



LINGUISTIC FORMS AND PATTERNS ON STORE SIGNBOARDS IN THE TUPAREV AREA, KARAWANG: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic forms and language patterns on 30 store signboards in the Tuparev commercial corridor, Karawang, West Java, using a descriptive qualitative method within a sociolinguistic framework. Data were collected through field photography and verbatim transcription. The analysis reveals seven language patterns: pure Indonesian (50.0%), Indonesian-English code-mixing (26.7%), Indonesian with numerals (6.7%), Indonesian-Chinese code-mixing (6.7%), Indonesian-Arabic code-mixing (3.3%), pure English (3.3%), and Indonesian with abbreviations (3.3%). Seven linguistic form categories were identified, with simple noun phrases (40.0%) and modificative noun phrases (23.3%) as the most prevalent. Code-mixing with English is the dominant multilingual strategy, driven by prestige, commercial modernization, and identity construction. The findings confirm Tuparev as a dynamic multilingual commercial landscape reflecting Karawang's sociolinguistic diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Language does not exist solely in spoken conversation or formal writing; it permeates the visible, material landscape of cities and commercial districts. Store signboards are among the most immediate and pervasive forms of public text, offering a window into the linguistic choices and sociocultural values of a community. As a form of *linguistic landscape*—a concept introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) to describe the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory—store signboards serve a dual function: they inform potential customers about the nature of a business, and they symbolically project the owner's identity, cultural orientation, and social aspirations (Backhaus, 2007).

The Tuparev corridor in Karawang, West Java, constitutes a densely populated commercial zone that has expanded alongside Karawang's growth as a major industrial and manufacturing hub. The area attracts a heterogeneous population of residents, workers, and entrepreneurs from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This demographic complexity generates a rich and layered linguistic ecology in public space, where Indonesian, English, Arabic, Chinese, and local scripts coexist on signboards in close proximity—sometimes even on a single sign. Such multilingual signage warrants systematic sociolinguistic analysis.

Despite the growing body of research on linguistic landscape in Indonesian urban contexts (Riani, 2015; Wibowo, 2019; Suyanto, 2020), empirical studies focusing on secondary cities and industrial corridors such as Karawang remain scarce. The majority of Indonesian linguistic landscape studies concentrate on metropolitan centers or heritage tourism zones, leaving the language ecology of industrial periphery cities

largely undocumented. This study addresses that gap by systematically examining 30 store signboards along Jalan Tuparev.

This study is guided by two research questions: (1) What linguistic forms are employed on store signboards in the Tuparev area? (2) What language patterns—particularly regarding the use of Indonesian, English, Arabic, and Chinese, and the phenomenon of code-mixing—characterize these signboards? The objective is to produce a systematic sociolinguistic description of these forms and patterns, contributing to the empirical database of linguistic landscape research in Indonesian commercial settings.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method within a sociolinguistic framework. The data corpus comprises 30 store signboards systematically documented through field photography along Jalan Tuparev, Karawang Timur. Inclusion criteria: (a) displays verbal text (not merely a logo); (b) mounted on the exterior of an active commercial premise; (c) text is legible and the language(s) identifiable. Each signboard was transcribed verbatim and classified along two dimensions: *linguistic form* (following Chaer, 2012, and Ramlan, 2009) and *language pattern* (following Suwito, 1985, and Hoffman, 1991). Analysis proceeded through data reduction, classification, and sociolinguistic interpretation. Trustworthiness was ensured via source triangulation (photography cross-referenced with field notes) and theoretical triangulation (multiple frameworks applied to the same data).

RESULTS

1. Data Inventory

Table 1 presents the complete inventory of 30 store signboards, classified by language(s) used, linguistic form, and language pattern.

