



## **A Semiotic Study of *Angkot* Signage in Ambon: Decoding Public Messaging on Wheels**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores stickers' semiotic and cultural significance on public minibusses (*angkot*) in Ambon City, Indonesia, through a multimodal analysis grounded in Roland Barthes' (1964) denotative and connotative meaning framework. The research examines five *angkot* stickers and investigates how these mobile, grassroots texts encode literal and symbolic messages, reflecting Ambon's sociocultural values, linguistic hybridity, and glocalized identities. The findings reveal that the stickers combine informal and formal Bahasa Indonesia, colloquial Ambonese Malay, and global pop culture references to convey themes of faith, resilience, humor, and social critique. Their placement on *angkot* transforms these vehicles into mobile billboards, circulating localized messages across urban spaces and challenging traditional notions of static linguistic landscapes. This study addresses gaps in linguistic landscape research by focusing on transient, user-generated signage, highlighting the agency of drivers and local artists in shaping public discourse. It underscores the importance of grassroots creativity in mediating cultural identity. It offers insights into how ephemeral texts contribute to the dynamic interplay of global and local influences in post-colonial urban environments.

**Keywords:** *Glocalization, Grassroots Creativity, Linguistic Landscape, Mobile Signage, Semiotics*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Semiotics, the study of signs and their meanings (Saussure, 1916; Peirce, 1932), provides a critical lens for understanding how cultural and ideological messages are embedded in everyday objects. Barthes' (1964) framework of denotative and connotative meaning—distinguishing between a sign's literal message and its symbolic associations—has been widely applied to analyze visual and textual artifacts, from advertisements to graffiti (Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi, 2017; Chandler, 2022). In the context of public transportation, semiotics enables an exploration of how multimodal signs, such as vehicle stickers, encode layered meanings that reflect individual creativity and collective identity.

The linguistic landscape (LL), defined as the "visibility and salience of languages in public spaces" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), is a vital field for examining multilingualism and cultural representation in urban environments. However, LL scholarship has historically prioritized static, institutional signage (e.g., street names, billboards) over transient or mobile forms of communication (Backhaus, 2006; Gorter, 2006). This oversight persists despite the ubiquity of grassroots, user-generated signage in cities across the Global South, where public vehicles often serve as dynamic canvases for vernacular expression (Chiluwa, 2008; Hafez, 2020). In Indonesia, *angkot* (public minibusses) exemplify this phenomenon, as drivers and local artists personalize these vehicles with stickers featuring religious aphorisms, pop culture references, and colloquial humor (Faniran et al., 2019). These stickers transform *angkot* into mobile sites of cultural communication, yet their semiotic richness remains underexplored, particularly in smaller cities like Ambon.

Ambon City, the capital of Maluku Province in eastern Indonesia, offers a compelling context for this study. The city is characterized by linguistic hybridity, where Bahasa Indonesia (the national language) coexists with Ambonese Malay—a creole influenced by Dutch, Portuguese, and indigenous languages—and regional dialects. *Angkot* plays a central role in Ambon's urban life, serving not only as a primary mode of transportation but also as a platform for grassroots creativity. These vehicles traverse diverse neighborhoods, acting as mobile billboards circulating localized messages. Unlike LL studies in larger Indonesian cities like Jakarta or Bandung, which focus on commercial or institutional signs (Winahyu & Ibrahim, 2018; Goebel, 2020), Ambon's smaller scale and distinct linguistic ecology provide a unique opportunity to investigate how ephemeral, multimodal texts mediate cultural identity.

