

THE USE OF ACRONYMS IN STUDY COURSES: A LINGUISTIC RESEARCH IN TANJUNGPINANG

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Abstract

This research examines the use of acronyms in naming non-formal education institutions, specifically course institutions, in Tanjungpinang City as part of the urban linguistic landscape.. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was obtained through observation and visual documentation of publicly visible signage of primary and secondary educational institutions. The collected data were then analyzed thematically to identify patterns in acronym usage and their symbolic meanings. The results show that acronyms are used not only for linguistic efficiency, but also as a branding strategy that represents a professional, modern and global identity. The majority of acronyms consist of three to four letters and are dominated by English, reflecting the institution's international orientation. This prominence of English acronym in Tanjungpinang's educational landscape underscores a growing global outlook and a strategic effort to enhance institutional recognition and apple beyond local boundaries. However, without additional explanation, the use of acronyms as branding tools can cause ambiguity and weaken their function as identity markers. . Therefore, the integration of visual elements and descriptive captions is essential for acronyms to be effective as identification and marketing tools. These findings enrich the study of the linguistic landscape in the context of non-formal education in Tanjungpinang.

Keywords: *acronyms; linguistic landscape; courses*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of using acronyms in naming course institutions in Tanjungpinang shows how language is used strategically for communication functions as well as symbolic and ideological representations that reflect social dynamics, collective identity, and power relations in society. The concept of linguistic landscape refers to how language is visually displayed in public spaces, such as signboards, billboards and banners, which reflect the linguistic and cultural differences of a region (Fadhillah, 2023). In Tanjungpinang, this concept is particularly relevant in understanding how educational institutions utilize language on their signage to communicate identity and values within the city's unique linguistic and cultural environment. In the context of non-formal education, especially course institutions, naming the institution through signage not only serves as identification, but also as a branding strategy that reflects certain values, such as modernity, internationalism, or locality. The use of acronyms in naming course institutions is an interesting linguistic phenomenon to research because it can show the ideological orientation and marketing strategy of the institution.

In the last five years, the development of course institutions in Tanjungpinang City, the capital of Riau Islands Province, has shown increasingly complex dynamics and adaptive to the demands of the times. This is reflected in the rise of the establishment of course institutions that offer practical competency-based programs and are in line with the needs of the global job market. The choice of acronym-shaped names not only reflects efficiency and marketing strategies, but also represents the spirit of modernity, professionalism, and global orientation that has become the new identity of non-formal education institutions. These acronyms actively contribute to branding by

creating easily recognizable and memorable names that resonate with target audiences, thereby shaping public perception of the institutions as innovative and globally connected. The phenomenon of English acronyms dominating the linguistic landscape in Tanjungpinang is inseparable from the trend of globalization in education and the economy in Indonesia. The use of English in naming, especially for educational institutions, is often associated with a 'modern' and 'professional' image that is relevant to the needs of the global job market.

This reflects the desire of institutions to attract young people who are familiar with digital culture and global values, who often view English proficiency as the key to broader educational and career opportunities. Thus, the choice of language in acronyms is not merely aesthetic, but a reflection of the linguistic ideology of the institution and its position in the competitive landscape of education. This phenomenon also shows the transformation of the course institution's identity from a provider of additional education services to an institution that positions itself as an agent of skills-based social and economic change. Symbolic identity through acronyms is part of a branding strategy that targets young people who are familiar with digital culture and global values.

In the social and economic dynamics of urban society, the use of acronyms in naming course institutions in Indonesia, especially in medium-sized cities such as Tanjungpinang, is an interesting linguistic phenomenon to study. This naming strategy not only functions as an institutional identity, but also as an effective marketing tool in attracting public attention. Acronyms that are short, memorable and visually appealing through signage or banner design have great potential in shaping the institution's image in the eyes of the public. More than just linguistic efficiency, the use of acronyms reflects the institution's linguistic ideology, i.e. how they position themselves in the map of educational competition through their choice of language and values. Despite the prevalence of this trend, academic studies on acronym usage within Indonesian educational institutions, particularly at the primary and secondary levels in urban contexts, remain notably scarce. While existing linguistic landscape research in Indonesia often explores broader themes such as the dominance of foreign languages (Putri & Susanto, 2020), regional language use (Handayani, 2019), or linguistic conflicts in public spaces (Wijaya, 2021), there is a discernible gap in detailed investigations into the specific sociolinguistic dynamics of acronym-based naming within these local educational settings.

