

A LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS IN EAST BANDUNG

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Abstract

This study investigates verbal and visual semiotics in the linguistic landscape of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in East Bandung, Indonesia, examining how public signs are used to construct and project institutional identity. Using qualitative semiotic analysis of photographs and textual data, this study examines how verbal and visual signs construct meaning in the school environment. The research draws on data collected through participatory observation, photographic documentation, and interviews in four case-study institutions: Al-Mu'awanah, Ma'had Al-Jami'ah, Al-Mahad Al-Lughawi, and Al-Ihsan. The signs, including signboards, banners, and logos, were analyzed using Landry and Bourhis's linguistic landscape framework and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model. The analysis reveals three dominant semiotic functions: reinforcement of religious identity, regulation of institutional authority, and integration of visual and verbal codes in daily school life. Each *pesantren* strategically cultivates a distinct identity through its linguistic landscape, ranging from a balance between tradition and modernity to "progressive traditionalism" that blends classical religious aesthetics with modern corporate branding. This study is among the first to examine the linguistic landscape of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, showing how semiotic practices in these religious educational spaces reflect broader cultural and institutional dynamics. The findings contribute to semiotic and linguistic landscape scholarship by demonstrating how verbal and visual signs in religious institutions construct identity and authority. This study underscores the importance of analyzing linguistic landscapes in religious educational settings to understand how semiotics mediates identity, authority, and cultural continuity.

Keywords: *East Bandung; Islamic boarding school; linguistic landscape; semiotics; visual semiotics*

1. Introduction

Linguistic landscape (LL) is an interdisciplinary field that examines language use in public spaces through written, visual, and multimodal signs (Muthia'ah et al., 2018). In this perspective, the term sign refers to "a fundamental element in semiotics, representing

something else within a semiotic field” (Sari et al., 2024). LL analysis thus serves as a powerful lens to understand how our social worlds, whether material or online, are constructed in and through language (Costley et al., 2023). Although LL has been studied in various Indonesian contexts, including Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), research specifically focusing on *pesantren* in the East Bandung region remains scarce. This gap is important because *pesantren* are Islamic educational institutions with unique linguistic characteristics that reflect the identity and values they uphold through public signage and visual communication.

In Indonesia, LL studies have increasingly highlighted how language in public spaces constructs social meanings, including in religious and educational settings such as *pesantren*. As Sujito (2016) notes, textual “signs” in dramatic scripts can also construct landscapes and guide meaning, showing that semiotic practices extend beyond purely physical environments. However, this study focuses specifically on *pesantren* environments in East Bandung, where the linguistic landscape includes institutional names, verbal signage within the *pesantren* environment, language used in physical spaces, and language found in visual and graphic communication.

In the context of linguistic landscape studies in *pesantren* located in the East Bandung region, this research aims to identify and analyze the use of language in the public spaces of *pesantren*, as well as to understand the symbolic meanings embedded within it. This study focuses on several key aspects:

1. Identify the names of the *pesantren* and analyze their symbolic meanings.
2. Observe verbal signs within the *pesantren* environment, including placards, banners, directional boards, and other types of information.
3. Analyze the use of language in the physical spaces of the *pesantren*, particularly in the choice of vocabulary used for naming facilities.
4. Evaluate the language used in visual and graphic communication, such as graphic design and textual content found in promotional materials (Hidayah & Fitri, 2023).

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance in the study of linguistic landscapes, particularly within the context of *pesantren* in the East Bandung region. Theoretically, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language is used in the public spaces of *pesantren* as a marker of cultural identity and the values being promoted. This aligns with the findings of Yusuf (2022), who indicates that *pesantren* use language as a tool for conveying information and constructing identity. Practically, the findings of this study can be utilized by *pesantren* administrators to understand how language use within their environment influences identity and communication (Yusuf, 2022). For example, by identifying the types and functions of existing verbal signs, administrators can design more effective communication strategies for both students and visitors. In addition, this research may serve as a reference for further linguistic landscape studies in the context of *pesantren* education in Indonesia, particularly in understanding the dynamics of language use within *pesantren* settings.

In *pesantren* environments, the language used in various visual media such as name boards, banners, and directional signs is not neutral. Research by Yusuf (2022) reveals that the use of language in these elements is consciously constructed to shape and affirm the religious identity of the *pesantren*, while simultaneously conveying ideological values to both students and the broader community. In this context, language functions not only as a tool

of communication but also as a symbolic instrument that reinforces the institution's image. Meanwhile, Al-Naimat & Alomoush (2018) highlight the importance of visual aspects such as design, color, and the arrangement of elements in linguistic signs, emphasizing that the physical and material form of a sign plays a significant role in shaping how ideological messages are conveyed and perceived. Therefore, this study views language in the *pesantren* space not merely as a sequence of text, but as part of a social and visual practice that carries deep and complex layers of meaning.