This study addresses three gaps in LL and semiotic research. First, while most studies emphasize fixed signage (Riani et al., 2021; Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias, 2020), mobile forms like *angkot* stickers remain overlooked despite their prevalence in Indonesian urban spaces. Second, scholarship on transportation signage disproportionately focuses on official directives (e.g., route boards, prohibitions) rather than user-generated content (Putra et al., 2024; Ayyub & Rohmah, 2024), marginalizing the voices of drivers and local artists. Third, Barthes' (1964) framework has rarely been applied to grassroots, multimodal texts like stickers, which blend text, imagery, and materiality to convey nuanced ideas. By analyzing five *angkot* stickers in Ambon, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the stickers' literal (denotative) meanings, and how do their textual, visual, and material features contribute to these surface-level messages?
2. What deeper (connotative) meanings do the stickers carry, and how do these reflect the cultural and ideological values of Ambon's communities?
3. How do the linguistic practices of Ambon City—particularly the interplay between Bahasa Indonesia, Ambonese Malay, and global influences—shape the creation and interpretation of the stickers?

This research challenges the traditional LL focus on static, institutional texts by centering mobile, grassroots signage in a smaller Indonesian city. It demonstrates how transient artifacts like *angkot* stickers negotiate cultural identity and glocalization, offering insights into vernacular creativity in rapidly transforming urban spaces.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Semiotics, Multimodality, and the Dynamics of Urban Communication*

Urban semiotics investigates how city signs—from graffiti to transit stickers—encode cultural, social, and ideological meanings. Rooted in Saussure (1916) and Barthes (1964), this field emphasizes the interplay between denotative (literal) and connotative (symbolic) messages, offering a framework to decode how everyday artifacts mediate power and identity (Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi, 2017; Chandler, 2022). Multimodality expands this lens by analyzing how text, imagery, and materiality collaborate to create layered meanings, as seen in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) work on visual grammar. For instance, stickers on public transport often merge bold typography, pop culture references, and vernacular language to engage diverse audiences (Abdeen, 2015). This multimodal approach is critical for studying transient texts like *angkot* stickers, which resist static interpretations and reflect the fluidity of urban life.

Linguistic landscape (LL) research traditionally prioritizes institutional signage, such as street names and billboards, framing cities as sites of top-down communication (Backhaus, 2006; Gorter, 2006). However, scholars increasingly recognize the role of grassroots, mobile texts in shaping urban discourse, particularly in the Global South (Chiluwa, 2008; Hafez, 2020). Mobile signage, such as *angkot* stickers, exemplifies how transient artifacts capture local creativity and spontaneity, challenging the notion of public space as dominated by institutional authority (Rowlett & Go, 2022). These texts are ephemeral yet pervasive, circulating messages across neighborhoods and fostering communal dialogue. Their study bridges gaps in LL scholarship by centering on marginalized voices and everyday practices.

Methodological innovations, such as digital ethnography and multimodal discourse analysis, have enabled researchers to capture the fleeting nature of mobile signage (Ottley et al., 2019). These tools are vital for analyzing stickers, which often combine colloquial language, visual metaphors, and material textures to convey localized meanings. For example, Faniran et al. (2019) demonstrate how Nigerian bus stickers critique societal norms using humor and religious iconography. Similarly, Goebel (2020) highlights Indonesia's multilingual LL, where vernacular texts negotiate national and regional identities. By integrating visual and textual data, researchers can uncover how transient artifacts mediate urban identities in rapidly changing contexts.

### *Grassroots Creativity, Glocalization, and Cultural Hybridity*

Grassroots creativity in urban signage reflects the agency of local communities to repurpose global symbols for localized expression. *Angkot* stickers exemplify this phenomenon in Indonesia, blending *Bahasa Indonesia*, Ambonese Malay, and global pop culture to assert hybrid identities (Faniran et al., 2019). For instance, a sticker might juxtapose a Casper the Ghost image with Ambonese slang, creating a glocalized text that resonates with local and transnational audiences (Ong, 2019). This hybridity challenges monolithic notions of cultural authenticity, positioning cities like Ambon as sites of vernacular innovation. Such practices underscore how grassroots texts negotiate globalization while preserving linguistic diversity.

