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Social Identity on Public Landscapes: Language Mixing and Cultural Expressions of the Graffiti in an Indonesian Sport Center

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Abstract: This study explores the linguistic and cultural dynamics of graffiti in the public space of Gelora Satria Stadium (GOR Satria Purwokerto), Indonesia, focusing on language mixing as a means of social identity expression. Data were collected through direct onsite photographic documentation of graffiti and scribbles in the area, adhering to established linguistic landscape methodologies that prioritize authentic visual data collection. A qualitative analysis was conducted to examine textual and visual elements, categorizing instances of language use, mixing patterns, and identity indicators. Drawing on Landry and Bourhis's (1997) theoretical framework, which differentiates the symbolic and informational functions of language in public spaces, this study interprets graffiti as a complex linguistic landscape where language choices reflect sociocultural meanings and community belonging. The findings reveal a rich interplay of local Indonesian, regional slang, and global English influences within the graffiti, demonstrating a dual identity that bridges local cultural roots and global popular culture. Notably, local affiliations are expressed through terms like "Viking Independent Crebond" and "PWG," signaling community pride and regional belonging. Simultaneously, references to global cultural icons such as "X-Man" and "Anti-Hero" illustrate the writers' engagement with wider cultural narratives. This blending of languages and cultural references underscores graffiti's symbolic function as a medium for asserting both individual and collective identities in a contested public space. Ultimately, this research highlights graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium as an active site of cultural expression and identity negotiation, emphasizing the role of linguistic landscapes in urban settings as platforms where language transcends communication to become a tool for social meaning-making and resistance.

Keywords: *landscapes; graffiti; social identity; sport fans; cultures*

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Introduction

The study of linguistic landscapes (LL) is a growing field within sociolinguistics, examining the written language in public spaces, such as signs, graffiti, advertisements, and other forms of textual expression visible in everyday life. This type of analysis reveals insights into the social, political, and cultural identity of the people who create and interact with these texts. Gorter (2006) and other scholars

have pointed out that LL can reveal the “symbolic construction of public spaces,” as well as the power dynamics and language hierarchies present in a community.

Linguistic landscape studies also highlight how language use in public space can reflect the multilingual and multicultural realities of an area. For instance, Landry and Bourhis (1997) discuss how language visibility in public spaces serves two primary functions: informational and symbolic. The informational function refers to conveying specific details or instructions, while the symbolic function relates to reflecting social identity and belonging. Graffiti offers a clear example of the symbolic function, as it often reflects the personal or collective identities of the people who write it.

Public spaces like GOR Satria Purwokerto serve as canvases for individuals to express their identities, often through graffiti and scribbles, which convey messages beyond the words themselves. Graffiti is especially interesting because it is typically informal, personal, and often anonymous. In some cases, graffiti artists mix languages, which can reflect a unique aspect of identity or even social inclusion and exclusion. Through these mixed-language messages, people show a fusion of cultures, beliefs, and values, which contributes to a richer linguistic landscape.

Graffiti is often seen as an art form and a communication tool that reflects the social dynamics, identities, and linguistic diversity of a community. As a form of “street art,” graffiti operates beyond conventional language boundaries, embedding symbols, slang, and mixed languages to convey messages that can range from social commentary to personal expression. Located in Purwokerto, Gelora Satria Stadium, particularly its East Tribune walls, features graffiti that provides insight into the local and multilingual community that interacts within this public space. With a seating capacity of around 15,000 people, Gelora Satria Stadium serves as both a sports venue and a public gathering place, amplifying its significance as a site for the linguistic landscape (LL) in Purwokerto.

In recent years, researchers have focused on graffiti to understand language mixing—a phenomenon where speakers combine different languages within a single message or sentence. In countries with rich linguistic diversity, such as Indonesia, graffiti often appears in a mix of local and global languages, suggesting that writers are negotiating their local identities with broader cultural influences. This phenomenon is of particular interest in Indonesian contexts, as the blending of languages in public graffiti may reflect a local-global dynamic where traditional language meets global culture.

This study will explore the graffiti and scribbles found on the wall of the East Tribune at GOR Satria Purwokerto, a public sports venue where community members from various backgrounds come together. Given Indonesia’s linguistic diversity and the role of public spaces in expressing identity, the analysis of graffiti here can reveal how people use language to make personal and collective statements, thereby contributing to the linguistic landscape.

Previous studies have shown that graffiti often serves multiple purposes. It can be a medium of protest, a form of personal or communal expression, or a symbol of resistance against dominant societal norms (Shobe, 2020; Hossain, 2022). For instance, Gabrilin and Haniza (2019) found that graffiti in Jakarta serves as a means of identity assertion and ideological expression for young people, who use public spaces to voice their views and connect with like-minded individuals. Similarly, Budyastomo (2018) observed that graffiti in Salatiga acts as both an artistic expression and a social commentary, highlighting local issues and expressing shared cultural values.