Previous studies have tended to focus on the general landscape of linguistics or other types of language markers, but have not specifically and deeply analyzed the phenomenon of acronym use in educational institutions, especially in non-formal settings such as course institutions. Specifically, existing research has not comprehensively examined how acronyms not only function as efficient abbreviations but also as branding strategies reflecting modernity, professionalism, and global orientation of institutions, as well as the visual and social meanings embedded within them. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of acronyms in training institutions in Tanjungpinang, a dynamic mid-sized city whose dynamics have not been extensively studied.

Yet, the naming strategies involving acronyms offer sociolinguistic dynamics worthy of further exploration. This study aims to explore the use of acronyms in naming course institutions in Tanjungpinang City as part of the urban linguistic landscape. The main focus of this research includes: (1) the forms and types of acronyms used; (2) the linguistic and symbolic functions of acronym use; and (3) the visual and social meanings contained in the representation of acronyms on institutional signboards. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research relies on direct observation data and visual documentation of course institution signboards scattered in various areas of the city. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of linguistic landscape studies in Indonesia, particularly in examining the visual dimensions and branding strategies in the non-formal education space. In addition, this research can also enrich the discourse on the role of language in commercial practices and the representation of institutional identity in public spaces.

The use of acronyms in naming course institutions not only reflects linguistic efficiency but also an effective branding strategy. Consistent and strong branding is very important in building a positive image of educational institutions in the eyes of the community. Elements such as logos, colors, typography, and taglines must be consistent across all media to create an identity that is easily

recognizable and trusted by prospective students and parents. In this context, short and memorable acronyms can strengthen the brand identity of the course institution. For example, course institutions like OLCE and AIEC use acronyms that reflect values of professionalism and global orientation. This is in line with the findings of research by Fadhillah (2023) which show that language choices in the linguistic landscape reflect the ideology and identity of institutions.

Moreover, the use of English acronyms in naming course institutions in Tanjungpinang reflects the dominance of foreign languages in the urban linguistic landscape. The dominance of foreign languages, especially English, in naming business entities reflects power and resistance in the naming practice. This shows that the use of English acronyms not only reflects a global orientation but also serves as a strategy to attract attention and build a professional image in the eyes of the public. However, it is important to consider the local context and cultural diversity in the use of language in public spaces. The use of various languages on signboards reflects the cultural diversity and history of an area. Therefore, it is important for course institutions to consider the local context in their branding strategies.

In practice, the use of acronyms in naming course institutions can also reflect the social identity and values upheld by the institution. The use of English in commercial signage reflects certain power and social status. In Tanjungpinang, English acronyms are used to attract the attention of aspirational and globally-oriented young people. This shows that the use of acronyms not only serves as identification but also as a representation of the social identity and values upheld by the course institution. However, it is important to ensure that the use of acronyms does not cause ambiguity or misunderstanding among the public. Therefore, course institutions are advised to include a brief description or tagline that explains their identity and services.

Overall, the use of acronyms in naming course institutions in Tanjungpinang reflects a complex linguistic and visual strategy, encompassing aspects of communication efficiency, identity representation, and branding strategy. This phenomenon shows how language is strategically used to shape institutional identity and attract public attention in the non-formal education space. This research is expected to contribute to the development of linguistic landscape studies in Indonesia and enrich the understanding of the role of language in branding practices and identity representation in public spaces.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe and analyze the phenomenon of using acronyms in naming course institutions in Tanjungpinang City. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on the meaning, interpretation, and social context of naming practices that appear in the public sphere (Malahati et al., 2023). This research employs a documentary qualitative approach, primarily analyzing visual and written data. The main focus of this research is to analyze the use of acronyms in the names of course institutions in Tanjungpinang City through a review of publicly visible documents, encompassing both physical materials (such as signboards, banners, pamphlets, and brochures) and digital content (such as institutional websites and social media platforms) belonging to these institutions. The subjects of this research are the names of educational institutions in Tanjungpinang. For that the acronym in their official naming. This research does not involve individuals but focuses on how to analyze linguistics data from visual documents and relevant texts.