The political dimension of mobile signage lies in its ability to amplify marginalized perspectives. Unlike institutional signs, which often reinforce dominant ideologies, stickers on *angkot* provide a platform for subaltern voices to critique class inequality or celebrate communal solidarity (Meireles, 2022; Theng et al., 2022). For example, Ambonese stickers use colloquial phrases like "jang balagu" (don't show off) to critique elitism, leveraging humor and

vernacular language to engage local audiences. These texts transform vehicles into mobile billboards, circulating counter-narratives across urban spaces. By doing so, they democratize public discourse and highlight the sociopolitical potential of everyday creativity.

The study of mobile signage also holds implications for urban policy and cultural preservation. Sezer (2020) argues that understanding vernacular texts can inform inclusive city planning, ensuring public spaces reflect community values. In Ambon, *angkot* stickers' use of Ambonese Malay challenges the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia, advocating for the visibility of regional languages in national LL frameworks. Policymakers could collaborate with drivers and artists to design campaigns promoting linguistic diversity or social cohesion. Similarly, educators might use these texts to teach critical semiotics, fostering an appreciation for grassroots creativity. Cities can cultivate more equitable and culturally vibrant urban landscapes by valuing transient signage.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in Roland Barthes' (1964) denotative and connotative meaning framework. The goal is to explore how stickers on Ambon's *angkot* encode literal and symbolic messages about faith, resilience, and identity. A multimodal social semiotics approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) analyzes the stickers' text, imagery, and materiality interplay. The design addresses linguistic landscape (LL) research gaps by focusing on mobile, grassroots signage rather than static or institutional texts.

The research design ensures a structured approach to understanding how *angkot* stickers function as mobile, grassroots forms of communication in Ambon. By focusing on the denotative and connotative meanings of the stickers, the study provides insights into how these transient artifacts reflect and shape the sociocultural fabric of urban life.

### ***Research Object***

The research objects are five stickers selected from *angkot* operating in Ambon City. The stickers were chosen based on thematic diversity, visual complexity, public visibility, and linguistic hybridity. Thematic diversity ensured that the stickers represented key themes in Ambon's sociocultural context, such as religious faith, humor, and critiques of class disparity. Visual complexity was considered to include stickers with bold typography, contrasting colors, or hybrid text-image designs, such as those combining Ambonese Malay text with pop culture icons. Public visibility was prioritized by selecting stickers placed on high-visibility areas of the *angkot*, such as rear windshields and side panels, to ensure frequent public exposure. Linguistic hybridity was a key criterion, as the stickers needed to reflect Ambon's multilingual identity by mixing Bahasa Indonesia and Ambonese Malay.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Data collection involved photographing the five selected stickers to capture their textual, visual, and material features. High-resolution images were taken to document the stickers' placement on the vehicles, including details such as font styles, colors, and accompanying imagery. To enhance the reliability of the study, two researchers independently coded the stickers using a shared codebook. Discrepancies in interpretation, such as differing views on whether a sticker conveyed humor or sarcasm, were resolved through discussion. This inter-rater reliability process ensured consistency in the analysis.

The analysis followed Barthes' (1964) denotative-connotative framework, operationalized through a two-step coding process. First, denotative elements were identified and categorized, including the text (language used, font styles, literal messages), imagery (types of images, visual composition), and materiality (colors, textures, placement on the vehicle). Second, connotative meanings were inferred through contextual and thematic analysis. This step involved interpreting the symbolic, ideological messages embedded in the stickers, such as resilience, communal solidarity, or critiques of socioeconomic inequality. The analysis also considered Ambon City's linguistic and cultural context. For example, stickers using Ambonese Malay were analyzed for their role in asserting local identity, while those using Bahasa Indonesia were examined for their ability to reach a broader audience. The interplay between global and local influences, such as using pop culture icons alongside religious symbols, was also explored.

## FINDING

The analysis of the five *angkot* stickers in Ambon City, guided by Barthes' (1964) denotative-connotative framework, reveals a rich interplay of linguistic, visual, and cultural elements. Each sticker was examined for its surface-level features—such as text, typography, imagery, and placement—before delving into the deeper, symbolic meanings embedded within them. This two-step process allowed for a nuanced understanding of how these transient, grassroots texts function as sites of cultural expression, social critique, and identity negotiation in Ambon's urban landscape. The findings are presented below, structured to highlight the stickers' denotative, connotative, and cultural dimensions.