Building on Yusuf's (2022) claim that *pesantren* language reinforces identity and Al-Naimat & Alomoush (2018) emphasis on visual design in linguistic signs, this study examines how verbal and visual semiotics interact in East Bandung *pesantren*. Accordingly, it asks: How do verbal and visual semiotics in the linguistic landscape of East Bandung *pesantren* construct identity, authority, and cultural meaning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Review of Theories

This analysis draws on two main theoretical foundations: the linguistic landscape theory of Landry & Bourhis (1997) and the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce (Liszka, 1996). In this approach, each linguistic sign in public spaces is understood as serving two principal functions: "Two basic functions of the linguistic landscape are an informational function and a symbolic function" (Rohmah & Wijayanti, 2023). The informational function relates to how signs offer practical guidance for readers, for instance through directions, regulations, or institutional names. The symbolic function, by contrast, concerns how signs express cultural identity, language hierarchies, and the ideological values of the community that produces them. These perspectives help explain how *pesantren* signage at once provides information and communicates institutional identity.

Landry and Bourhis focus on what signs do in social space, whereas Peirce's semiotic theory is more concerned with how signs come to mean. Peirce describes semiosis, or the process of meaning-making, as a dynamic relation between three elements: firstness (initial impression, feeling, or possibility), secondness (factual existence or concrete experience), and thirdness (the representation that links impression and fact into a relatively stable interpretation) (Camargo & Gudwin, 2022). Put simply, Peirce's semiotic triad outlines how a sign moves from being a visual or verbal stimulus to becoming a shared representation. In a *pesantren* setting, this perspective helps make sense of how colors, calligraphic styles, logos, and multilingual inscriptions develop from first impressions into institutional symbols that embody particular religious and ideological orientations.

Based on this conceptual framework, this study is guided by four key assumptions:

1. *Pesantren* names reflect institutional ideology.
2. Verbal signs convey information and affirm identity.
3. Facility naming encodes cultural and ideological meanings.
4. Visual and promotional language constructs institutional image.

Taken more broadly, the language policies and everyday language practices in *pesantren* can be read as part of wider sociopolitical and linguistic dynamics in the surrounding society (Suuriniemi & Satokangas, 2023). This view places *pesantren* within Indonesia's broader context, where religious identity intersects with national language policy

and with global debates on modernity and Islamic education (Suuriniemi & Satokangas, 2023). Looking at the linguistic landscape of *pesantren* therefore offers useful insight into how language functions both as a symbolic resource and as a communicative tool in shaping institutional identity. This study aims to deepen understanding of language use in religious educational settings by examining the interplay between verbal and visual signs in the public spaces of selected *pesantren* in East Bandung.

2.2 Review of Previous Studies

Building on these theoretical foundations, previous studies have shown how *pesantren* and other Islamic educational institutions construct their linguistic landscapes in practice. A number of studies report that *pesantren* commonly use Arabic, Indonesian, and English in the signs displayed throughout their environments. For example, Yusuf et al. (2022), in their research at *Pesantren Nurul Falah* and *Bahrul Ulum*, identify monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs that perform both informational and symbolic functions. In a similar study, (Firdausiyah, 2019), working at *Pesantren Putri Mambaus Sholihin* in Gresik, finds that the use of English, Arabic, and Indonesian in signage serves informative and symbolic purposes and supports the institution's role as a "Language Boarding School". While Yusuf et al. (2022) highlight the overall presence of multilingual signage in *pesantren*, (Firdausiyah, 2019) draws particular attention to English as a marker of modernity and global orientation. Together, these findings point to how *pesantren* linguistic landscapes negotiate between traditional religious identity and pressures of globalization.

A broader study of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia also suggests that the linguistic landscape can become a site of language policy and symbolic contestation. A case study at the Darussalam Gontor education complex, for instance, shows that English and Arabic dominate the school's linguistic landscape (school-scape), while the national language (Bahasa Indonesia) and the regional language (Javanese) appear in subordinate positions (Rohmah et al., 2024). This policy tends to place Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese below Arabic and English and, in doing so, reinforces the *pesantren's* international and religious image (Rohmah et al., 2024). Although Gontor clearly prioritizes Arabic and English to project a global Islamic identity, *pesantren* in East Bandung may manage their linguistic landscapes in different ways, for example by combining international languages with stronger expressions of local or national identity.

More generally, studies of religious spaces, including *pesantren*, indicate that linguistic landscapes in these settings often combine sacred and more worldly functions. The dominant use of Arabic typically indexes Islamic religious identity and sacred discourse, while English is frequently associated with modernity, globalization, and technological advancement. Research on the linguistic landscape of places of worship in Indonesia has also found that, despite the presence of various languages including local languages, English, Mandarin, and others. Bahasa Indonesia often remains an important marker of national identity in these spaces (Ardhian et al., 2021). In *pesantren*, this mix means that Arabic often signals sacred identity, English points to modern aspirations, and Indonesian ties the institution to national belonging; together, these codes position *pesantren* as both religious and globally oriented institutions.

