



Authorship and Policy Compliance in the Linguistic Landscape of Perak's Tourist Spaces

Nurul Ain Hasni¹, Aini Andria Shirin Anuarudin^{2*}

¹Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perak, Seri Iskandar Campus, Malaysia

²Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the linguistic landscape (LL) of tourist sites in Perak, Malaysia, focusing on language choice, code preference, and policy adherence in public signs. The analysis is based on visual data collected from three prominent tourist sites in Perak, Malaysia-Pulau Pangkor, Lost World of Tambun, and Teluk Batik. Using a mixed-method approach, this study identified the preferred language on the survey sites using observation and photographed data images. Drawing on a dataset of 1039 signs, the study categorizes the signs based on three aspects which are government and private authorship, monolingual and multilingual, and code preference in order to see the adherence with the national language policy. The results showed that most government signs utilised Bahasa Malaysia (BM) as the prominent language, reflecting policy compliance and promoting national identity. On the other hand, private signs exhibit greater linguistic diversity, particularly in multilingual signs. The strong presence of other languages in private signs, particularly English, reflects the noncompliance to the policy, which driven by the need to cater to a broader audience and enhance commercial appeal. The findings underscore the dual role of LL in upholding national and cultural values while meeting the economic demands in multicultural tourism contexts. It also contributes to the growing body of LL research by exploring the dynamic interplay between government and private linguistic practices.

Keywords: Code Preference, Linguistic Landscape, Language Policy, Tourist space, Multilingual Signs

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic landscape (LL) is a concept introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) which refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs. LL serves as a lens through which the sociolinguistic dynamics of a community can be understood. It represents a unique form of mass communication, connecting people with their surrounding through written language in public spaces. As a subfield of sociolinguistics, LL investigates the use and distribution of written language on signs, offering insights into language practices, cultural identities, and implementation of language policies.

Over the years, LL has become a foundational framework for defining and examining the relationship between language and society. The concept of LL has been manifested in diverse forms, including commercial signs, billboards, shop signs, banners, street signs, and building plaques. This diversity has made LL a rich area for exploration, attracting research from multiple perspectives. Scholars have delved into multilingualism (Degi, 2012; Muth & Wolf, 2009), semiotics and symbolism (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), power relations and language hierarchies (Hult, 2014; Blackwood, Lanza, & Woldemariam, 2016), identity construction (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009; Backhaus, 2007), ethnography (Bloommaert & Maly, 2016), online and digital spaces (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009; Pavlenko, 2010) and tourism (Kallen, 2009; Bruyel-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009; Andriyanti, 2019; Lu et al., 2020). Despite these evolving research areas, research focusing on tourist sites in Malaysia has not been thoroughly investigated, particularly in exploring the dynamic interplay between government and private authorship in shaping the language use in public tourist spaces.



Authorship plays a critical role in shaping the LL of tourist areas. Government-authored signs typically adhere to national language policies, prioritising its own national language, while private-authored signs tend to prioritise English due to the commercial appeal and multilingual accessibility. Previous studies indicate that English dominates the LL in many tourist destinations (Bruyel-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009; Djonda & Madrunio, 2023), but it remains unclear whether this trend is also mirrored in Perak's tourist sites. Given Malaysia's multilingual heritage and tourism-driven economy, an investigation into language choice and authorship in public signs is essential, particularly in popular destinations like Pulau Pangkor, Teluk Batik, and Lost World of Tambun. Furthermore, globalization has further intensified the complexity of LL in tourist spaces, resulting in increasingly dynamic and linguistically diverse signs (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017; Moriarty, 2015; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011; Rong, 2018; Sari et al., 2024). As emphasized by Low (2022), LL reflects the relative power and status of linguistic communication in public spaces, shaped by sociopolitical and economic influences.

To better understand these dynamics, this study explored how government and private entities construct the LL in Perak's tourist sites, focusing on language choice and the extent to which public signs align with Malaysia's national language policy. Following Gorter's (2006) suggestion that LL research should be explored beyond linguistic composition, this study categorizes the LL data into official (government) and non-official (private) signs, monolingual and multilingual, and code preference. This distinction allows for a deeper understanding of how different types of authorship construct the LL and provide insights into the consistencies between adherence of policy and actual practices. Based on the objectives identified, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do government and private entities construct the LL in the selected tourist sites?
2. To what extent do public signs in these survey sites comply with Malaysia's national language policy?