### *Denotative Analysis*

The first sticker, "*Hidup itu Tuhan yang tentukan, kita yang jalani, orang lain yang ngomentarin,*" translates literally to "*God determines life, we live it, others comment on it.*" This sticker uses **informal Bahasa Indonesia**, with a bold font (type unspecified) and a black-and-white color scheme. The absence of imagery focuses on the text positioned on the rear windshield for maximum visibility. The informal language and colloquial phrasing suggest an intent to connect with local passengers familiar with everyday conversational styles. The simplicity of the design underscores the relatability of the message, framing it as a reflection on life's challenges and societal judgment. The rear windshield placement makes the sticker visible to passengers and pedestrians, making it a mobile public declaration. The text is split into two clauses: the first asserts divine control over life's outcomes, while the second critiques societal judgment. The lack of imagery focuses on the textual message, and its placement on the rear windshield ensures visibility to passengers and pedestrians. The informal language and grammatical precision suggest an intent to address a broad, multilingual audience.



**Figure 1. 1<sup>st</sup> sticker**

The second sticker, *"Gagal sarjana karena masa muda di atas roda,"* translates literally to *"Failed to graduate because the youth was spent on wheels."* This sticker employs **informal Bahasa Indonesia** with playful typography: *"Gagal"* (Failed) in yellow bold, *"Sarjana"* (Graduate) in white with a black outline, and *"Roda"* (Wheels) in black outlined with yellow. The Casper, the ghost image climbing the letter R, adds a whimsical element. The rear windshield placement targets younger audiences familiar with the struggles of balancing education and informal labor. The use of informal language and humor makes the sticker relatable to a specific demographic, particularly those familiar with the challenges of balancing work and education. The Casper ghost imagery adds a layer of global pop culture, creating a hybrid visual-textual message. The varied typography and colors make the sticker visually striking, ensuring it captures attention. The playful imagery and informal language indicate a target audience of younger passengers or locals familiar with pop culture references.



**Figure 2. 2nd sticker**

The third sticker, *"Bagaimana aku akan takut dengan kemiskinan sedangkan aku adalah hamba dari yang maha kaya,"* translates literally to *"How can I fear poverty when I am a servant of the All-Rich?"* The text uses **formal Bahasa Indonesia** in a bold, black-and-white font. The lack of imagery and rear windshield placement emphasize philosophical reflection over visual appeal. The formal language and grammatical structure suggest an intent to convey a universal message, appealing to a broad audience. The black-and-white color scheme reinforces the seriousness of the message, framing it as a spiritual or moral statement. The rear windshield placement ensures the sticker is visible to a wide range of viewers, making it a mobile public declaration. The uppercase *"AKU"* (I) visually underscores self-identity, while the rear windshield placement ensures broad visibility. The sentence juxtaposes poverty (*kemiskinan*) with divine wealth (*yang maha kaya*), emphasizing spiritual security.



**Figure 3. 3rd sticker**

The fourth sticker, "*Jang balagu deng orang pung barang. Orang kaya sombong wajar, orang miskin sombong, malu dong,*" translates to "*Don't show off with someone else's stuff. It's normal for a rich person to be arrogant, but if a poor person is elitist, that is embarrassing.*" The text uses **colloquial Ambonese Malay** with red, white, and black typography. Key terms like "*sombong*" (arrogant) are highlighted in red, and the six-row layout creates a rhythmic, emphatic structure. The rear windshield placement targets local audiences attuned to Ambonese social norms. The use of colloquial language makes the sticker relatable to a specific demographic, particularly those familiar with the nuances of Ambonese culture. The varied typography and colors make the sticker visually striking, ensuring it captures attention. The text is divided into six rows, alternating thick and thin fonts, with keywords like "*sombong*" (arrogant) highlighted in red. The rear windshield placement and vernacular language target local audiences familiar with Ambonese social norms.



