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Judul Artikel yang direview : *Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown's Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera*

Bulan, Tahun Artikel yang direview : Agustus 2025

Cogent Education - Invitation to Review Manuscript ID OAED-2025-1761

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To: wahyunis@edu.uir.ac.id

Fri, Aug 1, 2025 at 3:12 PM

01-Aug-2025

Dear Dr SRI WAHYUNI:

Hope you are well.

The manuscript, "Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown's Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera" has been submitted to Cogent Education.

I should be grateful if you would kindly agree to act as a reviewer for this paper. The abstract appears at the end of this letter.

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I realise that our expert reviewers greatly contribute to the high standards of the Journal, and I thank you for your present and/or future participation.

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Yeasmin Mozumder
On behalf of Cogent Education Editorial Office
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MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

TITLE: Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown's Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera

ABSTRACT:

Language in public spaces functions not only for communication but also as a marker of social and cultural identity. In Chinatown in West Sumatera, the linguistic landscape (LL) reflects the cultural hybridity and assimilation of the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora. Despite its richness, LL has rarely been utilized in higher education as a pedagogical tool. This mixed-methods study combines ethnographic fieldwork with classroom-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to explore LL's socio-cultural value and educational potential. A total of 148 public signs were documented across commercial, religious, and residential zones, while five informants were interviewed to understand symbolic functions. Concurrently, PjBL was implemented to 60 university students and 4 lecturers who observed, analyzed, and presented LL data through structured project steps. Competency assessments focused on diction, accuracy, creativity, character, collaboration, and communication. Results revealed that 75.7% of the signage was bottom-up, created by local actors, particularly in commercial areas, while 24.3% were top-down, issued by official institutions. Linguistically, 40.5% of the signs were monolingual in Indonesian, followed by bilingual (38.0%) and multilingual (21.5%) compositions, reflecting cultural negotiation. The PjBL model significantly enhanced students' competencies (average scores: diction 9.0, accuracy 9.0, creativity 8.5–9.0, character 8.0–8.5, collaboration 9.0, and communication 9.0). Both students and lecturers reported positive perceptions of LL-based learning. The findings affirm that integrating LL into language pedagogy fosters contextualized, interdisciplinary learning, while promoting cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and meaningful language use. The study recommends broader curricular adoption of LL-based PjBL in multilingual and multicultural education contexts.

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Reply-To: X.Curdt-Christiansen@bath.ac.uk
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Sun, Aug 3, 2025 at 5:59 PM

03-Aug-2025

Dear Dr SRI WAHYUNI:

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Sincerely,
Dr Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen
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Keywords

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Based on my evaluation, I recommend rejection of this manuscript. While the topic is potentially relevant, the paper has major shortcomings in terms of methodological rigor, clarity of argumentation, and overall contribution to the field. The issues identified are substantial and would require a complete restructuring of the work rather than minor revisions. Therefore, I do not believe the manuscript is suitable for publication in its current form.

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1. The relationship between variables, for example, the possible correlation between language composition of signage (monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual) and specific student competencies (diction, accuracy, creativity, character values, collaboration, and communication), has not been analytically explored. Similarly, other potentially relevant relationships remain unexplored, such as the type of signage (top-down vs. bottom-up) and its influence on student competencies or cultural awareness; the spatial zone of signage (commercial, religious, or residential) and its impact on students' intercultural sensitivity or creativity in project work; the integration of LL into the PjBL process (extent of student engagement in each project phase) and its relationship with gains in collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills; and perceptions of students and lecturers toward LL-based PjBL and their alignment with measurable improvements in competencies.

2. Scope and Generalizability

A notable limitation of the study is its site-specific sample, as data were collected exclusively from a single Chinatown community in Kampung Pondok, Padang. While this focus offers depth and rich contextual insights, it also restricts the generalizability of the findings. Cultural, linguistic, and historical factors unique to this site may not reflect the realities of other Chinatowns in Indonesia or abroad. Consequently, the study's contribution is contextually significant but may have limited applicability to wider settings without further comparative or multi-site research.

3. Methodological Consistency

Although the study is described as employing a mixed-methods design, the integration of qualitative and quantitative components is not fully reflected in the analysis and presentation of results. The qualitative data (e.g., ethnographic interviews, thematic interpretation of signage) and quantitative data (e.g., percentages of signage types, student competency scores) are presented in parallel, but their integration, where findings from one method inform, explain, or validate the other, is limited. As a result, the "mixed-methods" approach functions more as two separate strands rather than a fully merged design that leverages the strengths of both methodologies to address the research questions holistically.

4. Adequacy of Quantitative Evidence

The quantitative component, while providing useful descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages of signage types and language compositions, average competency scores), is not sufficient to fully define or substantiate the study's findings. The absence of inferential analysis or deeper statistical testing limits the ability to draw robust conclusions about relationships between variables or the significance of observed differences. As a result, the quantitative results primarily serve as background context rather than as strong empirical evidence to support claims about the impact of the LL-based PjBL approach.

5. Absence of Qualitative Data in the Presented Findings

Although the study claims to employ a mixed-methods approach and mentions qualitative sources such as ethnographic interviews and student reflections, explicit qualitative data, such as direct quotations, narrative excerpts, or detailed thematic analysis, are largely absent from the results section. Without these illustrative data, the qualitative dimension of the study is underrepresented, making it difficult for readers to see how participants' voices and perspectives inform the interpretation of findings. This omission weakens the qualitative credibility of the study and limits the depth of insight into the cultural and pedagogical phenomena being investigated.

6. Lack of Logical Flow in Presentation

The organization of the paper does not consistently follow a clear and logical progression from research questions to methodology, results, and discussion. In several places, background information, literature review, and partial interpretations are interwoven with results, which can disrupt the narrative flow. This lack of sequencing makes it harder for readers to follow how each section builds on the previous one and how evidence systematically addresses the stated research questions. A more structured arrangement, moving from context to method to clearly separated results and then to interpretation, would strengthen the clarity and persuasiveness of the paper.