Table 1. Complete Inventory of Store Signboards, Tuparev Area
(ID = Indonesian; EN = English; ZH = Chinese; NP = Noun Phrase)

No.	Store Signboard Name	Lang.	Linguistic Form	Language Pattern
1.	Sehati Toys	ID+EN	Compound Word	Code-mixing (ID-EN)
2.	Toko Obat Herbal Islam “Al-Madinah”	ID+AR	NP + Quote-mark Name	Code-mixing (ID-AR)
3.	Toko Obat Eng Siu Tong	ID+ZH	Simple NP	Code-mixing (ID-ZH)
4.	Mulia Abadi Baby Shop and Toys	ID + EN	Modificative NP	Code-mixing (ID-EN)
5.	Toko Nasional Elektronik	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
6.	Delta Teknik	ID + EN	Compound Word	Code-mixing (ID-EN)
7.	Toko Bintang Diesel Karawang	ID + EN	Modificative NP	Code-mixing (ID-EN)
8.	Toko Plastik Tiga Jaya	ID	Compound NP	Pure Indonesian
9.	Toko Sepeda Sukses Tuparev	ID	Modificative NP	Pure Indonesian
10.	Asia Optical	EN	Simple NP	Pure English
11.	Toko Spareparts Bayi Electronics	ID + EN	Modificative NP	Code-mixing (ID-EN)
12.	Toko Buku Agung	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
13.	Toko Subang Karawang	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
14.	Toko Donal	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
15.	Toko Mas "Menara"	ID	NP + Quote-mark Name	Pure Indonesian
16.	Toko Karpet ABC	ID	NP + Abbreviation	ID + Abbreviation

17.	Toko Bangunan Murah Jaya Raya	ID	Modificative NP	Pure Indonesian
18.	Toko Nusantara Karawang	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
19.	Toko Cahaya Furniture	ID + EN	Simple NP	Code-mixing (ID– EN)
20.	Aneka Plastik	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
21.	Toko Bandung Raya	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
22.	Toko Sumber Sinar	ID	Compound NP	Pure Indonesian
23.	Toko Sin Yu	ID + ZH	Simple NP	Code-mixing (ID– ZH)
24.	Cahaya Abadi Elektronik	ID + EN	Compound NP	Code-mixing (ID– EN)
25.	Toko Perhiasan Perak Istana	ID	Modificative NP	Pure Indonesian
26.	Toko Susu 98	ID	NP + Numeral	ID + Numeral
27.	Boboy Dunia Mainan Anak-Anak	ID	Modificative NP	Pure Indonesian
28.	Toko Utama Jaya	ID	Simple NP	Pure Indonesian
29.	Toko Un Elektronik	ID + EN	Simple NP	Code-mixing (ID– EN)
30.	Toko Mebel 33	ID	NP + Numeral	ID + Numeral

2. Linguistic Forms

Seven distinct linguistic form categories were identified across the 30 signboards.

Table 2. Distribution of Linguistic Form

No.	Linguistic Form	n	%
1.	Simple Noun Phrase (NP)	12	40.0%
2.	Modificative NP	7	23.3%
3.	Compound NP	3	10.0%
4.	NP + Quote-mark Name	2	6.7%
5.	NP + Numeral	2	6.7%
6.	Compound Word	2	6.7%
7.	NP + Abbreviation	1	3.3%
Total		30	100%

Simple noun phrases (NP) constitute the most frequent form (40.0%, 12 signboards), comprising a generic classifier—most commonly *toko* (store), which appears in 22 of 30 signboards (73.3%)—followed by a head noun or proper name (e.g., *Toko Buku Agung*, *Asia Optical*, *Aneka Plastik*). This form's dominance reflects the cognitive economy of commercial naming: maximum referential clarity in minimum space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Modificative noun phrases (23.3%, 7 signboards) embed adjectival or prepositional modifiers that specify product range or market segment (e.g., *Mulia Abadi Baby Shop and Toys*, *Toko Bangunan Murah Jaya Raya*, *Bobot Dunia Mainan Anak-Anak*). These longer constructions serve an elaborate informational function, particularly strategic in a dense corridor where multiple stores sell similar goods.