**Figure 4. 4th sticker**

The fifth sticker, "*Boleh lelah tapi tidak boleh nyerah,*" translates literally to "*It's okay to be tired, but don't give up.*" The text uses **informal Bahasa Indonesia** arranged in four rows: "*Boleh*" (It's okay) in white bold, "*Lelah*" (tired) in yellow bold, "*tapi tidak boleh*" (but don't) in black highlighted with yellow, and "*Nyera*" (give up) in red uppercase. Placed on the **front entrance door**, the sticker greets passengers with a motivational message, its contrasting colors and typography emphasizing resilience. The informal language and motivational tone make the sticker relatable to many viewers, particularly those facing daily challenges. The black-and-white color scheme reinforces the seriousness of the message, framing it as a call to resilience. The front entrance door placement ensures that the sticker is visible to passengers as they board, reinforcing its message of resilience.



**Figure 5. 5th sticker**

### **Connotative Analysis**

The first sticker, "*Hidup itu Tuhan yang tentukan kita yang jalani, orang lain yang ngomentarin,*" connotes **spiritual surrender** and **divine trust** through the phrase "*Hidup itu*

*Tuhan yang tentukan*" (God determines life). This reflects Ambon's religious ethos, emphasizing faith in divine providence. The phrase *"kita yang jalani"* (we live it) highlights **personal agency**, suggesting that individuals must actively navigate their paths while life's outcomes are divinely ordained. The latter half, *"orang lain yang ngomentarin"* (others comment on it), critiques societal judgment, symbolizing **resistance to external scrutiny**. The black-and-white palette reinforces seriousness, framing the sticker as a moral manifesto. The informal language and colloquial phrasing make the message relatable, resonating with local passengers who face similar societal pressures. The rear windshield placement makes the sticker visible to passengers and pedestrians, making it a mobile public declaration. This connotative analysis reveals how the sticker combines linguistic and visual elements to communicate a philosophical reflection on faith and resilience.

The second sticker, *"Gagal sarjana karena masa muda di atas roda,"* critiques **socioeconomic trade-offs** in Ambon's informal economy. The self-deprecating humor of the text, combined with the playful Casper ghost imagery, symbolizes **resilience through humor**. The yellow highlights evoke youthful energy, contrasting with the black outlines hinting at regret. The informal language and humor make the sticker relatable to a specific demographic, particularly those familiar with the challenges of balancing work and education. The Casper ghost imagery adds a layer of global pop culture, creating a hybrid visual-textual message. The varied typography and colors make the sticker visually striking, ensuring it captures attention. The rear windshield placement and dynamic design prioritize engagement with younger, local passengers. This connotative analysis reveals how the sticker combines linguistic and visual elements to communicate a playful yet critical message.

The third sticker, *"Bagaimana aku akan takut dengan kemiskinan sedangkan aku adalah hamba dari yang maha kaya,"* connotes **spiritual confidence** through the phrase *"Bagaimana aku akan takut dengan kemiskinan"* (How can I fear poverty). This positions poverty as irrelevant to those under divine protection. The phrase *"sedangkan AKU"* (while I), with "AKU" written in uppercase, emphasizes **self-confidence** and **individual identity**, reinforcing the speaker's conviction. The phrase *"hamba dari yang maha kaya"* (servant of the All-Rich) elevates faith over material lack, reflecting a **theology of abundance** prevalent in Ambon's religious discourse. The formal language and grammatical structure suggest an intent to convey a universal message, appealing to a broad audience. The black-and-white color scheme reinforces the seriousness of the message, framing it as a spiritual or moral statement. The rear windshield placement ensures the sticker is visible to a wide range of viewers, making it a mobile public declaration.