1. Analytical Framework

This study adopts the Linguistic Landscape (LL) framework as the main analytical lens for interpreting data. Based on Landry and Bourhis' (1997) theory, which emphasizes that languages displayed visually in public spaces reflect the ethnolinguistic vitality as well as the ideology and identity of an institution, this study goes beyond the morphological description of acronyms. We analyze how acronyms on the signage of educational institutions in Tanjungpinang not only function as linguistic identities but also as branding strategies that represent a professional, modern, and globally oriented image. The analysis involves identifying the form and type of acronyms, their visual context (size, color, typography), and interpreting the symbolic and ideological meanings

contained within them. This approach allows us to understand how acronyms contribute to the formation of public image and perceptions of the values upheld by institutions within the structure of the urban linguistic landscape.

The data sources for this research consist of primary data in the form of visual documents such as signboards, banners, billboards, and promotional brochures from course institutions that use acronyms. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, where the researcher was present for 2 days during the data collection process through visual documentation of the course institution signboards. Then, document collection, where the researcher collected data in the form of photographs of course institution nameplates, and systematic recording, where the researcher recorded data related to the form and structure of acronyms and their context of use in documents. In this research, the researcher used several instruments to support the data collection and analysis process.

The primary tool for data collection was visual documentation (photography), used to systematically record the course institution names containing acronyms from publicly visible signage. Additionally, to ensure a systematic and consistent analysis of the collected data, the researcher developed a structured data classification and analysis template. This template served as a crucial instrument, allowing for the precise categorization of acronym forms, identification of patterns based on morphological theory, and detailed analysis of their usage context. It facilitated the systematic processing of the linguistic data, ensuring objectivity and alignment with the research's focus. The steps involved include identifying the acronyms used in the names of educational institutions, classifying the forms and patterns of acronym formation based on morphological theory, analyzing the context of acronyms usage within the city's"

The main instrument used was documentation, which served as a data source in the form of course institution names containing acronyms. Additionally, the researcher developed a special template for classifying and categorizing acronym forms, which was used as a tool to systematically identify the types and structures of acronyms. These two instruments enabled the researcher to analyze data in a focused and objective manner in line with the research research's focus. The steps involved include identifying the acronyms used in the names of educational institutions, classifying the forms and patterns of acronym formation based on morphological theory, analyzing the context of acronym usage within the city's linguistic landscape, and deriving the meaning and function of acronyms in shaping the identity and image of the institutions.

2. Data Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative findings, this study applied several strategies. First, data triangulation was conducted by collecting information from various multimodal sources. Although the primary focus was on physical signage, we also considered other visual documents such as banners, brochures, and digital content (institutional websites and social media, if available and relevant) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the use of acronyms and their context. Data selection criteria included the public visibility of the signboards or promotional materials, as well as confirmation that the institution was an active course provider in Tanjungpinang.

Second, method triangulation was applied through a combination of direct observation and visual documentation. Two days of field observation allowed researchers to record the context surrounding the signboards, while photographic documentation ensured the accuracy and traceability of visual data.

Third, the use of classification templates and structured data analysis served as instruments to maintain consistency in identifying acronym forms, their formation patterns based on morphological theory, and the analysis of their usage context. This ensures objectivity in the processing of linguistic data and aligns with the research focus. The entire research procedure was designed systematically to ensure the validity and reliability of the data, so that the findings produced are scientifically accountable.

Conveying the purpose of the research openly when necessary during documentation in public spaces. Using data only for academic purposes and scientific publications by maintaining objectivity and scientific honesty. By using a qualitative approach through document studies and data

