in promotional signage is largely contextual and associative rather than purely lexical. Words such as “Sale” or “Diskon” do not simply denote price reduction; they construct a sense of urgency and opportunity. Similarly, phrases like “Makin Seru” and “Xtra Fun” carry associative meanings that evoke

excitement and positive emotional responses. The meaning of these signs is therefore not fixed but constructed through the interaction between linguistic choices, promotional context, and consumer expectations. This demonstrates that meaning in commercial linguistic landscapes is strategically shaped to influence perception rather than merely convey information.

In terms of pragmatic functions, promotional signages primarily serve persuasive functions aimed at attracting attention and encouraging consumption. However, persuasion here is achieved through a combination of linguistic strategies, including the use of imperative forms (“Download”), numerical emphasis (“25%”, “Gratis 1”), and emotionally appealing expressions. These elements work together in a pragmasemantic process, where meaning and function are intertwined to maximize impact. The language does not only inform about promotions but actively constructs a compelling narrative that invites participation and action.

From a socio-cultural interpretation, promotional signages reflect the intersection between local cultural values and global consumer culture. The inclusion of terms such as “Ramadhan” indicates sensitivity to local religious and cultural contexts, while the simultaneous use of English expressions reflects global marketing trends. This combination constructs a hybrid cultural identity in which local traditions are integrated into modern commercial practices. As a result, the linguistic landscape becomes a space where cultural meaning is negotiated and recontextualized within consumer-oriented settings.

Finally, in terms of language choice and market orientation, the use of mixed languages reveals a deliberate strategy to target diverse consumer groups. Indonesian ensures accessibility and relatability for local audiences, while English enhances the perceived modernity and prestige of the promotion. This dual orientation constructs the commercial space as both locally relevant and globally appealing. Therefore, language choice in promotional signage is not merely a communicative tool but a strategic resource for shaping consumer perception and driving market engagement.

Tabel. 4 Commercial / Brand signages

No	Signage	Language	Meaning	Function
1.	คิมคิม Dum Dum	Mixed (Thai + English)	Associative	Identity
2.	Es Teh Indonesia	Indonesian	Associative	Identity
3.	Matahari	Indonesian	Associative	Identity
4.	Sport Station	English	Associative	Identity
5.	My Beaute	English	Associative	Identity
6.	Kopi Kenangan	Indonesian	Associative	Identity
7.	Roti'O Tasty Until The Last Bite	Mixed	Associative	Persuasive
8.	Wing Stop Juarnya Rasa!	Mixed	Associative	Persuasive
9.	Shake Shake In A Tub	English	Associative	Identity



Figure 4 Commercial / Signages

The fourth category consists of commercial and brand signages such as “Es Teh Indonesia”, “Matahari”, “Sport Station”, “My Beaute”, “Kopi Kenangan”, “Roti’O Tasty Until The Last Bite”, “Wing Stop Juaraanya Rasa!”, “Shake Shake In A Tub”, and “คั่มคั่ม Dum Dum”. These signs function not only as identifiers of businesses but also as key elements in constructing brand identity and shaping consumer perception within the commercial space.

In terms of forms and variations of linguistic landscape, brand signages appear in monolingual, bilingual, and mixed-language forms, often incorporating creative and stylized expressions. Some brands use Indonesian (e.g., “Kopi Kenangan”, “Es Teh Indonesia”) to emphasize local identity, while others use English (e.g., “Sport Station”, “My Beaute”) or a combination of languages to create a modern and global impression. Additionally, the presence of non-Latin scripts, such as Thai in “คั่มคั่ม Dum Dum”, introduces further linguistic diversity. These variations are not arbitrary; rather, they construct a distinctive visual and linguistic identity that differentiates each brand within a competitive commercial environment.

From the perspective of semantic meaning construction, meaning in brand signages is predominantly associative. Unlike informational signs, brand names do not merely denote a place or function but evoke certain images, emotions, and experiences. For example, “Kopi Kenangan” constructs a sense of nostalgia and emotional connection, while “Sport Station” suggests activity, energy, and lifestyle. Similarly, slogans such as “Tasty Until The Last Bite” and “Juaraanya Rasa!” reinforce positive product associations. In this case, meaning is not inherent in the words themselves but is strategically constructed to shape how consumers perceive and relate to the brand.

In terms of pragmatic functions, brand signages primarily serve identity functions, as they establish and communicate the unique identity of each business. However, they also carry persuasive elements, particularly when accompanied by slogans or evaluative expressions. This reflects a pragmasemantic process in which meaning and function are closely intertwined: the linguistic form of a brand name or slogan is carefully designed to achieve specific communicative goals, such as attracting attention, building recognition, and fostering consumer loyalty.

From a socio-cultural interpretation, brand signages reflect the dynamic interplay between local culture and global influence. Local language use, as seen in “Es Teh Indonesia” and “Kopi Kenangan”, reinforces cultural authenticity and familiarity, while English and other foreign elements signal modernity, cosmopolitanism, and global connectivity. This coexistence constructs a socio-cultural identity of the mall as a hybrid space, where traditional and global values intersect. It also highlights how language is used symbolically to position brands within broader cultural narratives.

Finally, in terms of language choice and market orientation, the selection of language in brand signages reveals strategic positioning within the market. Brands using English tend to project a modern, international image, appealing to consumers who associate English with prestige and quality. Meanwhile, brands using Indonesian emphasize local relevance and emotional connection with domestic consumers. The use of mixed or hybrid language forms allows brands to bridge these orientations, constructing an image that is both locally grounded and globally appealing. Therefore, language choice in brand signage plays a crucial role in constructing meaning that aligns with branding strategies and consumer expectations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a study of signage at the Mall of Serang, it was found that the use of language in commercial public spaces is dominated by English and Indonesian. English is used more frequently in store names, slogans, and promotions because it is considered capable of creating a modern, exclusive impression and attracting consumers' attention, while Indonesian is used to clarify information so that it is easily understood by local visitors. Additionally, some signage also features bilingual signs that combine Indonesian and English on a single public display. This indicates that the choice of language on signage is not random but tailored to the communication objectives and marketing strategies that commercial entities aim to establish.

This study also found that the meaning of signage at the Mall of Serang is shaped by semantic and pragmatic aspects. Semantically, the signage conveys lexical meaning through the use of direct terms such as "sale," "discount," or "open," which aim to provide brief and clear information to visitors. Additionally, there is also associative meaning that emerges through the use of English terms to convey a modern, elegant, and upscale image of a store or product. Pragmatically, signage not only serves to convey information but also has persuasive and symbolic functions. Some signage is used to influence consumer interest to entice them to enter a store, purchase products, or build a specific perception of the displayed brand. Thus, the context of language use significantly influences the meaning perceived by the public.

The results of this study indicate that the linguistic landscape at the Mall of Serang reflects the influence of globalization in modern commercial spaces. The dominance of English on signage reflects business operators' efforts to follow global trends and build an international image. However, the use of Indonesian continues to serve as a marker of local identity and facilitates communication with the local community. Therefore, signage at the Mall of Serang functions not only as a medium for information but also as a representation of social identity, business strategy, modernity, and the relationship between local and global cultures within the shopping center environment.

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