The fourth sticker, *"Jang balagu deng orang pung barang. Orang kaya sombong wajar, orang miskin sombong, malu dong,"* critiques **class performativity** through the phrase *"Jang balagu deng orang pung barang"* (Don't show off with someone else's stuff). This condemns materialism among the poor while normalizing it for the wealthy (*"orang kaya sombong wajar"*). The red highlights on *"sombong"* (arrogant) and *"malu dong"* (embarrassing) visually amplify societal shame, framing elitism as a moral failing. The use of colloquial language makes the sticker relatable to a specific demographic, particularly those familiar with the nuances of Ambonese culture. The varied typography and colors make the sticker visually striking, ensuring it captures attention. The rear windshield placement and vernacular language target local audiences familiar with Ambonese social norms. This connotative analysis reveals



how the sticker combines linguistic and visual elements to communicate a critical message about social behavior.

The fifth sticker, "*Boleh lelah tapi tidak boleh nyera*," acknowledges the **physical and emotional toll** of labor in Ambon's informal sector through the phrase "*Boleh lelah*" (It's okay to be tired). The phrase "*tapi tidak boleh nyera*" (but don't give up) transforms fatigue into a rallying cry for **communal perseverance**. The monochromatic design mirrors the stark realities of daily life, yet the bold font asserts unwavering resolve. The informal language and motivational tone make the sticker relatable to many viewers, particularly those facing daily challenges. The black-and-white color scheme reinforces the seriousness of the message, framing it as a call to resilience. The front entrance door placement ensures that the sticker is visible to passengers as they board, reinforcing its message of resilience. This connotative analysis highlights the sticker's role as a straightforward yet impactful piece of communication.

### *Cultural and Linguistic Context*

The stickers' use of **Bahasa Indonesia** and **Ambonese Malay** reflects the linguistic hybridity of Ambon's urban environment. Stickers in **Bahasa Indonesia** (1, 3, 5) transcend local dialects to address broader audiences, often conveying universal themes like faith and resilience. In contrast, **Ambonese Malay** in Sticker 4 asserts **local identity**, using colloquial phrases like "*jang balagu*" to critique social norms unique to Ambon. This linguistic duality mirrors Indonesia's national-local tension, where Bahasa Indonesia unifies diverse ethnicities while regional languages preserve cultural specificity.

Sticker 2's Casper the Ghost—a global pop culture symbol—is repurposed to critique local economic struggles, exemplifying **globalization**. Similarly, Sticker 4's red-and-white color scheme echoes Indonesia's national flag, subtly reinforcing patriotism while critiquing class inequality. These hybrids reflect Ambon's urban identity, where global icons and local values coexist in grassroots art.

The stickers' placement on the *angkot*—whether on the rear windshield or front entrance door—transforms the vehicles into **mobile billboards**, ensuring messages circulate across neighborhoods. This transient yet pervasive visibility challenges static notions of linguistic landscapes, emphasizing how mobility shapes public discourse. The interplay of global and local influences, such as using pop culture icons alongside religious symbols, underscores Ambon's role as a site of **vernacular creativity** and **grassroots resistance**. These stickers reflect the city's sociocultural dynamics and actively shape its mobile linguistic landscape, offering insights into how transient signage mediates urban life in post-colonial Indonesia.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate how *angkot* stickers in Ambon City function as dynamic semiotic artifacts, blending text, imagery, and linguistic hybridity to communicate cultural identity and grassroots narratives. Guided by Barthes' (1964) framework, the analysis reveals that denotative meanings in the stickers rely heavily on linguistic and visual immediacy. For instance, the sticker "*Boleh lelah tapi tidak boleh nyerah*" (It's okay to be tired, but don't give up) uses bold typography and contrasting colors to convey literal resilience. At the same time, informal Bahasa Indonesia ensures accessibility to a broad audience. This aligns with Abdeen's (2015) assertion that multimodal design enhances clarity in public communication. By prioritizing simplicity and visibility, the stickers fulfill their primary role as mobile, attention-grabbing texts, directly addressing Research Question 1 on surface-level messaging.