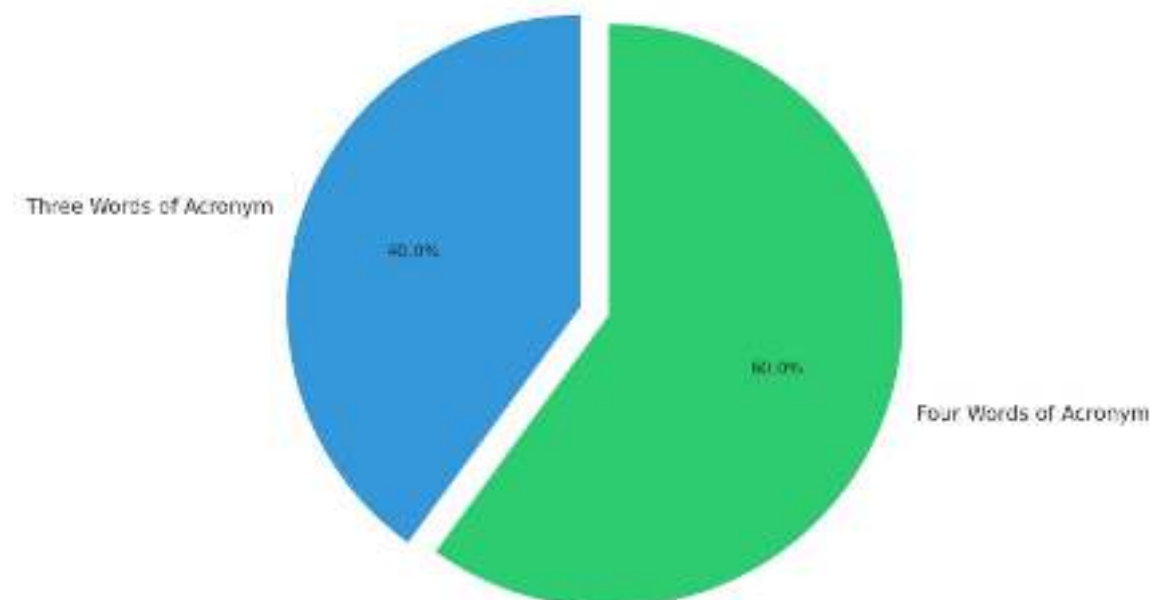
collection techniques in the form of observation and documentation, this research is expected to provide an in-depth and accurate picture of the use of acronyms in naming course institutions in Tanjungpinang. All research procedures are systematically designed to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, so that the findings produced can be scientifically accounted for.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, a search of the signboards of 5 course institutions in Tanjungpinang shows the dominant use of acronyms as the main strategy in naming institutions. The acronyms found varied in length, ranging from three to five letters, for example OLCE (One Language Center for Education). The majority of these acronyms are in English, indicating the institution's orientation towards a modern and international image. Based on observations of the linguistic landscape in the Tanjungpinang City area, a number of course institutions were found to use acronyms in naming their institutions. These acronyms are not only used as an efficient form of abbreviation in communication, but are also full of symbolic meanings that reflect the values, orientation and identity of the institution. The acronyms analyzed in this research include:

1. OLCE (One Language Center for Education)
2. AIEC (Afford International English Course)
3. ICTC (I Can Training Center)
4. TEE (Training Education Entrepreneurship)
5. BCI (Brilliant College Indonesia)

Each acronym shows a different linguistic and semiotic strategy in presenting the image of the course institution to the public.



Picture 1. (Number and Percentage of Acronyms in Naming Course Institutions)

Based on the pie chart, it can be seen that the majority of acronyms used consist of 4 letters, which is 60%. Meanwhile, acronyms consisting of 3 letters account for 40% of the total. This shows that acronyms with 4 letters are more common or more widely used than acronyms with 3 letters.





No	Three Words of Acronyms	Four Words of Acronyms
1.		
2.		
3.		

Table 1. (Categorization of Language Course Names Based on Acronym Word Count)

In this research, researchers analyzed the names of course institutions that use acronyms. Based on the results of the analysis, 2 acronyms are included in the initialism acronym type, and 3 acronyms are included in the true acronym type.

OLCE is a true acronym, it consists of the initial letters of each word in the phrase One Language Center for Education. Despite being made up of the initial letters, OLCE can be pronounced as a whole word /'olsi/ or /oolsi/, thus meeting the criteria of being a true acronym, rather than just spelled letter by letter. It is commonly used because it is concise and still recognizable. Linguistically, the acronym serves to abbreviate the institution's identity and facilitate the pronunciation of a long name. Symbolically, OLCE implies a focus on language acquisition in an educational context. Visually and socially, the acronym builds a strong professional and academic image on the institution's signage, reflecting confidence in the quality of formal standardized education (Sugiono, 2019).

