

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Singaraja is a historic town in Bali that plays an important role in the social, cultural, and educational development of North Bali. As the former capital during the Dutch colonial period and the political center of the Buleleng Kingdom, the town has long been a meeting place for diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups. Today, Singaraja also functions as an educational hub with institutions ranging from elementary schools to universities, including Ganesha University of Education (Undiksha), creating an environment rich in social and linguistic interactions. Such diversity is reflected in the signs, billboards, and other written displays in public spaces, which together form the city's linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

In the context of globalization, language use in public spaces goes beyond simple communication and carries symbolic and ideological meanings. Shohamy and Gorter (2009) emphasize that linguistic landscapes are not merely descriptive but reflect how language is used to assert identity, power, and social positioning. Similarly, Blommaert (2010) argues that globalization reshapes linguistic practices by introducing multiple centers of linguistic norms that coexist and interact simultaneously, influencing how languages are used and perceived at local, national, and global levels.

In the context of English language education, linguistic landscapes can function as a source of authentic language input that reflects real-world

communication practices (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Sayer, 2010). Exposure to public signs allows learners to develop vocabulary knowledge as well as sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, as students interpret how language is used in meaningful social contexts. Furthermore, linguistic landscapes support context-based and place-based learning by encouraging students to critically understand how language reflects identity, power, and cultural values in everyday life (Rowland, 2013).

Several studies in Indonesia support these theoretical claims by showing how linguistic landscapes reflect broader social dynamics across different spatial and social contexts. Research on culinary signage in Yogyakarta reveals a strong presence of bilingual and multilingual patterns, indicating that language choices on public signs are shaped by the interaction of local identity and global orientation, particularly in socially diverse urban settings (Vitasari & Setyawan, 2025). Similar tendencies are found in tourism-driven areas in Bali. Studies in Sanur demonstrate how multilingual signage reflects socioeconomic orientation and ideological contestation, with English and Indonesian dominating public signs while local languages function symbolically to signal cultural identity (Susianti et al., 2025). In Gianyar, especially around temple areas, multilingual signage conveys cultural and semiotic meanings closely tied to place, tradition, and identity, reinforcing the symbolic role of local language within a tourism and heritage context (Pendit et al., 2024).

Beyond Bali, studies in other regions of Indonesia consistently show that Indonesian and English dominate public signage in urban, commercial, and tourism-related spaces, while local languages tend to appear less frequently and

often serve symbolic or identity-marking functions rather than communicative ones (Dewi et al., 2025; Datang et al., 2022; Junining et al., 2025; Benu et al., 2025). Research in semi-public and non-tourism settings, such as street signage in Singaraja, religious spaces in West Denpasar, public spaces in Mataram, and transportation hubs in Malang, further confirms the strong dominance of Indonesian on top-down signs, reflecting national ideology and language policy, while bottom-up signs display more varied multilingual practices shaped by community participation and local social dynamics (Paramarta, 2022; Pidada, 2021; Setiawan, 2023; Putri et al., 2025).

However, research focusing on linguistic landscapes in semi-urban contexts such as Singaraja is still limited. Most existing studies are situated in larger cities or areas deeply affected by tourism and globalization, where language use is heavily influenced by commercial and visitor-driven demands. There are fewer studies examining linguistic landscapes in smaller urban spaces that are shaped more by educational, cultural, and everyday social interactions than by mass tourism. Research on linguistic landscapes in semi-urban contexts suggests that multilingual patterns in such spaces differ from those in major urban centers, indicating the need for more localized and context-sensitive investigations (Riani et al., 2021).

More importantly, existing linguistic landscape studies in Indonesia tend to emphasize descriptive categorization of language presence and dominance, while paying limited attention to how languages operate across different sociolinguistic scales, index social meanings, and are regulated by multiple centers of linguistic norms. Few studies explicitly adopt a sociolinguistics of globalization perspective that integrates the concepts of linguistic scale, indexicality, and polycentricity to

explain how public signage reflects layered power relations, social stratification, and competing language ideologies in everyday public spaces. As a result, the dynamic processes through which local, national, and global languages are ordered, evaluated, and negotiated in semi-urban contexts remain underexplored.

Preliminary observation conducted in the selected area of Singaraja shows that similar types of signs, such as shop signs and promotional banners, are found across locations. However, variations can be seen in the language choices, particularly in the use of English alongside Indonesian. This suggests that although the signs may appear similar on the surface, they may carry different social meanings depending on the context, audience, and spatial setting. The focus on Jalan Udayana, Singaraja is significant because this area represents a different sociolinguistic setting from tourism-oriented spaces in Bali. While tourism areas are often shaped by direct contact with international visitors, Jalan Udayana is more strongly characterized by educational, institutional, local commercial, and everyday social activities. Therefore, the use of English and other linguistic resources in this area is not assumed to be driven primarily by tourism, but by modernization, institutional presence, commercial branding, and local community interaction. This distinction is important because different spatial contexts may produce different patterns of scale, indexicality, and polycentricity in public signage.

To address these gaps, the present study explores the linguistic landscape of Jalan Udayana, one of the main public streets in Singaraja. Jalan Udayana was selected because it is an active public area that accommodates various social, educational, and commercial activities, making it a suitable site for examining language use in public spaces. This study adopts a sociolinguistics of globalization

perspective by focusing on linguistic scale, indexicality, and polycentricity to examine how language choices on public signs reflect social, cultural, and economic orientations. By foregrounding these dimensions, this research moves beyond descriptive accounts of language presence and provides a deeper sociolinguistic explanation of how multilingual public signage operates in a semi-urban context shaped by globalization.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the research background of the study above, several problems have been identified. First, there is a lack of research on the extent to which different languages appear in public signage in Singaraja. Public signs, including billboards, storefront names, government information boards, and street signs, serve as linguistic markers that shape the visual representation of language use within the city. Understanding the scale of language use in these spaces is crucial for assessing language dominance and vitality, particularly in the context of language maintenance and shift due to globalization. It is important to investigate which languages are more visible and whether local languages are being overshadowed by national and international languages.