By examining language used and preference as well as policy adherence, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of the LL in Perak's prominent tourist sites. It also addresses the extent to which these sites reflect Malaysia's multicultural identity and cater to the linguistic needs of tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic Landscape and Tourism

The linguistic landscape (LL), introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997), refers to the visibility and use of languages in public spaces through signs, billboards, shop names, and other written displays. LL serves both informational and symbolic functions, allowing visitors to navigate spaces while reflecting the sociolinguistic dynamics and cultural identity of a region (Kallen, 2009; Gorter, 2006). Within the tourism context, LL plays a critical role in shaping the experiences of visitors, who often rely on multilingual signs for identification, navigation, and accessing services (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The presence of familiar languages fosters inclusivity and accessibility of tourist spaces, making LL an essential aspect of visitor's satisfaction (Chen & Hsu, 2000; Fox, 2012). LL in tourism also functions as a cultural marker by revealing the local heritage, values, and language practices embedded in a particular destination. Scholars like Fox (2012) and Kallen (2009) argue that LL plays a crucial role in shaping the symbolic identity of tourist sites, transforming physical spaces into culturally meaningful and marketable attractions. Furthermore, globalization has intensified the multilingual dynamics of LL in tourist spaces, with English often serves as the dominant language due to its role as a global lingua franca (Huebner, 2006; Bruyel-Olmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009). While this enhances international accessibility, it can also marginalize local languages, creating tension between global economic demands and local cultural preservation (Yang et al., 2022; Andriyanti, 2019).

In Malaysia, where multilingualism is deeply embedded in its cultural identity, the LL of tourist sites reflects a unique interplay between language policy, economic priorities, and cultural representation. The extent to which LL balances Bahasa Malaysia (BM), English, and other local languages remains a critical area of exploration, particularly in popular destinations like Perak.

Authorship in LL

The distinction between government-initiated (top-down) signs and private-initiated (bottom-up) signs has been a central concern in most LL studies (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). In the context of tourism, the role of authorship is particularly important as it determines which language are made visible and how they function in public spaces. Official signs, usually produced by government bodies, typically used for displaying official announcement, reinforcing national identity through the prominence of national language (Coluzzi, 2017). In contrast, private signs, such as those display on hotels, restaurants, advertising billboard, and shops frequently embraces multilingualism, prioritizing languages that resonate most with their target audiences (Andriyanti, 2019; Artawa et al., 2023). Several LL studies, particularly in Southeast Asia, have shown that private signs often display dominance of English to enhance commercial value and appeal in public spaces (Fakhiroh & Rohmah, 2018; Yang et al., 2022).

The LL practices of both government and private authorship reveal how different actors contribute to the construction of LL in tourist spaces. Although this dynamic interplay has been documented globally (BruyelOlmedo & Juan-Garau, 2009; Kallen, 2009), it has not been extensively examined in Malaysia. By analysing the LL in Perak tourist destinations, it provides opportunity to study how language practices are influenced by cultural, economic, and policy-related factors. Furthermore, previous research also discovered that most language policy failed to be implemented in real practices, leading to a degree of incoherence in the LL (Du Plessis, 2007). This would be interesting to find out, especially in the local tourism context, to see how far LL influences the adherence of language policy in one's area. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by exploring how authorship, language choice, and policy compliance intersect to shape multilingual landscape of Malaysian tourist destinations.

Malaysia's Current Policy on the use of Language in Public Signs

The use of language on public signs in Malaysia is regulated under the National Language Policy, which mandates that Bahasa Malaysia (BM) must take precedence in all forms of public displays. This regulation applies across various domains, including commercial signs, advertisements, shop signs, street names, and directional signs, ensuring that the national language remains dominant in public spaces. Based on this research context, the enforcement of policy falls under the jurisdiction of the Ipoh City Council (Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh, MBI) and the Manjung Municipal Council (Majlis Perbandaran Manjung, MPM), which are responsible for monitoring and implementing these standards within their respective territories.

