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THE VISIBILITY OF BETAWI LANGUAGE IN THE VIRTUAL LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE: A STUDY ON TIKTOK

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the visibility of the Betawi language within TikTok's virtual linguistic landscape and its role in representing cultural identity. As a multimodal communication platform, TikTok enables the presence of Betawi in digital spaces through various linguistic and audiovisual elements. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using the virtual linguistic landscape as an analytical perspective. The data comprise TikTok content featuring Betawi, including on-screen text, captions, hashtags, and other linguistic elements. Visual and audio features are also examined, considering TikTok's combination of text, images, speech, music, and sound. Data were collected through digital observation and documentation and analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify the forms, functions, and contexts of Betawi language visibility. The findings reveal that Betawi appears in Sofwan Amin's TikTok content through speech transcriptions displayed as on-screen text, captions, and hashtags, either independently or alongside other languages. Within the virtual linguistic landscape, Betawi serves an informative function by conveying information about the Betawi community and a symbolic function by representing local identity. These findings suggest that TikTok provides a digital space for the visibility and representation of Betawi in contemporary communicative practices.

Keywords: *language visibility; Betawi language; virtual linguistic landscape; TikTok social media*

INTRODUCTION
The continuous evolution of digital technology has expanded the spaces for language use in everyday life. Communication, which was once conducted face-to-face, has shifted toward an internet-based environment. With the advent of the internet further amplified by the use of online platforms the flow of information and knowledge is rapidly evolving and transforming (Salma & Leiliyanti, 2024). Social media, as an internet-based platform, boasts a vast user base. In this context, social media serves not merely as a medium for exchanging information, but also as a space where users can showcase, modify, and ultimately assign meaning to linguistic resources within the practice of digital communication. In this context, language manifests through various forms of representation such as written text, speech, images, and interconnected audiovisual elements. This expanding communicative space has driven the evolution of linguistic landscape studies, shifting the focus from physical to digital environments. For instance, Biró (2021) suggests that social media can be understood as a "digital linguistic landscape," where language choices and semiotic practices shape

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communication and the representation of identity. In this study, Biró (2021) examines the emergence of language and linguistic patterns within local businesses among the Hungarian-Romanian community in Romania. Similarly, Yao (2021) demonstrates that online linguistic landscapes provide a space for users to leverage diverse semiotic resources and linguistic practices to negotiate how they present themselves. In this research, Yao (2021) explores the online linguistic landscape of the social media platform WeChat. Thus, the digital environment is not merely a setting where language happens to be found; rather, it serves as a space where language is actively displayed and employed within communicative practices.

One social media platform relevant for examining this phenomenon is TikTok. Since its launch in 2016, TikTok has continued to grow, with its expansion expected to persist. By 2020, the number of TikTok users worldwide reached 800 million, making it the ninth most popular social media platform (Espinoza et al., 2021). By 2025, TikTok had become one of the most popular social media platforms globally, boasting a diverse user base. It is estimated that the platform currently has approximately 1.37 billion global users, a figure projected to reach two billion by 2029 (Slotta, 2026). TikTok's characteristics which integrate video, text, speech, music, and user interaction allow language to emerge through various modes of communication simultaneously. Within a single piece of content, language can be found in a creator's speech, on-screen text, captions, and hashtags. These forms provide an opportunity to examine how language is manifested and positioned within digital content. However, the presence of language on social media platforms cannot be sufficiently explained merely by identifying the forms of language being used. Research must also consider the position of language within such content, its relationship to other communicative elements, and the context underlying its emergence. Studies on the online linguistic landscape particularly on social media highlight the importance of examining various semiotic resources and social practices to understand language use in digital spaces (Biro, 2021; Yao, 2021). In the Indonesian context, research has been conducted by Maharani (2025), who explored language use and identity formation on the platform X, and by Nanda (Nanda & Datang, 2025), who investigated language use and attitudes on Instagram. In this paper, the author examines the visibility of the Betawi language on TikTok, as the platform serves as a digital communicative environment that provides data for understanding language visibility through diverse forms of content and linguistic practices.

The Betawi language is a relevant subject for study, as it appears frequently in various communication practices on social media in Indonesia. In this paper, the Betawi language is understood following Grijns (1991) not as a distinct "language," but rather as a dialect of Malay, referred to as the Betawi dialect of Malay. Chaer (1976, 2023) subsequently termed it the Jakarta dialect of Malay. The Betawi language is used not only for conveying messages but also for expressing humor, storytelling, explaining vocabulary, and creating content that highlights the social life of the Betawi community. Syaharani and Saddhono (2024) have examined the influence of the Hokkien language on the Betawi dialect and its use as a form of colloquial, informal language (slang) within comments on TikTok. Both studies demonstrate that TikTok has become a relevant research context for examining the use of the Betawi language and the representation of Betawi culture. Nevertheless, the use of the Betawi language in digital content still warrants investigation from a perspective that specifically centers on the visibility of the language as the focus of analysis.