AIEC is a true acronym, formed from the first letter of each word in the phrase Afford International English Course. This acronym has the potential to be read as a single sound /'aiek/ or /ar'ek/, so it falls into the true acronym category, as it can be pronounced as a whole word and not just an arrangement of letters. Its linguistic function is to convey global reach and competence in English. Symbolically, the use of the word "International" gives the impression of being modern and open, while "Afford" denotes affordability, forming an inclusive institutional identity. Visually, AIEC is easily recognizable and gives a professional impression, making it a strategic branding element (Rahmawati, 2021).

ICTC is an acronym initial, consisting of the initial letter of each word and is usually read letter by letter: I-C-T-C. Since it does not form a new word that can be pronounced as a phonetic unit, ICTC is categorized as an initialism. The word "I Can" gives the power of positive affirmation that symbolically functions to build self-confidence. The acronym reflects not only the name of the institution, but also the values instilled in the participants. In visual representation, the ICTC acronym looks strong and energetic on the signboard, creating social meaning as a place that empowers individuals through training (Nurhidayah, 2020).

TEE is a true acronym, resulting from the first letters of three words in the phrase Training Education Entrepreneurship. Because it can be read as one word ("tee" /ti:/), it is a true acronym.. It is compact and efficient, classified as an initialism. Linguistically, TEE emphasizes the three main focuses of the institution: training, education and entrepreneurship. It is symbolic function points to the development of skills and entrepreneurial spirit, which is increasingly relevant in the context of the creative economy. Visually, the TEE is concise and memorable, creating a practical, modern and empowerment-focused image of the institution (Prasetyo, 2018).

BCI is an acronym initial, formed from the initial letters of the three words and is usually read letter by letter: B-C-I. Since it cannot be pronounced as a single phonetic word, this acronym is classified as an initialism. Linguistically, it is a formal initialism that reflects the name of the higher education institution. The symbolism of the word "Brilliant" reinforces the impression of brilliance, achievement and quality of higher education. The visual representation of BCI on the signboard displays an elegant and institutional impression, which has a social impact in the form of trust in the academic quality offered (Wulandari, 2022).

DISCUSSION

An analysis of the signboards of educational institutions in Tanjungpinang shows that acronyms are the dominant naming strategy, as evidenced by institutions such as OLCE, AIEC, ICTC, TEE, and BCI. This phenomenon illustrates how language is strategically used for both linguistic functionality and symbolic representation. Specifically, institutions like OLCE and AIEC use true acronyms that can be pronounced, simplifying the long institutional names while strengthening brand identity. These acronyms serve as markers of professionalism and are visually dominant on signage, aligning with Landry and Bourhis' (1997) theory that linguistic choices in public spaces convey institutional ideology and identity through visual representation.

Furthermore, the preference for English-language acronyms at the five institutions observed (OLCE, AIEC, ICTC, TEE, and BCI) reflects their aspirations to project a global and modern image. This trend highlights the globalization of education and the desire of local institutions to align themselves with international standards. Beyond mere symbolism, this alignment indicates a shift in educational offerings toward curricula that prepare students for global competencies, such as advanced English proficiency for international exams (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS) or skills relevant to multinational companies. For example, the existence of institutions such as OLCE underscores a direct response to global demand for English proficiency in Tanjungpinang. As noted by Fadhillah (2023), the deliberate choice of language in public signage carries deep semiotic and cultural meanings that reflect societal shifts and aspirations, indicating a growing emphasis on internationalization in Tanjungpinang's educational landscape.

This phenomenon in Tanjungpinang mirrors a broader trend across Indonesia, where non-formal education centers are increasingly adopting global branding strategies to attract a young demographic that is digitally savvy and globally minded, seeking opportunities beyond local boundaries. The prevalence of English acronyms in Tanjungpinang also indicates the growing aspirations among its youth to participate in the global economy. These institutions, by signaling an international outlook through their names, position themselves as gateways for students seeking broader career or educational opportunities, potentially driving 'brain drain' or, conversely, equipping the local workforce with globally competitive skills. This trend is a microcosm of Indonesia's broader push for human resource development aligned with international standards. However, this discussion can be enriched with a more in-depth critical analysis of the socio-linguistic implications of this preference for English monolingual acronyms. For example, how does the dominance of English affect the perception of the value of local languages or Indonesian among the people of Tanjungpinang? Is there a potential for marginalization of local linguistic identity due to standardization towards English as a marker of "modernity" and "professionalism"? The analysis can be expanded to discuss the power dynamics that may be contained in this language choice, where English is implicitly positioned as a superior language in the context of global-oriented non-formal education. Considerations regarding information accessibility for communities with limited English proficiency can also be added, given that the use of acronyms without explanation can be a barrier to communication.