According to the guidelines set forth by MBI and MPM, public signs must adhere to the following language guidelines: (1) BM must be the primary language on all signs, taking precedence over other languages, (2) The words and letters in BM must be given prominence in terms of colour, position, and clarity, ensuring greater visibility compared to other languages. If additional languages are used, their size must not exceed the measurement of BM text to maintain the national language's dominance. These guidelines are aligned with the country's efforts to uphold BM as the official language, while still accommodating the country's linguistic diversity. While government signs generally adhere to these regulations, private signs, particularly in tourist areas, often deviate from the adherence (Manan, David, & Dumanig, 2015; Du Plessis, 2012; Wang & Gao, 2025; Degi, 2012). Commercial interests can lead to instances where other language(s) takes a more prominent role, especially in business districts and popular tourist sites. This instance raises important questions regarding the consistency between language policy and its actual practices. Therefore, it important for this study to investigate the extent to which these policies are implemented in practice, particularly in private signs, and how language choices reflect both compliance and commercial priorities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed method approach to examine the LL of the selected survey sites. To address the research questions, the study adopts a descriptive approach, focusing on textual analysis to explore language choice and preferences and type of signs displayed by different authorship. Data collection involved on-site observations and photographic images of written signs across the three selected tourist sites using high resolution phone camera. This qualitative data collected in the survey areas are quantified as part of the analysis to obtain



a full understanding of the phenomena under observation (Gorter, as cited in Andriyanti, 2019, Mubarak et al., 2024). It also captures the linguistic reality of public spaces, providing insights into how language is used in practice and whether it aligns with the official policy implemented.

Following the framework of Backhaus (2007), LL in this study is defined as “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (p. 66). Therefore, only written signs were considered for analysis, while semiotic elements such as symbols, icons, and indexes were excluded. The dataset consists of photographs of public signs, including road signs, place names, commercial shop signs, advertisements, and regulatory notices. Redundant or identical signs were counted as a single entry to prevent data duplication. Therefore, out of 1093 signs found in the public spaces of the survey sites that had been recorded, only 1039 were analysed.

The collected data were then analysed using a coding framework derived from previous studies by Edelman (2010), Ben Rafael et al. (2006), Huebner (2009), Cenoz and Gorter (2009), Scollon and Scollon (2003) and Spolsky and Cooper (1991). The framework consists of the following categories: number of languages displayed (monolingual and multilingual), authorship (distinguishing between government or private sign), and code preference (which language is most prominent in terms of size, position, and visibility). This is to identify trends and patterns of languages present in government and private signs as well as to see the adherence of policy and the actual practices of the survey sites. The data were then validated by two well-versed LL researchers to confirm on the validity of the categories applied.

Research Location

The study focused on three major tourist destinations in Perak, Malaysia: Pulau Pangkor, Lost World of Tambun and Teluk Batik. These sites were selected based on their high visitation rates among both local and international tourists, as reported in the 2019 Domestic Tourism Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics Malaysia. Each site represents a distinct type of tourist attraction, providing a diverse LL for analysis. Pulau Pangkor is a well-known island destination offering a blend of beach holiday tourism, cultural heritage, and local commerce. In contrast, Lost World of Tambun, a privately managed theme park and hot spring resort, attracts diverse mix of local and international visitors, making it an ideal site for examining private-authored signs. Meanwhile, Teluk Batik is a coastal recreational site primarily visited by domestic tourists, where government efforts in tourism promotion are visibly reflected in the LL of the site. The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 had a global impact on global tourism, leading to decline numbers of visitors, including these survey locations. However, with the gradual reopening of Malaysia’s borders, these sites have regained influx number of tourists, making them relevant case studies for examining the evolving LL.

RESULTS

Types of LL and Features in the Selected Survey Sites

This section examines the diverse LL present in the selected survey sites. It categorizes signs based on the linguistic properties such as authorship (government versus private), monolingual and multilingual, language patterns, and code preference. The analysis not only provides a quantitative overview of the distribution of sign but also provides insights into the visual and features that define the LL in these tourist spaces. Table 1 Distribution of government and private signs (n=1039)

Site	Gov	%	Priv	%	Total	%
Pulau Pangkor	303	49.2	313	50.8	616	100
Lost World	0	0	326	100	326	100
Teluk Batik	52	53.6	45	46.4	97	100