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Sun, Aug 17, 2025 at 3:51 AM

Reply-To: X.Curdt-Christiansen@bath.ac.uk

To: wahyunis@edu.uir.ac.id

16-Aug-2025

Dear Dr SRI WAHYUNI:

Thank you for reviewing "Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown's Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera" for Cogent Education.

We greatly appreciate the voluntary contribution that each reviewer gives to the Journal. We hope that we may continue to seek your assistance with the refereeing process for Cogent Education, and hope also to receive your own research papers that are appropriate to our aims and scope.

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Sincerely,
Dr Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen
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Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown's Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera

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| Classifications: | Language Teaching & Learning < Language & Literature < Arts & Humanities, Cultural Studies < Humanities < Arts & Humanities, Culture < Museum and Heritage Studies < Arts & Humanities |
| Abstract: | <p>Language in public spaces functions not only for communication but also as a marker of social and cultural identity. In Chinatown in West Sumatera, the linguistic landscape (LL) reflects the cultural hybridity and assimilation of the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora. Despite its richness, LL has rarely been utilized in higher education as a pedagogical tool. This mixed-methods study combines ethnographic fieldwork with classroom-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to explore LL's socio-cultural value and educational potential. A total of 148 public signs were documented across commercial, religious, and residential zones, while five informants were interviewed to understand symbolic functions. Concurrently, PjBL was implemented to 60 university students and 4 lecturers who observed, analyzed, and presented LL data through structured project steps. Competency assessments focused on diction, accuracy, creativity, character, collaboration, and communication. Results revealed that 75.7% of the signage was bottom-up, created by local actors, particularly in commercial areas, while 24.3% were top-down, issued by official institutions. Linguistically, 40.5% of the signs were monolingual in Indonesian, followed by bilingual (38.0%) and multilingual (21.5%) compositions, reflecting cultural negotiation. The PjBL model significantly enhanced students' competencies (average scores: diction 9.0, accuracy 9.0, creativity 8.5–9.0, character 8.0–8.5, collaboration 9.0, and communication 9.0. Both students and lecturers reported positive perceptions of LL-based learning. The findings affirm that integrating LL into language pedagogy fosters contextualized, interdisciplinary learning, while promoting cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and meaningful language use. The study recommends broader curricular adoption of LL-based PjBL in multilingual and multicultural education contexts.</p> |

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Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown’s Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera

¹, ^{2*}, ¹, ³, ⁴, ⁵, ¹, ⁶

Email:

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Abstract—Language in public spaces functions not only for communication but also as a marker of social and cultural identity. In Chinatown in West Sumatera, the linguistic landscape (LL) reflects the cultural hybridity and assimilation of the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora. Despite its richness, LL has rarely been utilized in higher education as a pedagogical tool. This mixed-methods study combines ethnographic fieldwork with classroom-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to explore LL's socio-cultural value and educational potential. A total of 148 public signs were documented across commercial, religious, and residential zones, while five informants were interviewed to understand symbolic functions. Concurrently, PjBL was implemented to 60 university students and 4 lecturers who observed, analyzed, and presented LL data through structured project steps. Competency assessments focused on diction, accuracy, creativity, character, collaboration, and communication. Results revealed that 75.7% of the signage was bottom-up, created by local actors, particularly in commercial areas, while 24.3% were top-down, issued by official institutions. Linguistically, 40.5% of the signs were monolingual in Indonesian, followed by bilingual (38.0%) and multilingual (21.5%) compositions, reflecting cultural negotiation. The PjBL model significantly enhanced students' competencies (average scores: diction 9.0, accuracy 9.0, creativity 8.5–9.0, character 8.0–8.5, collaboration 9.0, and communication 9.0. Both students and lecturers reported positive perceptions of LL-based learning. The findings affirm that integrating LL into language pedagogy fosters contextualized, interdisciplinary learning, while promoting cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and meaningful language use. The study recommends broader curricular adoption of LL-based PjBL in multilingual and multicultural education contexts.

Keywords—linguistic landscape, project-based learning, teaching language, multicultural identity, chinatown

I. INTRODUCTION

Language displayed in public spaces, commonly referred to as the Linguistic Landscape (LL), functions beyond a communicative role; it reflects socio-cultural dynamics and group identities (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). In multicultural urban environments like Kampung Pondok, Padang, known as Chinatown in West Sumatera, the LL presents a compelling site for examining how languages index community identities, assimilation processes, and interethnic relations. Despite this richness, the pedagogical application of LL as a language learning resource remains underutilized, especially in the context of tertiary education in Indonesia. This oversight has resulted in missed opportunities to connect students with authentic, socially embedded language use.

The first gap lies in the limited use of LL as a pedagogical resource in Indonesian higher education, particularly within English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Although international studies have highlighted LL's instructional value in making language learning more contextual, meaningful, and engaging [1], [2], its integration in Indonesian university curricula remains rare. Most existing initiatives are focused on form-based learning (e.g., vocabulary or morphology from signage), without fully exploring LL's socio-cultural dimensions or involving students in active, real-world inquiry [3], [4]. There is thus a need to shift from passive content consumption toward experiential learning models that connect learners with their immediate linguistic environments.

The second gap pertains to the underrepresentation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in LL-related research, particularly in the Southeast Asian context. While studies from Canada, Spain, and Bhutan [5], [6] demonstrate how students can interpret signage through collaborative analysis, few studies adopt a comprehensive PjBL model that combines fieldwork, analysis, presentation, and reflection. In Indonesia, LL-based pedagogy often lacks methodological consistency and structured learning stages, failing to develop students' competencies beyond surface-level language features. Consequently, the potential of LL to foster critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and intercultural competence remains largely untapped.

The third gap lies in the absence of empirical studies on identity-rich LL in ethnic minority contexts such as Chinese-Indonesian enclaves. Although previous research has acknowledged the hybrid language practices and bottom-up agency visible in Chinatowns globally [7], [8], Indonesian Chinatown LLs, especially those outside Java, remain understudied. Kampung Pondok, as a historical site of Chinese diaspora in West Sumatera, offers a unique lens to examine how linguistic signs reflect negotiation between national identity, minority heritage, and religious expression. Yet, its potential as a living linguistic resource for language education has been largely overlooked.