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In this study, language visibility is understood as the emergence and presence of the Betawi language within digital content, observable through specific linguistic forms and the positions in which they are used. This definition is limited to visibility identifiable via content data, rather than algorithmic reach or the extent to which the language is exposed to the platform's entire user base. This distinction is crucial because the presence of the Betawi language in a TikTok video does not automatically imply that the content reaches a broad audience. In this research, language visibility is examined through the appearance of the Betawi language in spoken utterances, on-screen text, captions, hashtags, or a combination of these forms. The analysis also considers the position of the Betawi language within the content whether it serves as the primary language, a supplementary language, or as an insertion within speech conducted primarily in another language. Thus, visibility is understood not merely as the frequency of a language's occurrence, but as the pattern of its presence within the structure of digital communication

To examine this phenomenon, this study employs the perspective of the "virtual linguistic landscape." The concept of the "linguistic landscape" a field of study within sociolinguistics was introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and further developed by Spolsky and Cooper (1991). It focuses on the use and presence of languages in public spaces through various forms of signage, such as street signs, information boards, building names, advertisements, and other written displays within a given area (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). This field of study considers language not merely as a means of conveying information, but also as a representation of the identity and presence of linguistic groups within a social environment. With the advancement of communication technology and digital media, the spaces in which language appears are no longer confined to physical environments; they have expanded into the virtual realm. To examine this phenomenon, this study employs the perspective of the "virtual linguistic landscape." The concept of the "linguistic landscape" a field of study within sociolinguistics was introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and further developed by Spolsky and Cooper (1991). It focuses on the use and presence of languages in public spaces through various forms of signage, such as street signs, information boards, building names, advertisements, and other written displays within a given area (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). This field of study considers language not merely as a means of conveying information, but also as a representation of the identity and presence of linguistic groups within a social environment. With the advancement of communication technology and digital media, the spaces in which language appears are no longer confined to physical environments; they have expanded into the virtual realm.

In this study, the perspective of the virtual linguistic landscape is not treated as a separate object of research, but rather as an analytical framework for examining the visibility of the Betawi language within TikTok video content. The analysis focuses on how the Betawi language is present, where it appears, and how its emergence can be understood within the context of digital content. Furthermore, this study aims to analyze the visibility of the Betawi language in the virtual linguistic landscape of TikTok by identifying the forms of its appearance, its placement, and the context of its representation in digital content. Specifically, the research seeks to describe how the Betawi language manifests through

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observable linguistic elements such as spoken utterances, on-screen text, captions, and hashtags and how these patterns of appearance can be interpreted through the lens of the virtual linguistic landscape. The findings are expected to contribute to the study of regional languages on social media.

METHOD

To analyze the visibility of the Betawi language on the social media platform TikTok, a descriptive qualitative approach is employed, utilizing the perspective of virtual linguistic landscape analysis. A qualitative approach is used to systematically understand and interpret data within its specific context (Creswell, 2007). The research data consist of linguistic elements representing the Betawi language including spoken utterances, on-screen text, captions, and hashtags appearing either independently or in combination with other languages. The data source comprises video content from the TikTok account of Sofwan Amin, selected based on the presence of the Betawi language and information related to the Betawi community. The scope is limited to videos uploaded between January 2026 and June 2026, totaling 55 videos. Data were collected through non-participatory observation and documentation, then analyzed based on the forms of linguistic manifestation as well as their informative and symbolic functions within the framework of a virtual linguistic landscape. The TikTok account of Sofwan Amin can be accessed via the following link: https://www.tiktok.com/@sofwan_amin

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and conclusion verification (Miles et al., 2014). Data were categorized based on the form in which the Betawi language appeared, its position within the content, and the accompanying communicative context. Subsequently, the data were interpreted using the perspective of a virtual linguistic landscape to explain the visibility patterns of the Betawi language within TikTok content. To ensure data validity, the content was repeatedly examined, analytical categories were applied, and the interpretation process was documented. The analysis focused on the appearance and representation of the Betawi language within the studied data, rather than on the extent of the language's exposure to all TikTok users.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an analysis of the visibility of the Betawi language on the social media platform TikTok, employing the perspective of virtual linguistic landscape analysis. The data source consists of video content from the TikTok account of Sofwan Amin. The videos analyzed were those uploaded by the creator between January 2026 and June 2026, totaling 55 videos. These videos were examined using a framework based on their informative and symbolic functions.