The analysis of LL in the survey sites reveals a notable predominance of private signs, particularly in Lost World of Tambun. As shown in Table 1, private signs were most dominant in Lost World of Tambun, constituting 100% of the signs. This reflects the highly commercialized nature of the area. In Pulau Pangkor, private signs slightly outnumbered the government signs (50.8% vs. 49.2%), indicating a balanced distribution that caters both official and non-official signs. In contrast, Teluk Batik shows a predominance of government signs (53.6%), likely due to its public recreational nature which requires regulatory and informational signs. Based on the overall findings, two out of three survey areas show the dominance of private signs in their LL. The dominance of private signs in the selected tourist areas aligns with the findings from Ben-Rafael et al. (2020) and Mansoor et al. (2023) study, which noted that private signs in multicultural and commercial environments tends to exhibit greater

linguistic diversity. This is largely due to the need for businesses to attract diverse audience, necessitating visually appealing and engaging signs. In competitive market like tourist destinations, private signs play a crucial role in marketing and promotion, allowing businesses to be flexible in constructing signs to cater to customers' preferences.

Despite the prevalence of private signs, government signs also maintain their significant presence, particularly in Teluk Batik and Pulau Pangkor. These signs primarily serve informational, regulatory, and safety functions, contributing to the overall functionality of the LL (Fitriani & Alamsyah, 2020). Furthermore, government signs reinforce language policy and promote national identity through the consistent use of BM, which resonates with local cultural values and fosters a sense of unity and belonging within society. The coexistence of private and government signs reflects a balanced LL that caters to the needs of both local and international visitors. Private signs enhance commercial visibility and linguistic diversity, while government signs convey official information and reinforce national identity. This dual functionality ensures that the LL effectively communicates with its diverse audience while maintaining social and cultural identity.

Monolingual and Multilingual signs

The LL across the three survey tourist sites—Pulau Pangkor, Lost World of Tambun, and Teluk Batik— reveal distinct patterns of monolingual and multilingual signs, with noticeable differences between government and private signs. The signs were categorised into monolingual (single language) and multilingual (two or more languages) signs.

As shown in Table 2, the findings reveal that monolingual sign dominates the LL of all the three survey sites. This suggests that most signs preferred to employ one language to convey information. In Pulau Pangkor, monolingual signs accounted for a significant proportion of the overall signs, with government signs comprising 41.7%, in contrast to private monolingual signs which made up only 24.8%. In Lost World of Tambun, monolingual signs were highly prevalent in private signs (70%), suggesting the dominance of a single language, particularly English. This was likely intended to enhance marketability and attract international visitors. In Teluk Batik, monolingual signs dominated the LL, with government signs making up 47.4% and private signs accounting for 39.2%

Table 2: Distribution of monolingual and multilingual signs (n=1039)

	P. Pangkor		Lost World		Teluk Batik	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Monolingual (government)	257	41.7	0	0	46	47.4
Monolingual(private)	153	24.8	231	70.9	38	39.2
Multilingual (government)	46	7.5	0	0	6	6.2
Multilingual (private)	160	26	95	29.1	7	7.2
Total	616	100	326	100	97	100

Language Patterns in monolingual and multilingual signs

The distribution of monolingual signs across the survey sites highlights significant variations in language use, reflecting both government and private sectors’ linguistic preferences and adherence of language policies. The detailed distribution of the languages in both monolingual and multilingual signs is presented in Table 3 and 4, accompanied by some images as illustrations.

Table 3: Distribution of monolingual signs

Survey sites	Monolingual signs	Items		Percentage (%)	
		Gov	Priv	Gov	Priv
Pulau Pangkor (n=410)	BM	247	80	60.2%	19.5%
	BM (Jawi transliteration)	8	7	2%	1.7%
	English	2	64	0.5%	15.6%
	Chinese	0	2	0	0.5%
		257	153	Total:100	
Lost World of Tambun (n=231)	English	0	222	0	96.1%
	Chinese	0	9	0	3.9%
		0	231	Total:100	
Teluk Batik (n=84)	BM	33	30	39.2%	35.7%
	BM (Jawi transliteration)	3	1	3.6%	1.2%
	English	10	7	12%	8.3%
		46	38	Total:100	

In Pulau Pangkor, most monolingual signs constructed by government and private sectors displayed Bahasa Malaysia (BM), reaffirming its role as the official national language. Government signs using only BM accounted for 60.2%, while private signs made up 19.5%. A small proportion of government and private signs incorporate BM with Jawi transliteration with 2% and 1.7% respectively, reflecting an effort to maintain the Malay cultural identity in public signs. The use of English on government signs was minimal, accounting for only 0.5%. However, English was more prominent in private signs, appearing in 15.6% of the total signs.