The fourth and final gap is the lack of competence-based evaluation frameworks in LL-integrated language learning studies. Most prior research has emphasized qualitative outcomes such as increased motivation or awareness but rarely measures specific student competencies. There is limited data on how LL-based learning affects language accuracy, diction, creativity, or character values in a measurable way. In the Indonesian context, where curriculum standards increasingly emphasize

character education and collaborative skills [9], a pedagogical model that integrates LL with systematic competency assessment is urgently needed.

Responding to these gaps, this study investigates the integration of Kampung Pondok's Chinatown LL into a structured PjBL framework at the State University of Padang. It aims to document the socio-cultural functions of 148 LL signs, evaluate student competency gains, and assess perceptions of LL as a pedagogical tool. By doing so, the study contributes a localized, data-driven model for LL-based language instruction in multicultural Southeast Asian contexts, with implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and place-based education.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the linguistic characteristics and spatial distributions of public signage in the Chinatown Linguistic Landscape of Kampung Pondok, Padang?
2. How does the Linguistic Landscape reflect the processes of assimilation, identity negotiation, and cultural hybridity within the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora?
3. How can the Linguistic Landscape of Chinatown be integrated into a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model for language instruction at the university level?
4. To what extent does the implementation of LL-based PjBL enhance students' competencies in diction, accuracy, creativity, character values, collaboration, and communication?
5. What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of using the Linguistic Landscape as a pedagogical tool in language learning?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

First, the concept of Linguistic Landscape (LL) has moved beyond its conventional role as mere signage in public spaces to a more complex representation of communication, identity, and power. Aladjem and Jou [2] and Gorter [10] highlight how LL includes diverse visual texts, ranging from commercial signs to public notices that reflect social values, political stances, and cultural expressions. These signs function not only to inform but also to shape and assert social identities in public spaces. The communicative role of LL extends to expressing belonging, contesting authority, and symbolizing collective memory. Thus, LL becomes a visible site of ideological negotiation, revealing tensions between top-down institutional control and bottom-up local agency. Furthermore, LL has increasingly gained attention in the field of language education. Gorter and Cenoz [1] and Huebner [11] argue that LL offers unique pedagogical value by linking classroom instruction with the authentic use of language in real-world contexts. Through LL, students are exposed to genuine examples of multilingual communication, enhancing their pragmatic competence. Furthermore, LL-based tasks help foster multicultural awareness, critical thinking, and linguistic sensitivity. In language schools, LL is used not only to display institutional values but also to reflect linguistic diversity that mirrors students' lived realities, enabling them to see language as a living, dynamic social phenomenon.

In addition, a wide body of LL research has focused on themes such as language attitudes, policy, identity construction, and minority language maintenance [5], [11]. These studies show how LL can be a tool to examine power relations and social inclusion or exclusion in multilingual societies. The visibility or invisibility of certain languages in the landscape often reflects broader sociopolitical ideologies. This makes LL a rich field for understanding how language reflects and reproduces hegemonic structures and cultural resistance. As such, LL analysis is vital not only for linguistic inquiry but also for understanding societal dynamics and cultural representation. From a pedagogical perspective, the use of LL in English language teaching (ELT) has shown promise in supporting both linguistic and cognitive development. Aladjem and Jou [2], Bernardo-Hinesley [8], and Paramarta [12] suggest that LL's authenticity and accessibility make it a valuable tool for vocabulary building, contextual grammar use, and cultural literacy. LL tasks can simulate real-life communication, thereby fostering language acquisition through contextual cues. The familiarity of the visual environment also increases learner motivation, especially in urban areas where students are immersed in multilingual signage.

In educational setting LL provides opportunities for learners to develop critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills. Studies by Dumanig and David [7], Lozano et al. [5], and Sayer [13] show that engaging with LL helps students interpret sociolinguistic meanings, explore the semiotic functions of signs, and question issues of authorship, power, and audience. By analyzing multilingual signs, students learn to connect language with social meaning, thereby promoting deeper levels of inquiry and engagement. Such practices align with higher-order thinking competencies, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which are central to contemporary education. Building on this, LL can be positioned not merely as a source of linguistic data but as a pedagogical site that fosters higher-order cognitive engagement. Involving students in LL analysis empowers them to act as researchers of their own environments, critically examining how language constructs and reflects social realities. This approach encourages autonomy, reflective inquiry, and cross-cultural sensitivity, skills that are highly valued in both academic and professional domains. Therefore, LL-based instruction not only supports language acquisition but also cultivates essential 21st-century skills, making it a strategic component in modern language education.

According to Chapelle [14] conducted a critical examination of LL images in French textbooks in Canada, revealing that while public signage is visually present, it is rarely integrated into pedagogical activities. This suggests a missed opportunity for using LL as a meaningful teaching resource. The passive inclusion of LL visuals fails to capitalize on their potential for interactive learning. For LL to function as a pedagogical tool, instructional design must incorporate analysis, discussion, and reflection tasks that connect linguistic forms with their sociocultural contexts. Moreover, in school contexts, the study of the schoolscape—the linguistic environment within educational institutions—shows an overwhelming dominance of national languages. Andriyanti [15] and Pakarinen and Björklund [16] found that despite multilingual student populations, school

1 signage is often monolingual, which undermines efforts toward inclusive and equitable language practices. This phenomenon
2 reflects a broader monoglossic ideology that privileges dominant languages while marginalizing minority voices. It
3 underscores the need for deliberate and inclusive language planning within schools to make multilingualism visible and
4 valued.