Other research focusing specifically on graffiti, such as by Hanauer (2011), explores how language and identity intersect in public art. Hanauer's findings highlight that graffiti often combines personal expression with social commentary, making it an ideal lens for studying identity in linguistic landscapes. These studies provide a basis for understanding how language mixing and identity are visually represented in public spaces, particularly in informal forms like graffiti. By examining graffiti and scribble in Gelora Satria Purwokerto, focusing on East Tribune's wall, this study contributes to an understanding of how linguistic landscapes reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural influences in Purwokerto.

Objective and Framework

The objective of this study is to analyze the language mixing and identity expression found in graffiti at the East Tribune of GOR Satria Purwokerto, using Landry and Bourhis' (1997) framework. This framework is particularly suited for studying linguistic landscapes because it provides a way to analyze both the informational and symbolic functions of language in public spaces. By focusing on the symbolic function, this study aims to understand how language mixing in graffiti can reflect the identities of the individuals who created it.

Landry and Bourhis' theory offers a foundational approach to LL, as it emphasizes the idea that language choices in public spaces are not merely informational but also symbolic of identity and community. Their framework helps analyze how language visibility contributes to the construction of social identities and power dynamics within a community. For example, graffiti that mixes local and foreign languages may reflect a sense of belonging to both a local and a global community.

In this analysis, language mixing will be considered a marker of the complex identities present in Indonesian society. This approach will not only shed light on how people use language to negotiate identity but also reveal the social and cultural significance of language mixing in public spaces. Through this framework, the study will highlight how graffiti at GOR Satria Purwokerto embodies both personal and collective expressions of identity.

Method

To explore language mixing and identity expression through graffiti and scribbles, this study collected data directly from the East Tribune of GOR Satria Purwokerto. The data collection involved physically visiting the site to capture photographic images of the graffiti and other textual elements on the walls. Such an approach aligns with standard practices in linguistic landscape research, where direct observation and visual data collection are essential for analyzing the language used in public spaces (Backhaus, 2007). Capturing these images in situ allows for a contextualized analysis, offering insights into the social meanings conveyed by the graffiti in their authentic environment.

A qualitative methodology was applied to analyze the data, focusing on the textual and visual elements of graffiti. Qualitative methods are particularly effective for linguistic landscape studies, as they enable in-depth interpretation of language use and identity markers present in public texts (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009). By examining the language varieties and mixing patterns in the graffiti, the analysis aimed to understand the sociocultural messages and identity expressions embedded in these writings. This approach goes beyond simply identifying languages to interpret the meanings and intentions behind language choices, especially where multiple languages are present.

Data analysis involved categorizing each graffiti instance based on language type, mixing patterns, and possible identity indicators. Hult (2009) emphasizes that qualitative categorization in LL studies helps uncover the symbolic functions of language in public texts. By grouping graffiti according to language and identity markers, the study aimed to reveal patterns that reflect the authors' cultural identities and affiliations. The qualitative coding of language mixing instances, combined with observations on the placement and prominence of different languages, allowed for a nuanced understanding of how authors use language to express identity.

Furthermore, the analysis relied on Landry and Bourhis's (1997) theoretical framework, which categorizes linguistic landscapes according to their symbolic and informational functions. This framework was instrumental in interpreting the identity expressions within the graffiti, as it considers language visibility in public spaces to be a reflection of social identity and community belonging. By applying this framework to the collected data, the study sought to connect the observed language mixing with broader social and cultural dynamics within the community around GOR Satria Purwokerto.

Data Analysis

According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), linguistic landscapes can serve both informational and symbolic functions. In this context, the graffiti primarily serves a symbolic function, as it reflects the identities of the individuals who contributed to it. The language mixing, seen through the use of both Indonesian and English names and phrases, suggests a blending of local and global identities. This aligns with Landry and Bourhis' view that language in public spaces often serves to signal group identity and belonging.

In this study, data analysis is conducted using Landry and Bourhis's Linguistic Landscape (LL) theory to understand how language use in graffiti reflects the identities and social affiliations of its writers. The graffiti found on the walls of Gelora Satria Stadium, particularly in the tribune area, offers insights into the diversity of language and identity expressed by individuals or groups within this public space. Each piece of text, whether a name, phrase, or symbol, signifies a form of territorial claim over public space and serves as a means to express both local cultural ties and a connection to global identity.