A similar pattern also reflected in the LL of Teluk Batik which demonstrates a higher prevalence of BM on both government and private signs, with total of 39.2% and 1.2% respectively. The use of BM with Jawi transliteration was relatively low, accounting for only 3.6% of government signs and 1.2% of private signs. The limited presence of English monolingual signs (21.7% in government and 18.4% in private signage) indicates that the language does not seem to be significant as in Pulau Pangkor and Lost World of Tambun. Figures 1 and 2 below show examples of BM-only signs.



Figure 1 BM-only sign (government)



Figure 2 BM-only sign (private)

The LL of Lost World of Tambun nevertheless differs significantly from Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik. English dominates monolingual signs, accounting for 96.1% of all signs, serving as the preferred language for most private signs. This preference reflects the site's role as a commercial tourist destination, where English serves as a practical communication tool for international visitors. The relatively high presence of English monolingual signs further highlights a strategic adaptation to global tourism demands. In addition, Chinese monolingual signs were also visible but accounted for only 3.9% of the total signs. Their presence might be attributed to the presence of local Chinese community, that reflects its cultural heritage as well as the influx of foreign Chinese visitors. Figures 3 and 4 below show examples English-only sign and Chinese-only sign.



Figure 3 English-only sign (private)



Figure 4 Chinese-only sign (private)

Table 4 below provides the distribution of multilingual signs. Even though the occurrence of multilingual signs were not prevalence as the monolingual signs, the presence still signifies its importance in public tourist areas. As shown in Table 4, the high proportion of BM-English combination on multilingual signs was evident with the highest occurrence displayed, specifically in Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik. In Pulau Pangkor, 93.5% of government signs employed BM-English, while 55.6% of private signs employed BM-English. Similar to the LL of Pulau Pangkor, 83.3% of government signs in Teluk Batik used BM-English and 85.7% of private signs employed the same. It is not surprising that BM was widely used in most of the survey areas, given that it is the official language of the country and is spoken by majority of the population.

The inclusion of English together with BM in public tourist spaces is due to English being known as a global language which has been acknowledged by people around the world. This shows that English holds secondary significance in tourist spaces. According to Mulyawan et al. (2022), the acknowledgement of English language is very much associated with notions of prestige, economic status, modernity, advanced technology which makes it inherent to the language. Furthermore, English is known to have a special status in Malaysia, which considered the second most important language after BM.

Table 4: Distribution of the multilingual signs

Survey sites	Multilingual signs	Items		Percentage (%)		
		Gov	Priv	Gov	Priv	
Pulau Pangkor	<i>BM & English</i>	43	89	93.5%	55.6%	
	<i>BM & Chinese</i>	0	25	0	15.6%	
	<i>BM & Tamil</i>	1	0	2.2%	0	
	<i>BM & French</i>	0	1	0	0.6%	
	<i>BM & Greek</i>	0	1	0	0.6%	
	<i>English & Chinese</i>	0	17	0	10.6%	
	<i>English & Arabic</i>	1	0	2.2%	0	
	<i>BM, English & Chinese</i>	0	24	0	15%	
	<i>BM, English & Italian</i>	0	1	0	0.6%	
	<i>BM, English & French</i>	0	1	0	0.6%	
	<i>BM, Chinese, English, Tamil</i>	1	1	2.2%	0.6%	
			46	160	100	100
	Lost World of Tambun	<i>BM & English</i>		23		24.2%
<i>English & Chinese</i>			28		29.5%	
<i>English & Latin</i>			5		5.3%	
<i>BM, English & Chinese</i>			16		16.8%	
<i>English, Chinese, Arabic</i>			12		12.6%	
<i>English, BM, Korean</i>			3		3.2%	
<i>BM, English, Chinese & Arabic</i>			1		1.1%	
			7		7.4%	
		0	95		100	
Teluk Batik	<i>BM & English</i>	5	6	83.3%	85.7%	
	<i>BM & Arabic</i>	1	0	16.7%	0	
	<i>English & Chinese</i>	0	1	0	14.3%	
		6	7	100	100	

The strong presence of BM-English signs aligns with Malaysia’s national language policy, while also accommodating English for its role as a global lingua franca, particularly in tourism and commerce. Figures 5 and 6 below exemplify the combination of two languages on multilingual signs.