Despite these contributions, there is still limited research that examines how verbal and visual semiotics work together in the linguistic landscapes of *pesantren* in East Bandung, and how these semiotic resources relate to institutional identity, authority, and cultural

meaning. This gap is what the present study addresses by analyzing the semiotic functions of linguistic landscapes in selected *pesantren* in East Bandung.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study employs a descriptive qualitative case study approach, with participatory observation as the primary data collection technique. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of language use and symbolism in *pesantren* located in the East Bandung area. A descriptive qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore the social, cultural, and linguistic contexts within the *pesantren* environment and to examine how these elements interact in the construction of meaning (Creswell, 2007). In line with this, participatory observation was carried out over a period of approximately three months, during which the researcher attended daily activities in the *pesantren*, observed signage use in various spaces, and documented verbal and visual signs in situ. During observation, particular attention was paid to signs located at gates, dormitory corridors, and main prayer halls.

Additional data collection methods include photographic documentation and interviews with *pesantren* administrators and selected students as informants. Photographic documentation was used to systematically capture signboards, banners, logos, and other visual materials that form the linguistic landscape of each *pesantren*. Interviews were conducted with four administrators and eight students using semi-structured questions focusing on language use, symbolic meanings attributed to signs, and institutional considerations behind signage design and placement. The combination of participatory observation, photographic documentation, and interviews is consistent with the descriptive qualitative case study design and is highly relevant to the research objective, which seeks to examine the contextual and symbolic elements of the linguistic landscape.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data consisted of field observations of the *pesantren* environment, photographs of linguistic signs, and interviews with administrators and students (Musthafa & Hermawan, 2018). Secondary data were used to complement and support the primary data and were obtained through the review of various references, including journal articles, textbooks, previous studies, and other literature relevant to the research topic (Musthafa & Hermawan, 2018).

In this study, the primary data were obtained from four *pesantren*: Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Mu'awanah, Ma'had Al-Jami'ah, Al-Ma'had Al-Lughawi, and Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Ihsan. These *pesantren* were selected because of their distinctive characteristics in language use in both physical signage and visual communication. More specifically, they were chosen to represent diverse institutional types in the East Bandung region, ranging from more traditional *pesantren* to modern and language-focused institutions, and to capture different ways in which each institution manages language as part of its identity and religious learning process.

For data analysis, all visual and textual data from observations, photographs, and interview transcripts were organized and coded. The coding process followed semiotic categories that distinguish between verbal, visual, and symbolic elements in the linguistic landscape. These coded data were then analyzed using Landry & Bourhis (1997) distinction between informational and symbolic functions of the linguistic landscape and Peirce's semiotic triad of firstness, secondness, and thirdness (Camargo & Gudwin, 2022). This analytical procedure made it possible to examine how particular signs, such as institutional names, room labels, and promotional banners operate simultaneously as informative texts and as symbols that carry ideological and cultural meanings in the *pesantren* context.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and participants provided informed consent before taking part in interviews. Where necessary, the names of individual participants were anonymized, and sensitive information was treated with confidentiality, although institutional names are used to maintain the contextual specificity of the case studies.

Overall, this methodological design ensures that the study is able to address its objectives by analyzing how verbal and visual semiotics in the linguistic landscape of *pesantren* in East Bandung construct identity, authority, and symbolic meanings within religious educational settings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Case Study 1: Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Mu'awanah



At the level of firstness, the visual design of Al-Mu'awanah immediately presents a coherent palette and composition. In the first visual, blue, white, and gold dominate the signboard, while the institution's name, Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Mu'awanah, which is derived from Arabic, is displayed using minimalist fonts in Indonesian and Sundanese. The fonts used include LED style, Arial, and Digital 7, and the Arabic text is written in Thuluth and Kufi calligraphy. The overall layout is symmetrical and incorporates three languages that is Indonesian, Arabic, and Sundanese offering a clear impression of multilingualism and visual order. In the second visual, the dominant colors shift to black and gold; the Indonesian text appears in a minimalist style using the Traditional Arabic font, while the Arabic script is rendered in Diwani Jali calligraphy. In the third visual, the logo is primarily green, with additional blue and white elements, and features the Kaaba, four occurrences of the Arabic definite article (ال/الا), two kujang (a traditional Sundanese blade), and a star above the Kaaba. Together, these elements create an immediate sense of religious symbolism and local cultural identity.