The analysis of these various graffiti images will focus on language variety and identity markers, examining how language choices, styles, and compositions function as a medium for communicating identity and presence in a public setting. The use of names, English and Indonesian phrases, and certain symbols reflects a dynamic interaction between individual and group identities within the linguistic landscape of the stadium area. Each graffiti image that follows is expected to reveal characteristics of the community utilizing this stadium space as a medium for self-expression, both individually and collectively.



Image 1

Image 2

The graffiti in this image from Gelora Satria Stadium features a mixture of names and group identifiers, such as "Tiffany," "Ayu," "Benny," "Juan," and the phrase "Brothers Club." This diversity in names, combining traditional Indonesian and Western-influenced names, indicates a blend of local and global identities among the graffiti writers, likely reflecting the youth culture in this area. The term "Brothers Club" in English suggests a sense of group identity and unity, showing how language choice can signify affiliation with a modern, globally connected identity. Additionally, the stylized and prominent text of "Tomie" hints at individual expression within this shared space, as each writer marks their presence and establishes their identity in the public sphere. Following Landry and Bourhis's theory, this graffiti serves a symbolic function, transforming the stadium wall into a canvas that captures both personal and collective identities within the local linguistic landscape.

The graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium illustrates a blend of language varieties and identity expressions, with a mix of local and Western-influenced names such as "Indri," "Siskank," and phrases like "Hidup Miras" and "Lugas Kin." This diversity in names and language, including some English terms, reflects both local cultural ties and globalized influences, commonly seen in urban youth spaces. By marking their names and group identifiers, individuals claim a presence in this shared space, indicating personal or group affiliation while blending informal language and symbolic statements. This aligns with Landry and Bourhis's framework, where the linguistic landscape serves a symbolic function, highlighting both individual identities and a collective sense of belonging among the graffiti writers.



Image 3

Image 4

In this graffiti image from Gelora Satria Stadium, prominent words include "Bloods," "Jail," and the Indonesian slang acronym "Mokondo" (which stands for "modal kon*** doang," a vulgar expression roughly translating to "only relying on guts" or "barely equipped"). This language mix of English and Indonesian slang reflects a blend of global influences (such as "Bloods," possibly inspired by Western gang culture) and local expressions. The term "Jail" in English, alongside the rebellious tone of "Mokondo," indicates a possible association with defiance or a counter-culture identity often found in graffiti culture. The presence of "Bloods" suggests an attempt to emulate international or gang-related symbols, although it may simply be used here to represent toughness or unity within a local group, rather than a direct affiliation. The use of "Mokondo" adds a distinctly Indonesian layer, connecting the graffiti to local slang and youthful, informal language that carries a confrontational tone. This combination of languages and cultural references highlights the writers' dual influences from both local and global sources.

This graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium features the phrases "Dork" and "PeeWeeTee," with "Dork" likely referring to the term for an unconventional or quirky personality, and "PeeWeeTee" standing as an abbreviation for "PWT" or "Purwokerto." This combination reflects a playful, self-aware identity rooted in local pride, where the writers embrace a quirky or "dorky" label in association with their hometown,

Purwokerto. The use of English, coupled with local references, suggests an identity that balances both local belonging and a global, urban cultural influence. According to Landry and Bourhis's Linguistic Landscape theory, this graffiti operates symbolically, where language and style become tools for expressing both individuality and community pride. The wall thus serves as a public space where youth can assert a unique, locally grounded identity within the broader cultural framework of Gelora Satria Stadium.



Image 5

Image 6

This graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium features the terms "X-Man" and "Persibas," highlighting a mix of global and local cultural references. "X-Man" likely alludes to the popular Western superhero, symbolizing individuality, strength, or perhaps rebellion, which resonates with the graffiti's urban, informal setting. In contrast, "Persibas" is a reference to the local football club in Banyumas, Indonesia, signifying regional pride and community identity. This blend of Western pop culture with a strong local affiliation reflects the writers' dual influences, merging global and local identities. According to Landry and Bourhis's Linguistic Landscape theory, this graffiti serves a symbolic function, where language choices convey both personal identity and community belonging, using the stadium wall as a canvas for self-expression that celebrates both local pride and a broader cultural influence.

This graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium prominently features phrases like "Ladies VIKERS," "Dunia Akhirat," and "10.09.11," blending local language, group identity, and personal expressions. "Ladies VIKERS" suggests a group affiliation, possibly an all-female or female-focused community or club, while "Dunia Akhirat" (translated as "World and Afterlife" in Indonesian) reflects a deeper cultural or philosophical element, hinting at a connection to spiritual or moral values. The date "10.09.11" could signify a meaningful event or commemoration for the writers, adding a personal or historical layer to the graffiti. The mixture of English and Indonesian signifies a dual identity among the writers, balancing local cultural expressions with global influences.