Figure 5 BM and English sign (government)



Figure 6 BM and English sign (private)

In contrast, the LL of Lost World of Tambun presents a distinctly different pattern, where English-Chinese combination were the most common language appeared, accounting for 29.5%. The presence of BM-Chinese was placed second with 24.2% of the total signs. This indicates a strong emphasis on accommodating both international and domestic tourists, reflecting the prevalence of English as a global language, BM as the national language, and Chinese as a widely spoken minority language in Malaysia. All multilingual signs displayed in the area were constructed by private sectors, including business owners. Figure 7 below display examples of signs represent the LL in Lost World of Tambun.



Figure 7 English and Chinese sign (private)

The appearance of various multilingual combinations indicates linguistic inclusivity in the area which likely intended to enhance visitors' engagement across diverse cultural backgrounds. For instance, the inclusion of Arabic in the survey sites may indicate the religious influence of the Muslim community or efforts to accommodate Arabic-speaking visitors. Similarly, the presence of Latin or Korean could be associated with branding, historical references, or thematic elements within the area.



Code Preference

The data presented in Table 5 and 6 illustrate the patterns of code preference in multilingual signs across the three survey sites, focusing on both government and private signs. The analysis examines two main features of code preference: order of appearance (language order) and font size of languages used in multilingual signs. Scollon and Scollon (2003) stressed that code preference highlights how languages on signs are represented. Language order as well as font size are two types of code preference that could signify language preference.

The first feature of code preference is analysed through the order of appearance of languages in multilingual texts. According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), the layout sequence—where the language at the top or on the left is perceived as dominant determines the language hierarchy. Findings indicated that in many of the signs in the survey areas, specifically in Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik, BM was placed either on the first line of the text or on the left (this applies where the text is horizontal). This scenario denotes that BM is the preferred code in accordance with the descriptions made by Scollon and Scollon (2003) and Backhaus (2005). It was also found that 91% of government signs and 71% of private signs in Pulau Pangkor prioritised BM, whereas in Teluk Batik, 100% of government signs and 71% of private signs followed the same pattern. This positioning aligns with the stipulated language policy, emphasizing BM's role in promoting national identity and ensuring accessibility for local communities.

In contrast, the situation differs with LL displayed in Lost World of Tambun, where English emerged as the dominant code in 76% of the private signs. This trend can be attributed to the area's commercial nature and international tourist demographic. English, which perceived as a global language, is strategically used to appeal to a diverse audience, reflecting its status as a lingua franca in tourism and commerce. The preference for English highlights its commercial value and its effectiveness in attracting international visitors.

Another aspect analysed in this study was the font size preference in multilingual signs. Blackwood (2010, p. 299) explains that the 'code preference system' formulated by Scollon and Scollon (2003) established a hierarchy of languages by considering certain aspects such as the language position on the sign and its font (shape, colour, and size). This is to find out whether the texts in the signs adhere to the stipulated policy for outdoor signs. Backhaus (2005) also highlighted that the hierarchy of languages based on position can be cancelled by using different font sizes. The findings also indicated that BM and English were the most frequently prioritised languages in terms of font size. In Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik, a high frequency of the government and private signs in the LL employed larger fonts for the national language. In Pulau Pangkor, 84.8% of government signs and 68.8% of private signs prioritized BM, while in Teluk Batik, 83.3% of government signs and 71.4% of private signs followed the same pattern. This scenario demonstrates strong compliance with the national language policy, which mandates BM as the primary language on public signs.

However, the situation differs in Lost World of Tambun, where only 13.7% of private signs prioritise BM in terms of font size, with the majority favouring English as the dominant code. This reflects a strategic commercial decision to cater to international tourists and a deviation from the stipulated language policy.

Policy adherence and actual practices

To analyse the consistencies between the policies and actual practice, the analysis is guided based on the Verification Procedures of National Language in Advertisements issued by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) and the corresponding policy documents by-laws from both Ipoh City Council (MBI) and Manjung Municipal Council (MPM). These regulations mandate the use of BM as the primary language on public signs, requiring its prominence in terms of order of appearance, font size, colour, and position. The findings are presented by comparing the consistencies between government and private signs in the selected survey sites.

Although overall observations in the selected survey sites indicate that most signs conform to the regulations, there are still noticeable instances of non-compliance. In order to analyse the consistencies, monolingual signs in the survey areas were examined further. Table 5 below shows the distribution of monolingual signs by both authorship in the survey areas.