5 There are several related studies related to the LL in teaching language and issues in LL in Indonesia. First, according to
6 Lozano et al. [5] introduced LL in language instruction by treating street signs as a text genre. In this model, students engage
7 with signs as semiotic texts that convey meaning beyond literal interpretation. By analyzing genre, form, and audience,
8 students develop genre awareness and sociolinguistic interpretation skills. This genre-based approach also encourages students
9 to view LL not as static artifacts but as dynamic texts that reflect social intentions, power relations, and identity markers.

10 Second, Wangdi and Savski [6] explored the use of LL in collaborative learning projects. In their model, students collected,
11 categorized, and analyzed LL data as part of a team-based inquiry. This model aligns closely with Project-Based Learning
12 (PjBL) methodologies that emphasize student agency, autonomy, and real-world application. Through collaborative LL
13 projects, students not only improve language skills but also learn to negotiate meaning, resolve conflict, and co-construct
14 knowledge, skills essential for 21st-century education. This approach reflects a broader trend in applied linguistics and
15 language education that sees the linguistic landscape not merely as an object of analysis, but as a pedagogical space that fosters
16 active, student-centered learning. Integrating LL tasks into classroom projects has been shown to enhance learners' critical
17 awareness of language in society, increase intercultural competence, and promote meaningful engagement with authentic
18 materials. Moreover, by moving beyond textbook-based instruction, LL-based PjBL enables students to interact directly with
19 their linguistic environment, encouraging contextualized understanding and a deeper sense of place. This integration
20 strengthens the connection between linguistic form and social function, supporting not only language development but also
21 students' agency as sociolinguistic observers and participants.

22 Third, in the Indonesian context, the integration of LL in pedagogical practice remains scarce. The few existing studies focus
23 narrowly on linguistic forms such as morphology [3], [4], rather than exploring broader socio-semiotic or identity dimensions.
24 As a result, LL is underutilized as a tool for critical pedagogy or intercultural competence. This indicates a significant gap
25 between LL research and language teaching practice in Indonesia. To bridge this gap, educators must reframe LL not just as
26 language material but as a platform for contextualized, experiential learning. Instead of treating language learning as a purely
27 formal activity, educators can use LL to create experiential learning moments rooted in real-world contexts. This not only
28 promotes linguistic awareness but also develops higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and reflection. In the
29 Indonesian setting where cultural and linguistic diversity is both rich and complex, LL offers an authentic medium for
30 enhancing students' intercultural competence. Integrating LL into language instruction fosters a sense of ownership, social
31 empathy, and contextual literacy, all of which are aligned with current educational goals in 21st-century Indonesia. Therefore,
32 using LL as a pedagogical tool is not merely an innovative option; it is a necessary response to the sociolinguistic realities of
33 today's multilingual classrooms.

34 Finally, recent studies such as Agustina et al. [17] and Sari et. al. [18] have begun to explore the use of LL in tourism and
35 commercial areas in Indonesia. These studies propose that LL can serve as a medium for strengthening national identity and
36 promoting local culture. While these contributions are not directly instructional, they offer a conceptual framework for how LL
37 can be integrated into the curriculum, especially in vocational, tourism, or cross-cultural communication programs. These
38 findings also support the use of LL in teaching language with a place-based and culture-sensitive approach. This suggests that
39 the pedagogical potential of LL extends beyond traditional language classrooms. By connecting linguistic elements with
40 spatial and cultural realities, LL can be a powerful medium for teaching language as social practice. In vocational and tourism
41 education, where language use is deeply embedded in real-world contexts, integrating LL allows students to engage with
42 authentic texts, develop intercultural awareness, and understand how language operates in public and professional spaces.
43 Therefore, the inclusion of LL in curriculum design not only enriches language learning but also aligns with educational goals
44 that emphasize contextual relevance, national identity, and global competence.

45 Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been widely acknowledged as an innovative and effective pedagogical model that
46 promotes deep understanding and long-term knowledge retention. Fatima et al. [19] and Martín et al. [20] argue that when
47 students are presented with authentic problems and participate in projects relevant to their lives, the knowledge they acquire
48 becomes embedded in their cognitive framework and applicable to both academic and real-world contexts. This alignment with
49 real-world challenges makes learning more meaningful, while enhancing critical and creative thinking skills.

50 PjBL also reflects a fundamental shift in the way teachers facilitate and students engage in learning. It encourages learners to
51 become active constructors of knowledge through collaborative inquiry, production of public artifacts, and exploration of
52 socially meaningful themes. According to Anazifa and Djukri [21] and Yew and Goh [22], immersing students in real-world
53 projects not only builds academic skills, but also fosters creativity, self-direction, and deeper engagement. This becomes
54 particularly valuable in contexts that explore the intersection of language, space, and identity, such as linguistic landscape
55 analysis.

56 In fact, incorporating linguistic landscape elements into PjBL offers students opportunities to develop creative, and critical
57 thinking through the exploration of real-life signs, symbols, and language use in public spaces. The linguistic
58 landscape—comprising multilingual signage, public texts, and visual symbols, serves as a rich resource for language learning
59 and identity negotiation. Anazifa and Djukri [21] suggest that when students engage with real signage and language use in their
60 environment, they are more likely to generate original insights based on contextually grounded understanding. Hussein [23]
emphasizes that linguistic landscapes enable students to connect language with social meanings, which enhances their ability

to interpret, question, and create.

Moreover, PjBL that leverages the linguistic landscape, such as signage in Chinatown, West Sumatera, allows students to explore how public texts reflect and construct cultural identities. As noted by Khoiriyah and Husamah [24], engaging students in projects that incorporate visible language use in the environment can stimulate innovative thinking and creativity. Through these projects, students analyze semiotic aspects of signs, investigate issues of authorship and audience, and question power relations embedded in public discourse. This approach aligns well with Mariappan et al. [25], who found that tasks involving real-world linguistic data promote inventive thinking and problem-solving. By embedding the linguistic landscape into PjBL, students are not only learning language in context but also becoming more critically aware of how language operates in society. In the case of Chinatown's multilingual signage, learners have the opportunity to examine identity, heritage, and sociolinguistic diversity, making the project both academically enriching and socially meaningful.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods design with a focus on qualitative analysis and supported by quantitative data. The design combined ethnographic fieldwork to explore cultural meanings and identity in the Linguistic Landscape (LL) of Kampung Pondok, and content analysis to classify types of signs and language patterns. The qualitative part helped answer questions related to cultural identity, assimilation, and perception (RQ2 & RQ5), while the quantitative part addressed the distribution and types of signs (RQ1). Additionally, the study implemented a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model to observe how LL could support language instruction and student competencies (RQ3 & RQ4).