Dominance of Language Use in the Virtual Linguistic Landscape of TikTok

Data consisting of 55 TikTok video clips, obtained from the TikTok account of Sofwan Amin, have been tabulated to identify and analyze the dominant language usage within these videos. The data were examined based on the frequency of the Betawi language's appearance, as well as the specific types of languages employed. Presented below

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is a summary table of language usage in Sofwan Amin's TikTok content, categorized by frequency of occurrence and the type of language used:

Table 1. Recapitulation of Language Usage Dominance in Sofwan Amin's TikTok Videos

Number	Aspects analyzed	Language Category			
		Betawi Language	Indonesian Language	Foreign Language	Code-Mixing Patterns (Betawi, Indonesian, and English)
1	on-screen text	-	-	-	55
2	caption	1	4	-	50
3	hashtag	-	-	1	54

Dominance of Betawi, Indonesian, and English through Code Mixing

Based on the recapitulation data in Table 1, it is evident that the language usage in Sofwan Amin's TikTok video content is dominated by code-mixing patterns. The Betawi language appears in the videos mixed with both Indonesian and English. Among the 55 video clips analyzed for this study, the language used in on-screen text, captions, and hashtags predominantly features code-mixing. There are very few instances where the Betawi language appears in isolation that is, without the presence of Indonesian or English. Specifically, there is only one instance of Betawi used alone in a caption, four instances of Indonesian used alone, and one instance of English used alone. These findings indicate that linguistic representation in the TikTok video content is achieved through the use of multiple languages. The Betawi language is not presented exclusively within the observed written elements; rather, it exists within a linguistic environment that incorporates both Indonesian and English.

In the on-screen text, the creator displays a transcription of their spoken words. This transcription is written to reflect the actual pronunciation used in the speech. Across the 55 video entries, the on-screen text features transcriptions dominated by the Betawi language. In employing the Betawi language, the creator engages in code-mixing with Indonesian for instance, in a video uploaded by the creator on January 6, 2026. "(0:02) Bang, ini kita mau kemana *sih Bang*? (0:05) Hah, penasaran? (0:07) *Nyok,* kita bahas! (0:09) Hari ini, *ncang* ajak adek-adek *ncang tuh* (0:11) yang *cakep-cakep*, yang *botoh-botoh* (0:13) ke Setu Babakan (0:14) biar mengenal budaya Betawi. (0:17) Eh iya, *ncang* lupa, (0:19) ini hari *Senen*, musiumnya tutup. (0:21) Tapi *gak ngapa-ngapa*, (0:23) kita langsung ke pinggir Setu." In this excerpt from the on-screen text, Betawi vocabulary is used, including the term of address "*Bang*" (meaning "older brother" or a respectful term for an older male) and *"ncang"* (meaning "uncle/aunt"a term for a parent's sibling who is older than one's own parent). Other terms include "*nyok"* ("let's"), "*cakep-cakep*" ("pretty"), "*botoh-botoh*" ("beautiful/lovely"), and "*gak ngapa-ngapa*" ("it's no problem/it's alright") (Chaer, 2023). Furthermore, there is evidence of code-mixing incorporating Betawi, Indonesian, and English as seen in another video uploaded by the creator on January 6, 2026. The on-screen

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text reads: “POV: Ketika Anak Betawi *Ketemu Demenan* Masa Kecil.” Below are screenshots from both video segments:



Figure 1. Use of Betawi Language in On-Screen Text in the Form of Transcribed Spoken Utterances

In terms of the interplay between languages manifested through code-mixing in on-screen text there appears to be a balance between the use of Indonesian and Betawi Malay. Betawi Malay serves as a marker of local identity, while Indonesian is employed to convey information to a broader, more diverse audience; the same applies to the use of English. This code-mixing allows creators to showcase distinct Betawi characteristics without having to rely exclusively on the Betawi language throughout their entire discourse. While Betawi Malay establishes a social setting and local identity, Indonesian and English ensure that the message remains accessible to speakers from various linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, the use of code-mixing helps foster a more intimate and contextually relevant communicative atmosphere.

Furthermore, the language used in the captions predominantly follows a pattern of code-mixing specifically, a blend of Betawi and Indonesian. Examples include the captions "Anak Betawi *Kudu* Bisa Bahagiakan Istri, Ya *gak Cang*?" (from a video uploaded by the creator on February 7, 2026) and "Anak Betawi *Kudu* Punya Rumah" (February 8, 2026). While Betawi Malay is typically used alongside other languages in on-screen text, some video content such as the video titled "Kagak Ribet," uploaded on June 25, 2026 relies exclusively on Betawi Malay. In the context of TikTok videos, captions serve as explanatory text intended to provide additional context while also assisting the platform's algorithm in distributing the content to the appropriate audience.