Compound noun phrases (10.0%, 3 signboards) juxtapose two noun stems to form a new nominal unit (e.g., *Toko Sumber Sinar*, *Cahaya Abadi Elektronik*). They frequently employ aspirational lexemes—*cahaya* (light), *sumber* (source)—connoting abundance and permanence. The remaining four categories—quote-mark names, numeral-embedded NPs, compound words, and abbreviation NPs—each account for 3.3–6.7% and reflect specialized branding strategies, discussed further below.

3. Language Patterns

Table 3 summarizes the distribution of language patterns across the 30 signboards.

Table 3. Distribution of Language Patterns

No.	Linguistic Pattern	n	%
1.	Pure Indonesian	15	50.0%
2.	Code-mixing (ID–EN)	8	26.7%
3.	ID + Numeral	2	6.7%
4.	Code-mixing (ID–ZH)	2	6.7%
5.	Code-mixing (ID–AR)	1	3.3%
6.	Pure English	1	3.3%
7.	ID + Abbreviation	1	3.3%
Total		30	100%

Pure Indonesian (50.0%, 15 signboards) is the single largest category, encompassing signboards such as *Toko Nasional Elektronik*, *Toko Plastik Tiga Jaya*, and *Bobot Dunia Mainan Anak-Anak*. The lexical choices are predominantly functional and referential—naming the product category alongside an identity marker—consistent with a market strategy prioritizing communicative accessibility for the broadest local consumer base (Wibowo, 2019).

Indonesian-English code-mixing (26.7%, 8 signboards) is the most productive multilingual pattern. A consistent structural logic governs these signboards: the Indonesian generic classifier or proper name occupies the left position, while the English product-category term or modifier occupies the attributive position (e.g., *Sehati Toys*, *Delta Teknik*, *Toko Cahaya Furniture*, *Cahaya Abadi Elektronik*). The English lexemes—*toys*, *baby shop*, *spareparts*, *electronics*, *furniture*, *diesel*—are product-category terms conventionalized in Indonesian commercial discourse through sustained contact with global retail vocabulary. Their use leverages the symbolic capital of English as an emblem of modernity and quality (Piller, 2003) without presupposing English proficiency in the consumer.

Indonesian-Chinese code-mixing (6.7%, 2 signboards): *Toko Obat Eng Siu Tong* and *Toko Sin Yu* retain Chinese (likely Hokkien) personal or business names as the proper-name element, while the Indonesian classifier *toko* ensures accessibility to non-Chinese-speaking customers. This pattern is characteristic of Sino-Indonesian retail enterprises and reflects the retention of ethnic identity and community trust (Errington, 1998).

Indonesian-Arabic code-mixing (3.3%, 1 signboard): *Toko Obat Herbal Islam "Al-Madinah"* uses the Arabic toponym *Al-Madinah* as a religious brand name, co-occurring with the terms *herbal* and *Islam* to position the business within the Islamic wellness retail sector. Arabic lexemes build trust with Muslim consumers by indexing halal authenticity (Suyanto, 2020).

Pure English (3.3%, 1 signboard): *Asia Optical* employs a [proper name + product category] construction entirely in English, consistent with Backhaus's (2007) observation that professional services (medical, optical) are more likely to use English-only signage as a marker of scientific credibility.

Indonesian with numerals (6.7%, 2 signboards) and abbreviations (3.3%, 1 signboard) represent specialized sub-strategies. *Toko Susu 98* and *Toko Mebel 33* embed figures that likely encode founding years or street numbers, enhancing brand memorability. *Toko Karpet ABC* uses an opaque alphabetic initialism as a brand identifier—highlighting the importance of distinguishing script from language in linguistic landscape analysis (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006).