2. Source of the Data

The data came from three main sources: (1) public signs in Kampung Pondok (Chinatown), (2) interviews with five key community informants, and (3) student projects and observations from a PjBL class at the State University of Padang. A total of 148 public signs were collected across three zones: commercial, religious, and residential. There are 60 university students and 4 lecturers also served as participants in the classroom implementation.

3. Data Collection Procedure

The signs were photographed and documented over a two-week period in Kampung Pondok using smartphones, during afternoon hours for optimal lighting. All visible, permanent public signs containing written language were included. Signs that were temporary or damaged were excluded. Students in the university-level English class participated in a structured PjBL activity: observing, analyzing, and presenting data about LL. Interviews were conducted with community informants using semi-structured questions to explore language use and cultural identity. Lecturers and students reflections on PjBL were also collected through short written responses and classroom discussions.

4. Data Analysis Procedure

The signs were analyzed using content analysis to classify them into top-down or bottom-up types, and categorized by language (Indonesian, Chinese, English, etc.) and function (economic, symbolic, cultural, etc.) to answer RQ1. The interview data were analyzed thematically to explore assimilation and cultural identity (RQ2). Students' PjBL outputs such as reports and presentations were used to assess learning outcomes, especially in diction, accuracy, creativity, character, collaboration, and communication (RQ4). Finally, students' and teachers' perceptions of the method were reviewed from reflective responses to answer RQ5.

IV. RESULT

1. Linguistic Characteristics and Spatial Distributions of Public Signage

The findings of this study revealed that the linguistic landscape (LL) of Chinatown in Kampung Pondok, Padang, was shaped by both functional communication and symbolic cultural expressions. A total of 148 signs were identified across three urban zones: commercial, religious, and residential. The commercial zone showed the highest concentration and variety of signs, consistent with its function as an economic hub.

Table 1. Types of Linguistic Landscape (LL) Signs in Chinatown, Kampung Pondok

| No | Language Sign Type | Research Findings | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------------|--|------------|
| 1 | Top-Down (government signs) | Government offices, heritage sites, public schools | 24.3% |
| 2 | Bottom-Up (private signs) | Shops, restaurants, cafés, stalls, banners, advertisements | 75.7% |

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| Total | 100% |
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As shown in **Table 1**, bottom-up signage—including shop names, restaurant boards, banners, and informal advertisements accounted for 75.7% of the total, indicating strong community participation and local agency in shaping the LL. In contrast, top-down signs such as those from government offices, heritage buildings, and public schools represented 24.3%, reflecting formal institutional presence in certain areas.



Figure 1. Linguistic Landscape Sign at Deng Fu Restaurant and Banner (Bottom-Up)

Figure 1 shows a prominent linguistic landscape sign displayed at Deng Fu Restaurant. The sign features multilingual text, combining Chinese characters and Bahasa Indonesia, which reflects both the cultural identity of the establishment and the linguistic diversity of the Chinatown area. This sign was documented as part of the field observation conducted in 2025. In addition, the bottom-up data presented in Figure 1 at the right side depict a linguistic landscape sign displayed on a banner hung in front of the Chinese temple. The banner bears the phrase *tuan jie jiu shi li liang*, which translates to “unity is strength.” According to information provided by a Chinese diaspora community leader, the banner was created specifically for the Lunar New Year’s Eve celebration and is only displayed during certain festive occasions.



Figure 2. Top-Down Linguistic Landscape Sign at the Cultural Heritage Monument

Figure 2. illustrates a top-down linguistic landscape sign located at a cultural heritage monument. As an official sign issued by local authorities, it reflects institutional control over public space and the formal representation of language in heritage contexts.

Table 2. Language Composition of Public Signage in Chinatown, Kampung Pondok

| No. | Language Composition | Description | Percentage |
|-----|----------------------|-------------|------------|
|-----|----------------------|-------------|------------|

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|-------|
| 1 | Monolingual (Indonesian) | Signs written only in Bahasa Indonesia | 40.5% |
|---|--------------------------|--|-------|

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--|-------------|
| 2 | Bilingual | Signs in two languages (e.g., Indonesian–Chinese, Indonesian–English) | 38.0% |
| 3 | Multilingual | Signs in three or more languages | 21.5% |
| Total | | | 100% |

As presented in **Table 2**, the signs displayed varied language compositions. Monolingual Indonesian signs were the most dominant, comprising 40.5% of the data. This highlighted the role of Bahasa Indonesia as a lingua franca within the urban setting. Bilingual signs, combining Indonesian with either Chinese or English, made up 38.0%, indicating ongoing processes of identity negotiation and cultural hybridity. Multilingual signs which included three or more languages were also found, albeit in a smaller proportion (21.5%), particularly in business areas with a wider audience. The spatial distribution of languages also reflected social and cultural dynamics. In religious zones, signs often included Chinese characters alongside Indonesian, symbolizing ethnic heritage. In residential zones, signs tended to be monolingual, prioritizing clarity and local functionality over cultural representation. Overall, the linguistic landscape of Kampung Pondok served not only as a medium of public communication but also as a visual archive of the assimilation, hybridity, and identity construction processes within the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora.