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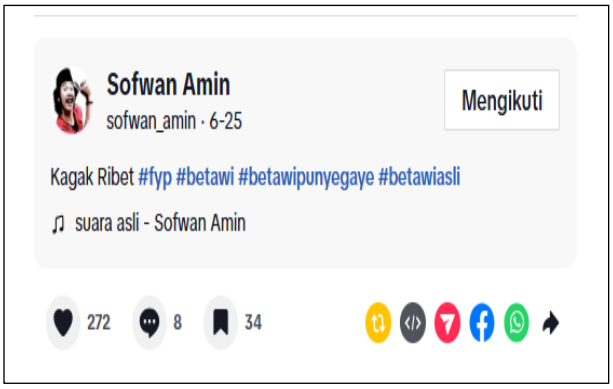


Figure 2. Use of Betawi Language in Captions and Hashtags

Furthermore, regarding hashtags, the language used is a combination of Betawi, Indonesian, and English for instance, in examples such as "#fyp #betawi #betawipunyegaye #betawiasli," "#betawi #betawipunyegaye #lebaran #fyp," and "#betawi #betawipunyegaye #fyp #outfit." These hashtags demonstrate the explicit presence of the Betawi language through markers like "#betawi," "#betawipunyegaye," and "#betawiasli." Meanwhile, hashtags such as "#lebaran" and "#outfit" link the content to specific themes, while "#fyp" refers to the "For You Page" TikTok's recommendation feed. The "#fyp" tag is typically included as a strategy by creators to ensure their uploaded TikTok videos reach the widest possible audience.

The Use of Indonesian and English

The use of Indonesian and English in Sofwan Amin's TikTok video content demonstrates linguistic variation in the language representation found within the analyzed material. Indonesian and English appear alongside Betawi Malay in specific linguistic elements, such as on-screen text and hashtags. For instance, the hashtags "#fyp" and "#outfit" both English-based co-occur with hashtags like "#betawi" and "#betawipunyegaye." From the perspective of a virtual linguistic landscape, the presence of these elements reveals that language representation in TikTok content is not confined to a single language; rather, Indonesian and English coexist alongside linguistic markers associated with Betawi Malay.

Visual and Audio Elements

The visual and audio elements in Sofwan Amin's TikTok content play a role in constructing a representation of Betawi identity, complementing his use of language. Visually, the creator consistently wears traditional Betawi attire in all his content; this appearance serves as a cultural marker that directs the audience toward the local identity being represented. Meanwhile, the use of audio specifically Betawi songs further reinforces the connection between the content and Betawi culture. From the perspective of a virtual linguistic landscape, the representation of language in digital spaces cannot be separated from the multimodal context in which it appears. However, the use of traditional Betawi attire and

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songs should be understood as a form of symbolic representation rather than direct evidence of the use of the Betawi language itself. Both elements establish a visual and audio context that supports the presence of the language within the content. Thus, the combination of verbal, visual, and audio elements on Sofwan Amin's account demonstrates that the visibility of the Betawi language on TikTok is shaped not only through speech and text but also through the cultural markers that accompany the presentation of the content.

The Function of Language within the Virtual Linguistic Landscape on the Social Media Platform TikTok

From the perspective of the linguistic landscape, Landry and Bourhis (1997) distinguish between the informative and symbolic functions of language. The informative function relates to the conveyance of information regarding the linguistic characteristics of a given area, while the symbolic function pertains to the values and meanings attached to a language serving as a marker of group identity and indicating the status of a language within a social environment. Landry and Bourhis (1997) developed these concepts of informative and symbolic functions within the context of linguistic landscapes in physical spaces; applying them to TikTok represents an extension of this perspective into the digital realm.