At the connotative level, the stickers encode ideological values that reflect Ambon's sociocultural ethos. The phrase "*Hidup itu Tuhan yang tentukan*" (God determines life) transcends its literal meaning to symbolize spiritual surrender and communal trust in divine providence, resonating with Ambonese religious discourse. Similarly, the critique of class performativity in "*Jang balagu deng orang pung barang*" (Don't show off with someone else's stuff) leverages Ambonese Malay to condemn elitism, echoing Meireles' (2022) observations on grassroots political commentary. These connotative layers illustrate how stickers mediate localized values, answering Research Question 2 by linking symbolic meanings to cultural and ideological frameworks. The absence of overt institutional messaging underscores the agency of drivers and artists in shaping public discourse.

The linguistic practices of Ambon—particularly the interplay between Bahasa Indonesia and Ambonese Malay—emerge as central to the stickers' creation and interpretation. Stickers in formal Bahasa Indonesia, such as "*Bagaimana aku akan takut dengan kemiskinan*" (How can I fear poverty), universalize spiritual confidence. At the same time, those in colloquial Ambonese Malay (e.g., "*jang balagu*") assert local identity and critique social norms. This duality mirrors Indonesia's national-regional linguistic tensions, as Goebel (2020) noted, where Bahasa Indonesia unifies while regional languages preserve cultural specificity. The strategic use of global pop culture symbols, such as Casper the Ghost, further exemplifies glocalization, where global icons are repurposed to address local realities (Roudometof, 2016). These findings directly respond to Research Question 3, highlighting how linguistic hybridity and glocal influences shape sticker semiotics.

The stickers' mobility transforms *angkot* into circulating billboards, enabling messages to traverse neighborhoods and reach diverse audiences. This transient yet pervasive visibility challenges static notions of linguistic landscapes (Gorter, 2006), aligning with Lou's (2016) concept of mobile "skinscapes." For example, the motivational sticker on the *angkot*'s entrance door greets passengers with a message of perseverance, its placement ensuring repeated engagement. Similarly, critiques of class inequality on rear windshields provoke reflection among pedestrians and following drivers. This mobility underscores the importance of ephemeral signage in shaping urban belonging, as Rowlett and Go (2022) observed in Cambodia's tuk-tuk graffiti. By circulating vernacular texts, *angkot* stickers democratize public space, privileging grassroots voices over institutional authority.

The study's implications extend to policy and pedagogy in multilingual urban contexts. The stickers' effectiveness in fostering dialogue aligns with Stroud and Mpendukana's (2019) advocacy for *linguistic citizenship*, where marginalized communities use vernacular texts to assert agency. Policymakers could collaborate with *angkot* drivers to design campaigns promoting linguistic diversity, such as stickers celebrating Ambonese Malay idioms. Educators might integrate these texts into curricula to teach critical semiotics, analyzing how language mixing challenges national linguistic hierarchies. Furthermore, digital archiving of stickers could preserve Ambonese Malay against homogenizing pressures, addressing Tupas' (2015) concerns about language endangerment. By valuing mobile signage as a form of cultural capital, cities like Ambon can nurture inclusive urban landscapes that reflect the creativity and resilience of their communities.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the semiotic richness of *angkot* stickers in Ambon City, demonstrating how these mobile, grassroots artifacts serve as dynamic platforms for cultural

expression, social critique, and identity negotiation. Through a multimodal analysis guided by Barthes' (1964) framework, the research reveals that the stickers' denotative meanings rely on linguistic and visual immediacy, while their connotative layers reflect Ambon's sociocultural ethos, including themes of faith, resilience, and class critique. The interplay between Bahasa Indonesia and Ambonese Malay underscores the city's linguistic hybridity, with global pop culture symbols further exemplifying glocalization. These stickers democratize public discourse by transforming *angkot* into mobile billboards, privileging grassroots voices over institutional authority. The findings emphasize the importance of transient signage in shaping urban belonging and suggest that valuing such vernacular creativity can foster more inclusive and culturally vibrant urban landscapes. This study fills gaps in linguistic landscape research and offers insights into how ephemeral texts mediate cultural identity in rapidly transforming cities like Ambon.

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