2. Assimilation, Identity, and Cultural Hybridity within the LL

Findings indicate that the linguistic landscape in Kampung Pondok is not merely communicative but deeply symbolic, reflecting ongoing processes of assimilation and identity negotiation within the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora. Bilingual and multilingual signs often included traditional Chinese characters, Hokkien phrases, or visual markers like red-gold colors and dragon imagery, signifying cultural continuity. At the same time, the prominence of Indonesian in public signage shows a clear adaptation to national identity and mainstream communication norms. Interviews with five key informants, community elders and shop owners, confirmed that signage serves as a tool for expressing pride in heritage while also navigating integration. These linguistic choices are not neutral; they mark the visibility of minority identities and mediate inclusion within a broader national framework. In many cases, hybrid signages such as Indonesian text alongside Chinese religious symbols represent intentional blending rather than cultural loss. Thus, the LL in Chinatown operates as a visible narrative of hybridity, sustaining ethnic distinction while embracing shared Indonesian identity.

3. Integration of Linguistic Landscape into Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

The study successfully integrated the LL of Chinatown into a structured Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model implemented in an undergraduate English class at the State University of Padang. Students participated in a multi-phase project involving field observation, photographic documentation, linguistic categorization, and critical presentation. This integration bridged classroom instruction with real-life language use, enhancing authenticity and relevance. The Chinatown setting provided a culturally rich context that encouraged students to analyze language as a social practice rather than a mere academic exercise. Students were guided through stages of planning, data collection, analysis, and collaborative reflection, which mirrored research-based pedagogical cycles. Classroom feedback indicated that students were engaged and motivated throughout the project, often expressing appreciation for the opportunity to explore their local heritage in English. The LL thus became a pedagogical tool not only for language instruction but also for cultural inquiry and place-based learning. This model proved effective in linking theory to practice, making language learning more tangible and meaningful.

4. Enhancement of Student Competencies through LL-Based PjBL

The PjBL model that utilized the Chinatown LL contributed significantly to student competency development. Based on performance rubrics and observational assessments, students demonstrated high levels of achievement in all measured areas. Specifically, students scored 9.0 in diction, 9.0 in accuracy, 8.5–9.0 in creativity, 8.0–8.5 in character values, 9.0 in collaboration, and 9.0 in communication.

Table 3. Students' Competency Scores after LL-Based PjBL Implementation

| No. | Assessed Competency | Average Score (out of 10) |
|-----|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Diction | 9.0 |

| | | |
|---|------------------|---------|
| 2 | Accuracy | 9.0 |
| 3 | Creativity | 8.5–9.0 |
| 4 | Character Values | 8.0–8.5 |
| 5 | Collaboration | 9.0 |
| 6 | Communication | 9.0 |

These results in Table 3 highlight the LL’s potential as an instructional scaffold that supports not only linguistic competence but also 21st-century skills. Through analyzing real-world signs and presenting findings collaboratively, students practiced both critical and creative thinking. In addition, teamwork in multilingual groups fostered responsibility, respect, and the exchange of diverse ideas. Many students reflected that this project helped them develop stronger cultural sensitivity and a better grasp of how language operates in society. The integration of LL into PjBL thus offered a comprehensive learning experience that went beyond traditional classroom activities, reinforcing experiential and contextual education.

5. Students and Lecturers Perceptions of LL-Based Pedagogy

Both students and lecturers reported highly positive perceptions of using the Linguistic Landscape as a pedagogical tool. From student reflections and feedback forms, the majority expressed that LL-based learning was authentic, enjoyable, and meaningful. Many indicated that it helped them improve not only their English skills but also their understanding of local cultural diversity. Lecturers, in turn, valued the contextual depth and interdisciplinarity of the approach. They observed that students became more autonomous, inquisitive, and socially aware throughout the project. Lecturers also acknowledged that LL-based instruction provided opportunities to address not only language structures but also topics such as identity, diversity, and cultural preservation. Overall, the PjBL model that employed real LL data allowed for deeper engagement with content, promoting not just cognitive learning but also affective and sociocultural development. The findings affirm that incorporating LL into university curricula can enhance educational quality and relevance, especially in multicultural and multilingual environments like Indonesia.

V. DISCUSSIONS

The linguistic landscape (LL) of Kampung Pondok, commonly referred to as Chinatown in Padang, revealed a total of 148 public signs distributed across three primary zones; commercial, religious, and residential. A significant majority (75.7%) of the signage originated from bottom-up sources, such as private businesses and individuals. This high proportion of private signage reflects strong local agency and an organic evolution of the public linguistic environment. Spatially, the commercial zone demonstrated the highest density and diversity of signs, particularly in multilingual forms, aligning with its dynamic economic and intercultural functions. Monolingual signs in Bahasa Indonesia remained dominant (40.5%), but the presence of bilingual and multilingual signs such as combinations of Indonesian with Chinese or English reflected both practical communicative needs and complex identity negotiations, echoing Gorter and Cenoz’s [1] emphasis on multilingualism in public space.

The coexistence of languages in signage demonstrates a nuanced process of cultural hybridity and identity formation within the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora. Ethnographic interviews with key informants revealed that signage does more than convey functional information; it embeds layers of historical memory, cultural symbolism, and religious values. Signs featuring Chinese characters alongside Indonesian text often conveyed traditional beliefs and socio-religious identity markers, illustrating what Li and Marshall [26] call a “pedagogical encounter with multilingualism and memory.” In religious zones, the use of Chinese script was more prominent, while residential zones favored monolingual Indonesian, indicating spatially contingent expressions of identity. These findings align with Aladjem and Jou’s [2] proposition that LL acts as a site for contextual language learning and identity articulation.

Furthermore, the study successfully integrated the LL data from Chinatown into a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) framework at the undergraduate level. Students engaged in fieldwork to document and analyze signage, then collaborated on presenting their findings. This integration of real-world sociolinguistic data into instructional practice offered learners meaningful engagement with authentic language use, consistent with Sayer’s [13] assertion that LL can serve as a powerful pedagogical resource. The PjBL approach provided opportunities for experiential learning and intercultural dialogue, showing alignment with Bytyqi [27], who argues that project-based approaches animate learning and foster student agency. Through this process, LL became a bridge between linguistic theory and language practice.