DISCUSSION

1. The Dominance of Indonesian as the Communicative Ground

The finding that 50.0% of signboards employ pure Indonesian—with a further 46.7% using Indonesian as the matrix language in code-mixed constructions—establishes Indonesian as the *communicative ground* of the Tuparev commercial landscape. This result aligns with Landry and Bourhis's (1997) informational function of the linguistic landscape: regardless of which prestige codes are layered on top, the Indonesian generic classifier *toko* (present in 73.3% of all signboards) ensures that every passerby can identify the establishment as a retail store. This is not a passive default but an active strategy of communicative accessibility—the

deliberate preservation of the mother tongue as a legibility anchor in a multilingual consumer environment. Even when the expressive layer (English, Arabic, Chinese) targets a specific community or projects a desired image, the referential layer (Indonesian) remains universally decipherable.

Notably, pure-Indonesian signboards in this dataset are predominantly found in sectors dealing in everyday goods: building materials (*Toko Bangunan Murah Jaya Raya*), plastic goods (*Toko Plastik Tiga Jaya, Aneka Plastik*), bicycles (*Toko Sepeda Sukses Tuparev*), and children's toys (*Bobot Dunia Mainan Anak-Anak*). This sector distribution suggests that proximity to working-class and lower-middle-class consumer segments correlates with a preference for unmarked, domestically-coded signage—consistent with Riani's (2015) finding that high-prestige commercial zones show greater English penetration than traditional market areas.

2. English Code-Mixing as a Marker of Commercial Modernity

Indonesian-English code-mixing (26.7%, 8 signboards) is the most productive multilingual strategy in the dataset, and its structural consistency is analytically significant. In every instance, the English element occupies the right-peripheral position—functioning syntactically as the head or post-head modifier of the noun phrase: *Sehati Toys, Mulia Abadi Baby Shop and Toys, Delta Teknik, Toko Spareparts Bayi Electronics, Toko Cahaya Furniture, Cahaya Abadi Elektronik*. This positional regularity reflects Hoffman's (1991) intra-sentential mixing pattern and follows a consistent cognitive template: [Indonesian identity anchor] + [English product/category marker].

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, this structural template enacts what Piller (2003) calls the language-of-modernity effect: the English element does not merely denote a product category but *connotes* a cluster of values—international quality, technological sophistication, and upward commercial aspiration—indexically associated with English in post-colonial Indonesian commercial culture. Crucially, this symbolic work is performed without requiring English proficiency from either the business owner or the consumer: terms such as *toys, electronics, furniture, and spareparts* have been sufficiently naturalized into Indonesian commercial vocabulary to be legible to a non-English-speaking public. This decoupling of symbolic from communicative function is a defining feature of English use in non-Anglophone commercial signage (Backhaus, 2007; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006).

The sectors represented by English code-mixed signboards—electronics, automotive parts, furniture, toys—are precisely those most exposed to globalized supply chains, branded merchandise, and international retail conventions. The convergence of sector affiliation and language choice suggests that English code-mixing in Tuparev signboards is partly a genre convention of certain commercial domains rather than purely an individual stylistic choice.

3. Ethnic and Religious Identity in Multilingual Signage

The three signboards incorporating Arabic or Chinese elements—*Toko Obat Herbal Islam "Al-Madinah", Toko Obat Eng Siu Tong, and Toko Sin Yu*—represent a qualitatively distinct sociolinguistic phenomenon from prestige-driven English code-mixing. Here, the non-Indonesian element performs *ethnocultural identity*, signaling the owner's communal affiliation and targeting a specific trust community within the broader consumer public.

For the Arabic-embedded signboard, Suyanto (2020) identifies this as a strategy within Indonesia's expanding Islamic commercial economy (*ekonomi syariah*): the Arabic proper name *Al-Madinah* does not merely label a business but certifies its religious orientation, constructing an implicit halal guarantee at the level of onomastics. The co-occurrence of *herbal* and *Islam* on the same signboard amplifies this effect, positioning the store at the intersection of Islamic wellness discourse and traditional medicine—identity markers with strong resonance in Karawang's predominantly Muslim population.