From the perspective of secondness, these visual choices operate as concrete, material signs that carry socially recognizable meanings. Blue is often associated with calmness, peace, and trust (Su et al., 2019), making it suitable for religious or spiritual contexts where stability and serenity are emphasized. White represents purity and holiness (Bzour, 2015), while gold suggests grandeur and dignity (Okazawa et al., 2011). Black adds connotations of strength and stability, and green is widely linked to Islam, fertility, and peace (Mutmainnah, 2017). As (Su et al., 2019) note, blue is associated with tranquility, which supports the *pesantren*'s emphasis on peace and order, while (Quddus, 2020) also connects blue with stability. Similarly, white is commonly read as a sign of purity and cleanliness in Islamic culture (Muthia'ah et al., 2018). The name "Al-Mu'awanah" meaning help or assistance, reinforces the institutional message of supporting students in their religious learning. The choice of minimalist fonts for Indonesian and Sundanese, such as LED style, Arial, and Digital 7, reflects a modern and practical approach to communication; these fonts emphasize simplicity and readability (Russell-Minda et al., 2007). In contrast, Thuluth and Kufi calligraphy for the Arabic text introduce a strong traditional and religious nuance in line with classical Islamic calligraphic practice (Al-Mughrabi, 2023).

Language choice and script further structure the *pesantren*'s linguistic landscape. The simultaneous use of Indonesian, Arabic, and Sundanese shows an effort to engage multiple segments of the community with Indonesian functions as the national and explanatory language, Arabic as the language of religious authority, and Sundanese as a marker of local identity. In another display, the Indonesian text uses the Traditional Arabic font, producing a minimalist yet formal visual impression (Ramadan, 2011), and the Arabic script is rendered in Diwani Jali calligraphy, which is known for its artistic and decorative qualities (Pujiati, 2016). Room names such as Sunan Bonang and Sunan Ampel evoke important historical figures in the spread of Islam in Java, linking the *pesantren* to a broader Islamic heritage. The use of Indonesian for room names enhances accessibility and clarity, while Arabic naming adds a sacred tone that connects the space to Islamic traditions and values (Suriani et al., 2022). The kujang symbol signifies Sundanese cultural heritage (Kurniawan, 2014), and the star above the Kaaba can be read as representing aspiration and noble goals upheld by the institution.

At the level of thirdness, these colors, scripts, and symbols come together to form a coherent institutional narrative. The palette of blue, white, gold, black, and green is not merely decorative, but conveys values of peace, spirituality, purity, and stability within a religious environment. In the *pesantren* context, these colors bridge visual perception and ideological understanding, pointing to religious teachings, inner purity, and a harmonious way of life. The name Al-Mu'awanah, chosen to signify "assistance", aligns with the institution's vision to support students who are still struggling to understand religious teachings, particularly matters of faith and the concept of divine oneness. The combination of gold and black creates a strong visual emphasis: gold evokes luxury and grandeur, while black symbolizes strength and stability, together suggesting a firm institutional foundation both visually and symbolically. The symmetrical arrangement of visual elements signals a pursuit of harmony and balance between worldly and spiritual concerns and reflects the ideal of doing good toward fellow human beings and toward God.

The multilingual signage embodies the *pesantren's* foundation in Islamic scholarship. Arabic is used for religious content, Indonesian serves as the explanatory medium, and Sundanese underscores the *pesantren's* local identity in the Sundanese-speaking region of Bandung. The variety of fonts illustrates an ideological stance that embraces technological advancement while maintaining respect for religious tradition and identity. The Traditional Arabic font links aesthetic beauty with cultural values, creating a visual balance between simplicity and elegance. It functions not only as a typographic choice but also as a medium for conveying politeness, order, and reverence for tradition, without neglecting a modern and graceful appearance. Diwani Jali script adds artistic expression and creativity to the written text; beyond its communicative role, this calligraphy serves as a symbol of art that enhances meaning, offers strong visual appeal, and reflects the high aesthetic value of Arabic writing traditions.

Naming practices and logo design complete this semiotic configuration. The use of historic names within the *pesantren* does not merely indicate physical locations but also honors the significant roles of these figures in the spread of Islam in Java, reinforcing the connection between space and the *pesantren's* cultural and religious heritage. The use of Indonesian for room names facilitates accessibility for a broad audience, while Arabic names introduce a religious and sacred dimension, deepening the balance between communicative clarity and reverence for spiritual heritage. The inclusion of the Kaaba in the Al-Mu'awanah logo signifies that the *pesantren* aligns itself with the Kaaba as the spiritual direction, underscoring its commitment to the central axis of Islamic worship (Mutmainnah, 2017). The presence of four lam alif inscriptions (لا) in the logo represents the *pesantren's* core motto, which guides students through four formulations, "La ilaha illallah la maujuda illallah" (there is no god but Allah, there is no existence but Allah), "La ilaha illallah la ma'buda illallah" (there is no god but Allah, there is none to be worshiped but Allah), "La ilaha illallah la mathluba illallah" (there is no god but Allah, there is no one to be sought but Allah), and "La ilaha illallah la maqsuda illallah" (there is no god but Allah, there is no ultimate aim but Allah). The kujang symbol signals that the *pesantren* is situated in a Sundanese cultural setting, specifically in Bandung, West Java, while the star expresses the institution's highest aspiration: attaining knowledge of and closeness to Allah, the Almighty.