In terms of learning outcomes, the implementation of LL-based PjBL significantly enhanced student competencies across linguistic, cognitive, and social domains. Quantitative evaluations indicated high scores in areas such as diction, accuracy, creativity, character development, collaboration, and communication. These gains suggest that students developed both linguistic precision and intercultural sensitivity, while also cultivating soft skills critical for global competence. This echoes the findings of Corazza [28], who emphasized the role of authentic tasks in enhancing creativity, and Hancock [4], who found that LL use sharpens student understanding of sociocultural diversity.

Finally, feedback from both students and instructors revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the LL-based instruction model. Students reported greater engagement, motivation, and appreciation for the relevance of language in real contexts, while instructors recognized the interdisciplinary potential of LL in fostering critical awareness and cultural

understanding. These perspectives align with the views of Dumanig and David [7], which highlighted the pedagogical effectiveness of LL in English learning environments, as well as Wangdi and Savski [6], who emphasized LL's potential to nurture critical language awareness. Overall, the integration of LL into language education through a project-based approach was perceived as innovative, contextualized, and transformative especially for learners in multilingual and multicultural contexts such as Indonesia.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the dual function of the Linguistic Landscape (LL) in Kampung Pondok (Chinatown), Padang, as both a communicative tool and a site of cultural identity expression within the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora. The analysis of 148 signs across three urban zones revealed that 75.7% were bottom-up, produced by local businesses and community members, while 24.3% were top-down, issued by government bodies or formal institutions. The dominance of monolingual Indonesian signs (40.5%), alongside bilingual (38.0%) and multilingual (21.5%) signage, illustrates the dynamic interplay of national language, minority language maintenance, and global influences. These findings reflect not only language policy in practice but also process of assimilation, hybridity, and identity negotiation in an urban diasporic context. Importantly, the study extended its scope to pedagogy by integrating LL into a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) framework within a university language classroom. Students engaged in real-world linguistic observation, analysis, and presentation, which significantly enhanced their performance in key competencies such as diction, accuracy, creativity, character, collaboration, and communication. Reflective responses from both students and lecturers confirmed the relevance, engagement, and transformative potential of LL-based pedagogy. Overall, the findings suggest that the LL, particularly in multicultural settings, can serve as an authentic and contextually rich resource for sociolinguistically informed language instruction. The study advocates for the systematic incorporation of LL into interdisciplinary curricula to promote culturally responsive, critically engaged, and locally grounded language education..

ETHICAL APPROVAL

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

...conceived and led the study, secured ethical approval and funding, and coordinated overall project administration. ..and... designed the instructional framework and project-based learning materials. Field data (photographing, cataloguing, and preliminary coding of Chinatown's linguistic landscape) were collected by ...and ..Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted by... and..., with methodological guidance from ... Visual mapping, graphic layouts, and figure preparation were handled byand.... carried out the literature review, supplied cultural and economic context, and critically revised the manuscript for intellectual content. The first draft was written by..... integrated all revisions and prepared the final version. All authors discussed the results, contributed to subsequent revisions, and approved the final manuscript.

FUNDING

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy restrictions involving participant identities and institutional permissions. However, data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request in line with the Taylor & Francis "Share Upon Reasonable Request" policy.

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Dear Reviewers,

Thank you for reviewing the manuscript OAED-2025-1761 entitled "Teaching Language through Signs of Identity: A Project-Based Learning of Chinatown's Linguistic Landscape in West Sumatera" for Cogent Education. We greatly appreciate the voluntary contribution that each reviewer gives to the Journal and hope that we may continue to seek your assistance with the refereeing process for Cogent Education.

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A copy of your comments to the author, along with those of any other referees, follows at the end of this letter for your information. Any files that referees uploaded for the attention of the author are attached as a PDF proof.

Yours sincerely,

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Referee comments to the author:
Reviewer: 1

Recommendation: Major Revision

Comments:
Reviewer's Comments:

This is a timely and engaging study that explores the intersection of linguistic landscape (LL) and language pedagogy through Project-Based Learning (PjBL). The integration of public signage as a pedagogical tool is creative and contextually rich. However, there are several areas where the manuscript could be improved for clarity, structure, and scholarly rigor.

Literature Review:

The concept of Linguistic Landscape (LL) should be more clearly and critically defined, particularly in relation to its theoretical foundations and relevance in educational settings.

The section introducing Project-Based Learning would benefit from a subchapter heading to improve structural clarity.

The literature review should be more critical, not just descriptive. When citing authors (e.g., "Author X states..."), the text should also explain why these particular studies were chosen and how they support the current research focus.

Methodology:

The type of mixed-methods design used (e.g., explanatory, exploratory, or convergent parallel) should be explicitly stated and justified.

The rationale for integrating public signage into language pedagogy needs further reflection. While innovative, it may raise questions about appropriateness and relevance in various contexts. The authors are encouraged to reconsider or more clearly justify this approach.

Results and Analysis:

The following sentence should be expanded and clarified, especially with respect to 21st-century skills:

"These results in Table 3 highlight the LL's potential as an instructional scaffold that supports not only linguistic

competence but also 21st-century skills."

— What specific skills are meant here, and how were they measured or observed?

The section "Students and Lecturers' Perceptions of LL-Based Pedagogy" should include direct quotations to support the claims. Additionally, the qualitative data should be analyzed using a clearly defined qualitative-driven approach (e.g., thematic analysis or content analysis).

Conclusion:

The conclusion should not only summarize key findings but also acknowledge the study's limitations, such as sample size, generalizability, or methodological constraints. Doing so would enhance the credibility and academic rigor of the work.

Additional Questions:

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As a thank you and to acknowledge the contribution of our reviewers, the journal may publish a list of the names of those who have reviewed at the end of the year. This will not be linked to any specific paper and will only be done if the list of reviewers is long enough to protect the anonymity of the review process for individual papers. If you would prefer for your name not to be included in a published list of reviewers, please indicate this below.: Do not include my name

Do you have any conflict of interest to declare?: No

If yes, please provide details below:

Reviewer: 2

Recommendation: Minor Revision

Comments:

Please authors to describe research methods in more detail. What was the content of interview questions? What methods were used for exploring achieved students' competencies?