Informative Function

The informative function encompasses the use of language as a means to convey information. Based on the analysis, there are seven content topics across 55 TikTok videos by Sofwan Amin from January to June 2026. The first topic concerns Betawi traditions and arts. Out of the 55 videos, 13 provide information on Betawi traditions and arts such as the "*ziarah kubur*" (grave visitation) tradition, "*mandi merang*" (ritual bathing with rice-straw ash), "*palang pintu*" (a traditional welcoming ceremony), "*malam abug*", "*ondel-ondel*" (traditional giant puppets), and various other Betawi customs and art forms. Another topic relates to the social life of the Betawi community. There are 13 videos that offer information or insights into the social life of the Betawi people, including their leisure activities, such as visiting tourist attractions and attending fashion shows. Interestingly, several videos discuss how many Betawi individuals today are well-educated, pursuing higher education, and even studying abroad. Other content includes 11 videos exploring the history and origins of place names in the Betawi region such as the history of the Manggarai sluice gate, the origins of names for various "*rawa*" (swamps) and "*kebon*" (gardens/orchards) in Jakarta, and more. There are also 8 videos dedicated to culinary topics, covering dishes like "*kerak telor*", "*kolak*", "*sayur babanci*", and others. Another category consists of 4 videos providing insights into prominent Betawi figures, such as Rano Karno, Mandra, and Sabeni. Additionally, 3 videos examine the etymology of certain terms, highlighting the influence of Arabic, Chinese, and Dutch on the Betawi language. Finally, there are 3 promotional videos, which provide information about a healthcare service in Indonesia.

Symbolic Function

The symbolic function of the Betawi language in Sofwan Amin's TikTok content can be observed through the use of linguistic elements that represent the ethnolinguistic identity of the Betawi community. This representation manifests, for instance, in expressions such as "Anak Betawi *Kudu* Bisa Bahagiakan Istri, Ya *Gak Cang*?" (A Betawi person must be able

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to make their wife happy, right, Uncle?), "Anak Betawi *Kudu* Punya Rumah" (A Betawi person must own a home), and "*Kagak Ribet*" (Not complicated). These expressions demonstrate that the Betawi language serves not merely as a means of communication, but also as a marker that links the content to a local identity. Specifically, the explicit mention of "Anak Betawi" (a Betawi person) constructs a group identity through language, while the use of vocabulary such as "*kudu*" (must), "*kagak*" (not/no), and "*cang*" (uncle) introduces linguistic features associated with the Betawi community. From the perspective of a virtual linguistic landscape, the presence of language in digital spaces can be understood as a representation of identity through various verbal and multimodal elements displayed on digital platforms (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009). Thus, the use of the Betawi language in this content serves a symbolic function by presenting a local identity through language choices that are perceptible to TikTok users.

This symbolic function is further reinforced through the use of hashtags such as "#betawi," "#betawipunyegaye," and "#betawiasli," as well as the inclusion of the term "Anak Betawi" (Betawi person/child of Betawi) within the text and video captions. These elements establish a connection between language, identity, and group representation in the digital space. In this context, hashtags serve not merely as supplementary information for the content, but as markers for identity categorization that explicitly link the content to the Betawi community. This aligns with the perspective of Landry and Bourhis (1997) regarding the symbolic function of a linguistic landscape namely, that the presence of a language reflects the identity and existence of an ethnolinguistic group. However, such representations should be interpreted critically. The use of the Betawi language and identity markers within the content does not necessarily imply that the creator's entire linguistic repertoire reflects the full linguistic diversity of the Betawi community, nor does it mean that the language is used consistently in their daily life. The identity that emerges in the content is a representation constructed through specific linguistic choices and visual-verbal elements. Therefore, the visibility of the Betawi language on Sofwan Amin's account illustrates how a local identity is presented and constructed through digital communication practices, rather than serving as a comprehensive depiction of the identity and linguistic practices of the entire Betawi community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the visibility of the Betawi language in Sofwan Amin's TikTok content is manifested through speech, on-screen text, captions, and hashtags showcasing the use of the Betawi language both independently and in combination with other languages. This representation is not shaped solely by verbal elements; it is further reinforced by visual and audio components, such as the use of traditional Betawi attire and the consistent inclusion of Betawi songs as background audio. The interplay of linguistic elements, clothing, and music constructs a representation of local identity, with these components mutually supporting one another within the virtual linguistic landscape. The informative function is evident in the use of the language to convey information regarding the Betawi community covering topics such as history, locations, notable figures, and vocabulary

tailored to the specific subject matter of each piece of content. Meanwhile, the symbolic function is reflected through the use of distinctively Betawi expressions, the explicit identification as an "Anak Betawi" (Betawi person), and the use of hashtags such as "#betawi," "#betawipunyegaye," and "#betawiasli," all of which signify a local identity. These findings demonstrate that the visibility of the Betawi language on TikTok is forged through an integration of verbal, visual, and audio elements, presenting Betawi identity as an integral part of communication practices within the digital sphere. This visibility is apparent not only in the use of the Betawi language as a medium for conveying messages but also in its role as a marker of Betawi identity. Consequently, the presence of the Betawi language within this content illustrates that a local language can be represented and negotiated through communication practices on social media.

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