Significant differences can also be observed between true acronyms and initialisms. Effectiveness in oral communication and memory retention, as seen in OLCE, AIEC, and TEE, aligns with findings in branding and linguistic studies emphasizing the importance of ease of pronunciation for brand recall and public engagement, as reviewed in Rahmawati's (2021) research on acronym branding strategies in education or Nurhidayah's (2020) study on the symbolic meaning of acronyms as part of visual identity. The visual components of acronym usage are equally important. The appearance of acronyms on signage often involves bold typography, vibrant color schemes, and minimal text to ensure visibility and impact. These visual strategies align with semiotic theory emphasizing the role of symbols and aesthetics in shaping public perception (Prasetyo, 2018). Therefore, acronym-based naming is not only a linguistic decision but also a visual and marketing strategy aimed at creating recognition, differentiation, and trust among prospective students and the public. While acronyms offer advantages in efficiency and branding, their use also poses challenges, especially when they are not accompanied by explanations. This can lead to semantic ambiguity or misunderstanding among the public. Institutions are encouraged to provide a brief description or tagline alongside the acronym to clarify their identity and services. As suggested by Rahmawati (2021), acronyms should not be used in isolation but supported by contextual cues to maintain communicative clarity and avoid potential misinterpretation.

Acronyms, as abbreviations formed from the initial letters or certain parts of a series of words, can be divided into several types, two of which are relevant in this context: initialisms and true acronyms. Initialisms are formed from the first letter of each word and are read one by one (e.g., ICTC, BCI), while true acronyms are formed from initial letters or syllables and can be read as a single, pronounceable word (e.g., OLCE, AIEC, TEE). In addition to acronym types, the use of

monolingual English in all observed acronyms reflects a consistent linguistic choice that serves institutional branding. All words forming the acronyms are derived entirely from English, projecting a professional, global image and reinforcing the relevance of English as a key element in educational and skills training institutions. For instance, OLCE (One Language Center for Education) and Brilliant College Indonesia (BCI) reflect a deliberate monolingual naming approach BCI, though containing the word “Indonesia,” maintains its English-dominant structure to enhance international appeal. This linguistic and visual strategy highlights how acronym use is embedded in broader branding practices aimed at increasing competitiveness, credibility, and alignment with global educational trends.

CONCLUSION

The use of acronyms by non-formal educational institutions in Tanjungpinang is a deliberate linguistic and visual strategy to project an image of professionalism, modernity, and global orientation. The dominance of English acronyms reflects a monolingual trend aligned with international branding practices. These acronyms, whether true acronyms (e.g., OLCE, AIEC, and TEE) or initialisms (e.g., ICTC and BCI), significantly contribute to the linguistic and visual landscape, serving as identity markers and persuasive marketing tools. However, the preference for English acronyms poses significant challenges regarding accessibility and inclusivity for local communities who may be less proficient in the language. This phenomenon supports a linguistic landscape framework that examines how language in public spaces reflects social identity, power, and ideology.

While this conclusion has identified the study's important contributions, this section could be improved by providing a more concise and definitive statement regarding the overall contribution of the research or the unique insights that distinguish it. Rather than merely touching on “complex socio-linguistic dynamics,” the conclusion could more clearly articulate new arguments or specific, overarching takeaways that distinguish this research from broader observations of the linguistic landscape. Some sections of the conclusion still tend to reiterate findings rather than offer deep closing thoughts or a strong final synthesis.

To address this impact, it is recommended that policymakers consider promoting bilingual or culturally integrated naming practices to support linguistic diversity and prevent the marginalization of local identities. Future research could further explore how the use of acronyms affects public perception, institutional credibility, and the socio-economic position of non-formal education providers, as well as how digitization and demographic changes shape linguistic and visual strategies in educational signage across Indonesian cities.

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