From the results (line 50 and below; part Enhancement of Students Competencies through LL-based PjBL) it is not clear if students measured their achieved competencies or teachers did that? In the other words, are these self-assessment results or teachers measured student achievement? From lines 35 to 40 I suppose that teachers measured students achievements. In that manner I don't understand how they evaluated group work for a single student. Namely, PBL is a team didactic model. From the results it is not clear how teachers have measured competence achievement for each student?

Additional Questions:

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Do you have any conflict of interest to declare?: No

If yes, please provide details below:

Reviewer: 3

Recommendation: Minor Revision

Comments:

To establish a proper background of the study, the researcher has clearly identified some research gaps; however, the theoretical and factual gaps have not been explicitly identified, despite their critical importance. The researcher has also provided examples of the LL identified, but has not yet explained the factual gaps related to student competencies, critical thinking skills, character values, collaboration, and communication. If RQ4 is maintained, the background of the study needs to be added regarding the reality of student competencies, critical thinking skills, character values, collaboration, and communication; their connection to LL needs to be discussed in more detail. Is

PjBL using LL really a solution to overcome of this problem?

For RQ5, testing the effectiveness and relevance of LL through PjBL has not been analyzed in detail, quantitative data is still limited to being analyzed using descriptive statistics. It's important to clarify which mixed methods design was used. If a quantitative approach was indeed used, the type of quantitative analysis utilized hasn't been explained in detail (including data validity testing and instrument testing techniques, and what statistical tests were used to analyze the data).

The selected informants need to have their competencies confirmed so that they are considered suitable as sources of research data. The results of the discussion only explain and describe descriptive statistical analysis, so it cannot be stated as a mixed method (quantitative if the statistical analysis is not only descriptive).

Additional Questions:

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Do you have any conflict of interest to declare?: No

If yes, please provide details below:

Reviewer: 4

Recommendation: Reject

Comments:

1. The relationship between variables, for example, the possible correlation between language composition of signage (monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual) and specific student competencies (diction, accuracy, creativity, character values, collaboration, and communication), has not been analytically explored. Similarly, other potentially relevant relationships remain unexplored, such as the type of signage (top-down vs. bottom-up) and its influence on student competencies or cultural awareness; the spatial zone of signage (commercial, religious, or residential) and its impact on students' intercultural sensitivity or creativity in project work; the integration of LL into the PjBL process (extent of student engagement in each project phase) and its relationship with gains in collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills; and perceptions of students and lecturers toward LL-based PjBL and their alignment with measurable improvements in competencies.

2. Scope and Generalizability

A notable limitation of the study is its site-specific sample, as data were collected exclusively from a single Chinatown community in Kampung Pondok, Padang. While this focus offers depth and rich contextual insights, it also restricts the generalizability of the findings. Cultural, linguistic, and historical factors unique to this site may not reflect the realities of other Chinatowns in Indonesia or abroad. Consequently, the study's contribution is contextually significant but may have limited applicability to wider settings without further comparative or multi-site research.

3. Methodological Consistency

Although the study is described as employing a mixed-methods design, the integration of qualitative and quantitative components is not fully reflected in the analysis and presentation of results. The qualitative data (e.g., ethnographic interviews, thematic interpretation of signage) and quantitative data (e.g., percentages of signage types, student competency scores) are presented in parallel, but their integration, where findings from one method inform, explain, or validate the other, is limited. As a result, the "mixed-methods" approach functions more as two separate strands rather than a fully merged design that leverages the strengths of both methodologies to address the research questions holistically.

4. Adequacy of Quantitative Evidence

The quantitative component, while providing useful descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages of signage types and language compositions, average competency scores), is not sufficient to fully define or substantiate the study's findings. The absence of inferential analysis or deeper statistical testing limits the ability to draw robust conclusions about relationships between variables or the significance of observed differences. As a result, the quantitative results primarily serve as background context rather than as strong empirical evidence to support claims about the impact of the LL-based PjBL approach.

5. Absence of Qualitative Data in the Presented Findings

Although the study claims to employ a mixed-methods approach and mentions qualitative sources such as ethnographic interviews and student reflections, explicit qualitative data, such as direct quotations, narrative excerpts, or detailed thematic analysis, are largely absent from the results section. Without these illustrative data, the qualitative dimension of the study is underrepresented, making it difficult for readers to see how participants' voices and

perspectives inform the interpretation of findings. This omission weakens the qualitative credibility of the study and limits the depth of insight into the cultural and pedagogical phenomena being investigated.

6. Lack of Logical Flow in Presentation

The organization of the paper does not consistently follow a clear and logical progression from research questions to methodology, results, and discussion. In several places, background information, literature review, and partial interpretations are interwoven with results, which can disrupt the narrative flow. This lack of sequencing makes it harder for readers to follow how each section builds on the previous one and how evidence systematically addresses the stated research questions. A more structured arrangement, moving from context to method to clearly separated results and then to interpretation, would strengthen the clarity and persuasiveness of the paper.

Additional Questions:

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Do you have any conflict of interest to declare?: No

If yes, please provide details below:

Reviewer: 5

Recommendation: Minor Revision

Comments:

The research deals with an interesting aspect. All the research questions as well as materials and methods are clearly stated. However, there are some aspects which should be done to add more clarity and relevance of the results.

1. There are some mistakes regarding referencing. Some are missing, e.g. Landry & Bourhis 1997, Martin et al. is not the same as reference No. 20. Please controll all the references again.
2. In the result sections, please also provide concrete examples in 2, 3 and 5. In terms of the analyzsed signs, it would be better to illustrate how assimilation, identity and cultural hybridity appear. In terms of qualitative data, e.g. from interviews, some quotes can be added. Please also be more precise when the terms "the majority" is used.

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If yes, please provide details below:

Sri Wahyuni <wahyunis@edu.uir.ac.id>
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