Image 7

Image 8

This graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium prominently features "Viking Independent Crebond" and "X-Men," combining elements of local identity with global cultural references. "Viking Independent

Crebond" suggests affiliation with a local supporter group for Viking fans, possibly linked to the Persib football club, with "Crebond" likely representing a local or group-specific term that further roots the identity in a community context. The inclusion of "X-Men," a reference to the popular Western superhero group, brings an additional layer, symbolizing strength, uniqueness, or solidarity in a way that resonates with both local and global cultural touchpoints. This blend of English and Indonesian group markers reflects a hybrid identity, where the writers express allegiance to local groups while embracing elements of global pop culture.

This image includes phrases like "Bombastis," "Viking Irak," and "Anti-Hero," blending Indonesian language, local affiliations, and elements of rebellious identity. "Bombastis," an Indonesian word meaning "bombastic" or exaggerated, suggests an emphasis on bold expression. "Viking Irak" likely refers to a sub-group or branch of the Viking supporters associated with the Persib Bandung football team, with "Irak" possibly used symbolically to signify resilience or toughness, aligning with a fierce fan identity. The term "Anti-Hero" in English introduces a counter-cultural element, expressing nonconformity or a rejection of traditional heroism, which resonates with the rebellious ethos often found in graffiti culture.



Image 9

Image 10

This graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium displays the phrases "Love is Fuck," "Cipustra," "Kocin," and "Tatjana," blending English with unique local or personal identifiers. The phrase "Love is Fuck" suggests a raw or possibly disillusioned perspective on love, using provocative language to express strong emotions, which is common in graffiti as a form of rebellion or personal expression. "Cipustra," "Kocin," and "Tatjana" appear to be names or nicknames, likely representing individuals or close friends, adding a personal dimension to the graffiti. The use of English alongside locally recognizable names reflects a hybrid identity, where the writers incorporate both global cultural expressions and intimate connections to their community.

This graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium includes phrases like "JKT 48," "I Soak," and "PWG tai!!!" blending references to popular culture, informal expressions, and local slang. "JKT 48" likely references the popular Indonesian idol group, which may signify admiration or connection to contemporary Indonesian pop culture. The phrase "I Soak" could indicate an English-influenced expression of fatigue or disinterest. "PWG tai!!!" incorporates local slang with "PWG" likely referring to Purwokerto (a local abbreviation), and "tai" is a vulgar Indonesian term, adding a rebellious, confrontational tone. This combination of language varieties—English, Indonesian, and slang—demonstrates a layered identity that connects both to local culture and global influences, common in youth expressions within public spaces.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the graffiti on the walls of Gelora Satria Stadium, particularly in the East Tribune, serves as a vibrant linguistic landscape that reflects the complex identities, affiliations, and cultural dynamics of its writers. Through the blending of local Indonesian language, slang, and global influences like English and popular culture references, the graffiti reveals a dual identity that connects both to local roots and broader global trends. Using Landry and Bourhis's (1997) framework, this research highlights how the symbolic function of language in graffiti conveys individual expression and group identity, allowing the writers to claim a public space as a canvas for self-expression.

The presence of local terms and regional affiliations, such as "Viking Independent Crebond" or "PWG," illustrates a strong sense of community pride, while the use of English terms like "X-Man" or "Anti-Hero" reflects the writers' connection to global pop culture. The mixing of languages and symbolic expressions within this graffiti supports the notion that linguistic landscapes are not merely informational but are a means of constructing identity and belonging within a public space. Ultimately, the graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium exemplifies how public spaces can be transformed into meaningful sites of cultural expression, where language becomes a tool for asserting both personal and collective identities. This study contributes to the broader understanding of linguistic landscapes by illustrating how language choices in public art like graffiti can embody the sociocultural dynamics of a community, blending global influences with local traditions.

In light of these findings, this study underscores the importance of examining linguistic landscapes like graffiti as a window into the diverse, layered identities within urban spaces. The analysis of language mixing and cultural references in graffiti at Gelora Satria Stadium provides valuable insights into how individuals navigate and negotiate their sense of belonging in a community that is both locally rooted and globally influenced. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring similar graffiti sites across different regions or by examining how different demographic groups use public language to express identity in various urban settings. By viewing public spaces as canvases for linguistic and cultural expression, we gain a deeper understanding of how language functions not only as a tool for communication but as a powerful medium for asserting identity, belonging, and resistance. This study thus contributes to the growing field of linguistic landscape research, offering a nuanced perspective on the sociocultural significance of language choices in public art forms like graffiti.

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