Taken together, these elements show that Al-Mu'awanah constructs its identity as a traditional Islamic institution that at the same time incorporates elements of modernity. This is visible in the use of religious color schemes, three languages (Indonesian, Arabic, and Sundanese), and a combination of modern fonts and classical calligraphy. Its ideological orientation emphasizes the oneness of God, the inclusion of both local and global cultures, a balance between worldly and spiritual life, and religious nationalism. These values are condensed in the logo, which features the Kaaba, four instances of the lam alif, the kujang, and a star. Overall, the linguistic landscape of this *pesantren* functions both as an informational medium and as an ideological tool that affirms a vision of Islamic monotheism that is progressive while remaining rooted in tradition and local cultural values.

4.2 Case Study 2: Ma'had Al-Jami'ah

Ma'had Al-Jami'ah, which literally means "University *Pesantren*", presents a consistent visual identity that reflects its character as a modern Islamic higher education

institution with a clear academic orientation and a strong connection to the university environment. Unlike Al-Mu'awanah, which maintains a strong traditional salaf atmosphere, Ma'had Al-Jami'ah foregrounds a professional, intellectual image and an openness to the global sphere.



The banner for new student admissions is one of the main media through which the institution constructs its public image. At the level of firstness, its neat and modern layout, dominated by bright green and white, immediately conveys a fresh and formal impression, similar to a contemporary corporate or university setting. High-quality photographs of smiling students and administrators contribute to a sense of friendliness, enthusiasm, and trustworthiness, while digital elements such as a QR code and social media icons add a modern touch, facilitate access, and highlight the institution's technological competence. Rather than functioning as mere decoration, the banner operates as a semiotic tool of institutional branding: it visually articulates Ma'had Al-Jami'ah as a *pesantren* that is fully integrated into the academic culture of a university campus.

From the perspective of secondness, these signs operate as concrete material elements that organise everyday life in Ma'had Al-Jami'ah. The new-student admission banner, mounted at a main entrance, not only presents information but also physically directs visitors toward the *pesantren* as an academic gateway. Inside the building, numerous visual signs serve ongoing educational and character-building purposes. Small banners displaying wise sayings are designed with a clean and uniform appearance, making them easy to read and reinforcing an atmosphere of order and calm. The poster titled “Idioms or Ushlub” adopts a more dynamic design, with appealing graphics and small icons such as stars or lightbulbs that add a creative and friendly tone for learners. The bulletin or announcement board functions as a space for student self-expression, filled with colour, creative paper shapes, and handwritten notes that signal enthusiasm, creativity, energy, and shared ownership. Even simple regulatory signs, such as a sign indicating where to place footwear, are clearly and intuitively designed, using universal pictograms and contrasting colours to project a sense of order and standards aligned with international expectations. Taken together, these elements show that banners, posters, and bulletin boards are not incidental, but work collectively as semiotic resources that shape how the *pesantren* presents itself as a disciplined, active, and intellectually engaged community.

In this context, the notion of a “wall curriculum” is helpful. Here, the “wall curriculum” refers to the use of permanent visual signs such as banners with wise sayings, posters, and regulatory notices as continuous pedagogical tools that embed moral, disciplinary, and educational values into the physical environment. The walls of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah thus operate as an extended classroom: students do not only learn from formal

lectures, but also from the constant visual reminders that surround them in corridors, study areas, and communal spaces.

From the perspective of thirdness, the visual and textual elements of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah are interpreted through the lens of modern education and strategic institutional branding. The name "Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Gunung Djati" serves as a symbol that explicitly aligns the *pesantren* with a formal and prestigious state university, signalling that it is not merely a traditional *pesantren* but an integrated Islamic higher education institution. The hybrid term "mahasantri", combining mahasiswa (university student) and santri (religious student), encapsulates the dual identity being cultivated: individuals who are intellectually capable like university students while remaining devout and rooted in Islamic values like traditional santri.

The list of "Flagship Programs" such as "Intensive Courses: Arabic, English, Classical Islamic Texts" and "Public Lectures on Religious Moderation" symbolises a curriculum designed to balance Islamic intellectual tradition (through kitab kuning), global competencies (through foreign language mastery), and contemporary Islamic understanding (through the promotion of moderation). The banners that display wise sayings in Arabic, accompanied by Indonesian translations placed directly below, reflect an educational approach that aims to instil ethics and moral values in a form that is both accessible and applicable to everyday life. Likewise, the "Idioms" poster, which presents Arabic and English expressions alongside their Indonesian equivalents, functions as a sign of the institution's commitment to practical and communicative language instruction, moving beyond rote grammar memorisation toward authentic and functional language use.