Second, the ways in which public signs reflect social, economic, and cultural hierarchies in Singaraja remain unexplored. Language in public signage often carries indexical meanings, signaling prestige, modernity, or traditional values. The dominance of certain languages in high-end commercial areas may indicate economic power and global influence, while the presence of local languages in specific areas may highlight cultural preservation efforts. Analyzing the indexicality of language use in signage can reveal underlying power relations,

societal stratifications, and how different groups position themselves within the urban space. This aspect is particularly relevant in understanding whether the linguistic landscape of Singaraja fosters inclusivity or contributes to linguistic marginalization.

The last one, different language norms influence the linguistic landscape, but their effects on language interactions and identity in Singaraja have not been studied in depth. The concept of polycentricity, where multiple language norms coexist and compete within a space, is crucial in understanding how various language centers, local (Balinese), national (Indonesian), and global (English, Mandarin, and other foreign languages) interact in shaping linguistic practices. Investigating how public signage incorporates different languages and the motivations behind language choices will provide insights into linguistic adaptation, the role of tourism and economic factors, and the perception of multilingualism among the local community.

By addressing these identified problems, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the linguistic landscape of Singaraja and its broader implications on language use, identity, and globalization. Through an in-depth analysis of language visibility, socio-economic and cultural indexicality, and the interaction of language norms, this research will contribute to the growing field of linguistic landscape studies and provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and language preservation advocates.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

This research is limited to the analysis of linguistic landscape (LL) in the public space of Singaraja with a sociolinguistic perspective, especially in the context of globalization.

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The location context is limited to a main street area in Singaraja, specifically Jalan Udayana. This study focuses on Jalan Udayana as a semi-urban public space characterized by educational, institutional, local commercial, and everyday social activities. Therefore, the findings of this study are not intended to represent tourism-oriented areas in Bali.
2. The objects analyzed are limited to permanent and semi-permanent public signage, such as shop signs, billboards, banners, government information boards, and road signs.
3. The analysis includes all languages and linguistic varieties appearing in the selected public signs, including local, national, and foreign languages represented in the collected data.
4. The analysis focuses on three main aspects according to the formulation of the problem:
 - a. The scale of language use (sociolinguistic scale),
 - b. The social, economic, and cultural meaning of language use (indexicality), and
 - c. The existence and interaction of different language norms (polycentricity).

5. This study does not discuss in depth the public's perception of language use in public signs or the direct influence of government policies on the linguistic landscape. In addition, this study does not involve interviews or direct interactions with sign owners, business actors, or other stakeholders, as the data are limited to observable public signage.
6. This study relies primarily on observation and photographic documentation. As a result, the analysis focuses on the visible linguistic features of public signs and does not explore the perspectives, motivations, or language ideologies of sign owners, businesses, government officials, or members of the public through interviews or surveys.

1.4 Research Questions

These 3 research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What language scales are used in public signs in Singaraja?
2. How do public signs reflect the indexicality of social, economic, and cultural status?
3. How do different language norms (polycentricity) influence the linguistic landscape in Singaraja?

1.5 Research Objectives

According to the research questions above, the purpose of the study can be stated as follows:

1. To identify the language scales used in public signs in Singaraja.
2. To analyze public signs in relation to the indexicality of social, economic, and cultural status.
3. To analyze how different language norms (polycentricity) influence the linguistic landscape in Singaraja.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is divided into two parts: theoretical significance and practical significance.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of linguistic landscape by applying Blommaert's (2010) concepts of scale, indexicality, and polycentricity. This research helps explain that language used on public signs in Singaraja is not only for communication, but also reflects social power, social status, economic conditions, and cultural values. Therefore, this study improves understanding of how language in public spaces is shaped by social contexts and, at the same time, shapes social interactions.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to be useful for several groups:

1. For the researcher

This study helps the researcher gain a deeper understanding of linguistic landscape theory and how Blommaert's concepts can be applied in real social contexts.

2. For policymakers

The results of this study can be used as a reference in creating language policies for public spaces that are more inclusive and appropriate to the local social and cultural context of Singaraja.

3. For business owners and local communities

This study raises awareness of the importance of language choice on public signs in building identity, social image, and cultural value, especially to support local tourism.

4. For future researchers

This study can serve as a reference for further research related to linguistic landscape studies, particularly in multilingual and multicultural communities.

5. For English Language Education Department

This study provides empirical data that can be utilized as authentic teaching materials in English language classrooms, as the linguistic landscape of Singaraja presents real-world examples of multilingual language use that support the development of students'

sociolinguistic awareness, vocabulary enrichment, and contextual understanding of language. Public signs can function as effective resources for vocabulary learning by exposing students to authentic expressions used in public communication, while the analysis of linguistic landscape also enhances students' pragmatic awareness by illustrating how language is appropriately used in different social contexts. Furthermore, this study contributes to the development of students' sociolinguistic competence, particularly in understanding how language reflects identity, power, and social meaning, and supports the implementation of context-based learning (CBL), enabling students to connect classroom learning with real-life language use.