For Chinese-embedded signboards, Errington (1998) frames the retention of Chinese business names in Indonesian commercial contexts as ethnolinguistic maintenance: the Chinese proper name (*Eng Siu Tong, Sin Yu*) indexes family lineage and intra-community reputation, while the Indonesian classifier *toko* ensures legibility to the general public. This bilingual architecture—Chinese core, Indonesian frame—mirrors the

social position of many Sino-Indonesian entrepreneurs: culturally embedded in their ethnic community while commercially integrated into the broader Indonesian marketplace.

4. The Semiotic Function of Numerals, Abbreviations, and Quote Marks

Three minor but analytically notable formal features appear in the dataset: embedded numerals (*Toko Susu 98*, *Toko Mebel 33*), alphabetic abbreviation (*Toko Karpét ABC*), and internal quote marks (*Toko Mas "Menara"*, *Toko Obat Herbal Islam "Al-Madinah"*). These features perform distinct semiotic functions within the signboard's naming economy.

Embedded numerals operate as temporal or spatial anchors: the numeral 98 in *Toko Susu 98* most plausibly encodes the year of establishment (1998), converting historical continuity into a brand asset and implicitly claiming longevity and trustworthiness. The alphabetic abbreviation ABC in *Toko Karpét ABC* functions as an opaque brand identifier; the familiar A-B-C sequence carries connotations of completeness that may be commercially advantageous. Following Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), it is important to distinguish script from language: ABC here is better classified as an Indonesian-language sign that uses Latin letters as a brand device, not as an English-language sign. Internal quote marks in *Toko Mas "Menara"* and *Toko Obat Herbal Islam "Al-Madinah"* perform typographic foregrounding: by visually isolating the emblematic name from the generic classifier, the quotation marks signal a registered or well-known sub-brand identity, enriching the signboard's semiotic density beyond what words or languages alone convey.

5. Tuparev in Comparative Perspective

Situating these findings within the broader Indonesian linguistic landscape literature reveals both commonalities and distinctive features. The dominance of Indonesian (50.0% pure) in Tuparev contrasts with Riani's (2015) Malioboro study, where code-mixed and English-dominant signboards exceeded Indonesian-only ones—attributable to Malioboro's status as a heritage tourism zone where English also serves a tourist-oriented informational function. Wibowo's (2019) near-total English dominance in Summarecon Bekasi reflects that development's deliberate branding as an upper-middle-class enclave. Tuparev's more balanced distribution positions it as a *transitional* commercial zone: more linguistically diverse than a traditional local market, but less globally oriented than an elite commercial district. The presence of three distinct non-Indonesian language families (English, Arabic, Chinese) in a single 30-signboard corpus—admittedly a small sample—is indicative of the sociolinguistic complexity generated by Karawang's industrial migration patterns, where diverse ethnic and linguistic communities share a compressed commercial corridor. This compressed multilingualism merits longitudinal documentation as the city continues to grow.

CONCLUSION

This study has systematically described the linguistic forms and language patterns on 30 store signboards in the Tuparev commercial corridor, Karawang. Simple noun phrases (40.0%) and modificative noun phrases (23.3%) dominate the formal landscape, with the classifier *toko* functioning as the primary retail anchor (73.3% of signboards). Pure Indonesian (50.0%) constitutes the predominant language pattern, followed by Indonesian-English code-mixing (26.7%), confirming English as the dominant prestige overlay in this multilingual commercial space. The presence of Chinese (6.7%) and Arabic (3.3%) elements reflects the ethnic and religious diversity of business owners and their targeted communities.

Collectively, the Tuparev signboard landscape is a site of active sociolinguistic negotiation: Indonesian provides the communicative ground, English the prestige overlay, and Chinese and Arabic the ethnocultural identity anchors. These findings contribute to the empirical documentation of *linguistic landscape* dynamics in Indonesian secondary cities and recommend future research extending to the full Karawang commercial corridor with owner interviews to elicit emic motivations.

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