One of the most prominent symbolic features is the consistent use of three languages: Arabic, English, and Indonesian. This trilingual approach signals an intentionally inclusive and internationally oriented learning environment. Indonesian affirms national identity and ensures accessibility, Arabic anchors religious authority and classical scholarship, and English indexes modernity, global connectedness, and technological advancement. The use of these three languages is therefore aimed not only at the Indonesian-speaking community, but also anticipates possible interaction with Arabic and English speakers, while training students to operate in a multilingual context. Together, these semiotic choices reinforce the institution's aspiration to be recognised as a global educational community.

In summary, Ma'had Al-Jami'ah consistently cultivates its identity as a professional academic institution with a global outlook. Its underlying ideology centres on the formation of the "Modern Muslim Intellectual" or "Global Mahasantri": individuals who are spiritually grounded in Islam yet equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to engage with the international world. This vision is articulated through its visual landscape, including professionally designed banners, the strong emphasis on foreign language proficiency, and the *pesantren's* explicit institutional affiliation with a state university.

4.3 Case Study 3: Al-Mahad Al-Lughawi

Al-Mahad Al-Lughawi, meaning "Language *Pesantren*", presents a highly focused semiotic landscape oriented toward one central goal: the creation of an Arabic-speaking environment (bi'ah lughawiyah). Unlike the two previously discussed *pesantren*, which negotiate broader institutional identities, its linguistic landscape is dominated by signs that

directly support language pedagogy. The semiotic arrangement clearly prioritizes function over aesthetics, reflecting a pragmatic immersion-based approach to language learning.



At the level of firstness, the main banner displays a simple and utilitarian visual quality. Printed on standard white vinyl with green and black text, it appears slightly faded and creased, suggesting prolonged use and limited resources. There are no striking design elements or photographs, creating a straightforward impression that centres on delivering information rather than projecting a commercial image. Additional signs in the form of *mufradat* (vocabulary items) posted on the walls reinforce the educational atmosphere. The *mufradat* are printed on plain HVS paper without frames or decorative elements, underscoring the priority of pedagogical function. Together, these visual features establish the mood of an active and continuous learning environment. Room signage on office doors and dormitories further affirms the *pesantren*'s linguistic and cultural focus, ranging from very simple sheets of paper for *حجرة المدبرات* (room of female coordinators) to more formal printed stickers with frames for *الإدارة* (administration) and *ابن سيده* (Ibn Sīdah).

From the perspective of secondness, these signs operate as concrete physical markers that structure everyday life. The large banner mounted in an outdoor area indexes the presence of the *Asrama Akhwat* (female dormitory) and, through its worn condition, indexes time and exposure to the elements, indicating long-term use as a location marker. The vocabulary list posted directly on the canteen wall functions as an index of contextual learning practices—students encounter food-related vocabulary in an authentic dining setting. Similarly, the poster displaying the word *البوابة* (gate) affixed to a wall serves as an index of a systematic vocabulary learning programme. The physical presence of these signs throughout the *pesantren* compels students to interact constantly with Arabic. Signs such as *الإدارة* (office) and *ابن سيده* (Ibn Sīdah) stand as factual indicators that this is a *pesantren* whose daily routines and spatial organisation are deeply embedded in language-based practices.

At the level of thirdness, the texts and their spatial distribution construct a clear institutional ideology. The name *المعهد اللغوي* (Al-Mahad Al-Lughawi) functions as a central symbol that explicitly declares the institution's specialisation in language. Its affiliation with the "Ikatan Keluarga Alumni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung" (Association of Alumni of the Arabic Language Education Programme at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung) symbolises academic legitimacy and a strong link to a formal scholarly community and alumni network. The inclusion of logos and social media accounts points to efforts to build a sense of community and institutional identity in the digital age, reinforcing the message: "We are a *pesantren* specialising in Arabic, supported by an academic community, and committed to a clearly defined mission."

The practice of labelling everyday objects, such as **مَقْصَف** (canteen), and providing related vocabulary lists symbolises the comprehensive application of an immersion-based language learning method. Such practices represent internal norms aimed at fostering an environment in which Arabic is used continuously across daily activities. The “Al-Mufradat” poster that includes the Instagram handle (@ompb_24) indicates an attempt to integrate focused language instruction with contemporary tools for community engagement and communication. The underlying ideological message is clear: “Here, Arabic is not merely an academic subject but a living language. Every corner of this space is an opportunity for learning.” The dominant use of Arabic, even in functional spaces such as **حجرة المديرات** (female coordinators’ room), underscores a strong commitment to sustaining an Arabic linguistic environment. At the same time, the inclusion of an English translation (office) on the sign **الإدارة** (administration) signals pragmatic awareness of the need to communicate with external stakeholders. Naming a room after “Ibn Sidah”, a renowned lexicographer and Arabic linguist, functions as a powerful cultural symbol that aligns students’ identities with the intellectual legacy of Arabic studies.