Table 5 Types of monolingual signs (n=725)

Type of signs / tourist sites	Pulau Pangkor		Lost World		Teluk Batik	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
BM only (government)	255	62.2	0	0	36	42.9
BM only (private)	87	21.4	0	0	31	37
English only (government)	2	0.5	0	0	10	11.9
English only (private)	64	15.6	222	96.1	7	8.3
Chinese (private)	2	0.5	9	3.9		
Total	410	100	231	100	84	100

It could be deduced from the findings that in both Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik, the number of government and private signs using only BM was higher than those using only English. In Pulau Pangkor, 62.2% of government signs and 21.4% of private signs used BM exclusively. Likewise, in Teluk Batik, 42.9% of government signs and 37% of private signs indicated a preference for BM in monolingual signs. This demonstrates consistencies between most of the monolingual signs and the stipulated policy in both survey sites.

However, there were monolingual signs in these two survey areas that failed to abide with the regulations set by the authorities. Even though the number is not significant, it still shows inconsistencies in the LL of the survey sites. The instances were evident in the presence of English-only and Chinese-only signs. In Pulau Pangkor, 0.5% of government signs and 15.6% of private signs were exclusively in English, while in Teluk Batik, 11.9% of government signs and 8.3% of private signs had the same pattern.

A more noticeable instances were found in the LL of Lost World of Tambun, with 96.1% of the monolingual signs were written fully in English, all of which were from the private sectors. The strong presence for English-only signs clearly demonstrate nonconformity with the stipulated language policies. The data also reveals that 3.9% of private signs in this location displayed Chinese and there were no BM-only signs recorded at this site.

DISCUSSION

Language use and code preference in the survey sites

The data showed that the LL across the three survey sites reveal a distinct pattern in language use and code preference by different authorship. The findings indicate that monolingual signs dominate the LL, with government signs exhibit strong adherence to BM. The prevalence of government monolingual signs in BM, particularly in Pulau Pangkor (60.2%) and Teluk Batik (39.2%), reinforces the role of BM as the official language. This aligns with Landry and Bourhis' (1997) LL theory, which suggests that government signs serve as a symbolic marker of national identity and contributes to social cohesion. Wang and Xu (2018) also supported that the visibility of BM in public spaces reflects its sociopolitical status and the power dynamics within a society.



Despite that, private signs in these areas also displayed a higher preference for BM monolingual signs, which the total number of signs were slightly higher than English-only signs.

The preference for English-only sign constructed by the private entities reflects Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) Preference Model, which posits that language choices on signs are often driven by the presumed linguistic preferences of the target audience. The visibility of English in the LL of tourist spaces is seen as a common practice as the language is known to show modernity, boost commercial opportunities, and attract tourist who are familiar with the language. Lost World of Tambun provides the strongest instances of this trend, where 96.1% of private monolingual signs were displayed in English. This clearly indicates noncompliance with the national language policy. As Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) argued, linguistic preferences especially in commercial signs reflect market forces rather than sociopolitical regulations, explaining why most private business favour English over other local language(s) in tourist spaces.

Meanwhile, the presence of multilingual signs, particularly BM-English combinations in the survey sites indicate a dual-language strategy that accommodates both local and international tourists. The high proportion of BM-English multilingual signs in Pulau Pangkor (55.6%) and Teluk Batik (85.7%) reflects Malaysia's bilingual communication practices, where BM remains dominant as the primary language while English functions as a secondary and complementary language for economic and global engagement. As noted by Mulyawan et al. (2019), the inclusion of English in multilingual signs is often linked with modernity, economic mobility, and global connectivity. This indicates that both private and government entities acknowledge the role of English in supporting tourism and trade while still maintaining BM's official linguistic status. Another significant pattern was the use of English-Chinese signs, which was particularly prominent in Lost World of Tambun.