In sum, the semiotic landscape of Al-Mahad Al-Lughawi consistently projects a specialised institutional identity centred on Arabic language immersion. Its core ideology is pedagogical: language immersion is treated as a way of life. The entire physical environment is turned into an active and continuous space for Arabic language learning. In contrast to *pesantren* that foreground grandeur or modernity in their visual design, Al-Mahad Al-Lughawi emphasises clarity of purpose, discipline, and depth of linguistic engagement. Its legitimacy is grounded less in visual sophistication than in clear academic affiliation and a strong reverence for the intellectual tradition of the Arabic language itself.

4.4 Case Study 4: Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Ihsan I-Mahad Al-Lughawi



The name Al-Ihsan means “excellence” or “spiritual beauty” in English and refers to the highest level of faith, in which a believer worships God as though seeing Him. This concept sets the tone for the *pesantren*’s semiotic landscape, which brings together traditional religiosity and a modern institutional identity.

At the level of firstness, the directional signboard along the road conveys a functional and slightly worn impression. Its classic green and white colour scheme suggests a long-established institution that has been present in the community for some time. In contrast, the mihrab decoration in the prayer hall radiates grandeur, sacredness, and high artistry. The combination of vibrant colours such as blue, purple, and gold, together with intricate calligraphic designs and geometric ornaments, creates an atmosphere of deep spirituality and classical beauty. Meanwhile, the *pesantren*’s logo has a distinctly modern, minimalist, and professional appearance. Its geometric design, with sharp lines and abstract forms, conveys a dynamic and contemporary image. The use of a single turquoise green tone

adds a sense of cleanliness, freshness, and corporate identity. Visually, the logo stands in striking contrast to the ornate traditional aesthetics of the mihrab.

From the standpoint of secondness, these elements function as concrete objects that organise the space and experience of the *pesantren*. The roadside sign exists as a physical marker that has long occupied public space; its slightly rusted condition indexes the passage of time and signals the *pesantren's* embeddedness in the local neighbourhood. The mihrab is a permanent and central architectural feature. Its solid structure and dominant placement within the prayer area index the centrality of worship and spirituality in daily life at Al-Ihsan. The presence of a digital clock beneath the mihrab indexes the adoption of modern technology to support traditional religious practices, such as keeping precise prayer times. The logo, reproduced on official documents and institutional materials, is a graphic design artefact produced through deliberate planning. Its repeated use is an index of a conscious branding strategy aimed at presenting Al-Ihsan as a recognisable institution in contemporary educational and social landscapes.

At the level of thirdness, the meanings of these signs come together in a layered ideological synthesis. The signboard bearing the inscription “Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Ihsan” alongside the Arabic calligraphy معهد الإحسان الإسلامي symbolises a dual identity as both a traditional Indonesian Islamic educational institution and part of a broader, translocal Islamic tradition. The mihrab functions as a universal symbol of Islamic worship. The Qur’anic verse inscribed above it (Surah Al-Baqarah: 238), which commands careful observance of prayer, reinforces the *pesantren's* ideological foundation in ritual piety and disciplined devotion. These elements affirm Al-Ihsan’s rootedness in classical religious practice.

The logo, by contrast, symbolises modernity and forward-looking institutional ambition. Its form, reminiscent of abstracted Kufic-style geometric calligraphy, reflects a radical reinterpretation of traditional Islamic visual aesthetics. It is no longer designed to be read literally, but to function as a bold and contemporary emblem. The flame crowning the design acts as a universal symbol of spirit, enlightenment, and knowledge. In combination, these features articulate a symbolic statement: “We are a traditional Islamic educational institution with deep spiritual and ritual foundations, and at the same time we are professional, innovative, and oriented toward the future.”

The analysis shows that the identity and ideology constructed by Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Ihsan can be described as a form of “Progressive Traditionalism”. The underlying message is that strong traditional roots do not hinder, but instead provide the foundation for dynamic modern expression. Al-Ihsan does not blend or dilute its identity; rather, it preserves a deeply traditional and authentic spiritual core, as reflected in the mihrab and Qur’anic inscription, while simultaneously adopting a modern corporate visual language for external branding and communication, as seen in the logo. This points to a deliberate strategy: reassuring its traditional base through familiar and sacred visual elements, while appealing to newer audiences, such as urban, middle class parents and prospective students, through a professional, clean, and progressive institutional image.

4.5 Synthesis: Overall Identity Patterns

The Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) located in the eastern region of Bandung consistently formulate identities and ideologies that combine deep Islamic traditions with selective adaptations to modernity and global dynamics. This pattern is visible in the

distribution of signage types across the four case studies: approximately 75% of the signs observed foreground traditional Islamic learning, especially through references to classical kitab (texts), religious terminology, and spiritually charged naming practices, while around 25% display stronger integration of modern visual and technological elements. These percentages are based on the relative proportion of traditional versus modern sign types identified in the data set from the four *pesantren*, rather than on a statistical survey of all institutions in the region.

The “traditional” tendency is reflected in the emphasis on spiritual values, the frequent use of Arabic in religious activities and signage, and the naming of facilities with Islamic connotations. In terms of Landry and Bourhis’s framework, many of these signs perform informational functions, regulating daily routines, indicating rooms, and directing movement, while at the same time carrying symbolic functions that affirm religious identity, institutional history, and attachment to the *pesantren* tradition. The more “modern” tendency, visible in roughly one quarter of the signage, appears in the use of contemporary fonts alongside classical calligraphy, the incorporation of digital technologies such as QR codes and social media icons, and the adoption of professional visual communication strategies. These modern signs also combine informational and symbolic roles: they provide practical information about programmes and facilities, while projecting images of professionalism, global engagement, and academic credibility.

The presence of multiple languages, Indonesian, Arabic, English, and Sundanese, across the *pesantren* reinforces this dual orientation. Indonesian maintains accessibility and national identity, Arabic anchors religious authority and classical scholarship, English signals modernity, globalization, and technological awareness, and Sundanese expresses commitment to local cultural roots. In Peircean terms, the linguistic landscapes of these *pesantren* move from firstness, initial impressions of sacredness, professionalism, or local warmth, through secondness, in which signs appear as concrete objects shaping everyday practice, to thirdness, where these repeated visual and verbal patterns crystallize into stable institutional ideologies, such as “Modern Muslim Intellectual” or “Global Mahasantri” identities. The physical environments of the *pesantren* are intentionally designed to support continuous learning, linking ethical formation with linguistic proficiency through both overt messages and more subtle visual cues.

Branding and communication aspects are also given significant attention. The linguistic landscape operates as a key medium through which each *pesantren* communicates its vision, mission, and values to students, parents, and the broader public. This can be seen in the use of professionally designed banners, modern style logos, and the strategic placement of visual signage in highly visible locations. At the same time, many *pesantren* continue to uphold and respect local cultural values, as reflected in the use of Sundanese language and regional cultural symbols alongside national and global codes. Taken together, these findings illustrate Landry and Bourhis’s dual functions of the linguistic landscape: informational signs regulate daily life and learning, while symbolic signs project ideological identity and institutional positioning. Peirce’s triadic model clarifies how *pesantren* signs move from immediate impressions to physical markers and ultimately to institutional ideologies that define what it means to be a santri in East Bandung today. In this way, the linguistic landscapes of East Bandung *pesantren* reveal how verbal and visual semiotics function as tools of identity construction, balancing tradition, modernity, and globalization.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that language use within the linguistic landscapes of *pesantren* in East Bandung serves both informative and symbolic purposes in constructing institutional identity and ideology. Across the four *pesantren* examined, linguistic signs ranging from nameplates and banners to room signage and graphic designs are strategically employed to articulate each institution's values and vision. Taken together, the four cases illustrate diverse strategies of identity construction, ranging from more traditional and immersion oriented environments to more explicitly modern and branding oriented institutions, yet all of them seek to balance Islamic tradition with contemporary educational and social demands.

The findings confirm Landry and Bourhis's distinction between the informational and symbolic functions of linguistic landscapes, showing that signs in *pesantren* simultaneously regulate daily routines and project ideological positions. They also demonstrate Peirce's triadic process of meaning making visual impressions of sacredness or professionalism (firstness) are anchored in concrete material signs such as banners, logos, and architectural features (secondness), and over time these signs crystallise into institutional ideologies and stable identity narratives (thirdness). In this way, the study shows how verbal and visual semiotics work together to shape what it means to be a santri in the context of East Bandung.

The contribution of this research lies in extending linguistic landscape and semiotic analysis to *pesantren* settings, a religious educational context that has received relatively limited attention in previous work. By examining how Arabic, Indonesian, English, and local languages are combined with specific visual designs, this study shows how religious and cultural identities are constructed, negotiated, and communicated through everyday signage in Islamic educational institutions. The analysis highlights that *pesantren* are not static traditional spaces, but actively engage with issues of modernity, globalization, and institutional branding through their verbal and visual choices.

At the same time, this study has certain limitations. The analysis is based on four *pesantren* in East Bandung and therefore does not capture the full diversity of *pesantren* across Indonesia or in other regions. Future research could expand the scope to include a larger number of institutions, conduct comparative studies across regions or countries, and integrate perspectives from students, teachers, and community members to deepen understanding of how these signs are interpreted in practice. Such work would further refine our understanding of the role of linguistic landscapes in religious education.

Ultimately, the linguistic landscapes of *pesantren* in East Bandung reveal how semiotics functions as a powerful instrument of identity, ideology, and cultural negotiation in contemporary Islamic education.

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