Based on the findings, English-Chinese multilingual signs constitute 29.5% of the total signs in the area, reflecting a targeted linguistic approach that caters to both international tourists and local Chinese-speaking community. Compared to other local languages, Chinese had a stronger presence, reflecting its cultural association with the country's second-largest ethnic group. These patterns illustrate how linguistic practices in tourist areas often deviate from formal policy requirements. This corroborates with Huebner's (2006) findings on LL study in Bangkok, which revealed that commercial sites often prioritise the linguistic preference of their consumers rather than complying to the stipulated policy. The findings from the analysis of code preference in terms of language placement and font size further underscore the linguistic hierarchy embedded in the LL of the survey sites. Scollon and Scollon (2003) assert that the language placed at the top or on the left of a sign is perceived as dominant, reflecting both policy influence and commercial intent. The findings indicate that BM was clearly prioritised in government and private multilingual signs in terms of placement and font size, particularly in Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik, emphasising its status as the official and preferred language. However, private signs displayed in Lost world of Tambun showed different practices where English takes precedence in most multilingual signs, with larger and more prominent lettering. The prominence of English in tourist centric place like the Lost World of Tambun is indeed driven by its economic value as a global lingua franca. This suggests that private business strategically construct the LL according to the demand and also to maximise potential tourists' engagement.

Overall, the findings indicate that government signs largely align with national language policy, ensuring BM remains the dominant language in the LL of tourist spaces. Private signs, on the other hand, demonstrate dynamic linguistic practices prioritizing more on commercial needs and readers preferences. Although there were quite a few of private signs who adhered to the language policy by making BM as the prominent language in terms of placement and font size, the presence of signs that gave prominence to other languages, especially English still signifies discrepancies between policy and actual practice.

Consistency between policy and actual practices in the survey sites.

The analysis of the LL across the survey sites reveals a complex linguistic situation between the adherence of language policy and actual practice. While Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik generally adhered to the stipulated policy, where most monolingual and multilingual signs gave prominence to BM, compliance was less consistent in Lost World of Tambun. In the former two sites, most government and private signs conformed to the stipulated



policy, ensuring that BM was appropriately prioritised, typically appearing at the top of multilingual signs and displayed in a larger font.

In contrast, the LL of Lost world of Tambun demonstrated a different practice, as neither monolingual nor multilingual signs fully complied with the required policy. Instead, English was given prominence and often appeared in larger fonts and more visually dominant positions than BM. Moreover, there were instances where BM was entirely absent, indicating a lack of compliance. This shows that the implementation of the official language policy has still not reached a satisfactory level, similar to Beh's (2017) LL study in Penang, where signs without BM were still present in the LL of the survey areas. Therefore, it cannot be conclusively stated that these survey sites have fully complied with the stipulated language policy.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the existing LL research by exploring language use, code preference, and policy adherence by different authorship in tourist spaces. Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be summed up that the linguistic choices on the survey sites highlight the dynamic interplay between language policy, economic factor, and sociolinguistic realities in the LL of Perak's tourist sites. The analysis revealed that while government signs predominantly adhered to the national language policy by prioritizing BM, private signs demonstrate greater linguistic diversity, particularly in commercially driven spaces. Pulau Pangkor and Teluk Batik showed a relatively high degree of compliance with the stipulated language policy, with BM being featured prominently in both monolingual and multilingual signs. However, inconsistencies were found in the Lost World of Tambun, where English and Chinese were often given greater prominence, reflecting the influence of market-driven language preferences.

The widespread use of English in multilingual signs across all three survey sites highlights its role as a global lingua franca in tourist spaces. Its frequent appearance alongside BM suggests a deliberate linguistic strategy to accommodate both local and international tourists. Despite that, the significant proportion of English-Chinese signs in the Lost World of Tambun implicate the intention of private sectors in prioritising languages that align with their target market rather than strictly adhering to the stipulated policy. The abovementioned findings provide meaningful insights into how language operates in multilingual tourist contexts, an area that remains which remains underexplored in LL research.

Furthermore, the findings also reveal inconsistencies between language policy and actual practices. Although government signs generally followed regulations by giving BM priority in terms of placement and font size, many private signs in the Lost World of Tambun deviated from these regulations by displaying English prominently on most signs. In some instances, BM was excluded entirely, indicating non-compliance with the existing guidelines. This indicates that the language policies are often downplayed for their symbolic function rather than informational purposes (Mansoor et al., 2023). Such findings carry important implications for policymakers and tourism stakeholders, as they underscore the need for stricter enforcement while allowing flexibility for multilingual representation in tourist spaces.

Despite its contributions, the current study has its limitations. The analysis was confined to selected tourist sites in Perak, and the findings therefore, cannot be generalised. Future research could benefit from exploring visitors' perceptions on LL, particularly in terms of how signs influence their experiences and understanding of the sites. Furthermore, comparative studies across different tourist destinations would also help identify broader trends and variations in LL practices. Addressing these limitations will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relations between language, policy and tourism.

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