

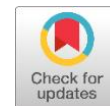
From linguistic tokens and functions into English language teaching pedagogical tools: Exploring schoolscape in Marawi's Islamic and integrated school

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ABSTRACT

Schoolscape, a focused strand of linguistic landscape research, refers to the linguistic displays in school environments that reflect institutional ideologies, language practices, and pedagogical priorities. This study qualitatively examines the schoolscape of Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation (DIIF) in Marawi City, Philippines, with particular attention to the extent of English representation and its role in facilitating English language teaching and learning among learners and teachers. Data were collected through systematic photographic documentation of school-based signs, complemented by in-depth interviews with administrators, English teachers, and selected students. The signs were analyzed through linguistic and functional classification, while interview transcriptions were examined thematically and compared with the visual findings to identify converging and divergent perspectives. The findings reveal that English-only signs were highly visible with 58.24% of the schoolscape. Additional multilingual signs, combining English with Arabic and Filipino, constituted 35.71% of the corpus, indicating that multilingual representation was present but less prominent than English. Participants perceived the schoolscape as a useful environmental linguistic resource that provides repeated exposure to English, reinforces classroom learning, supports incidental vocabulary engagement, and creates low-stakes opportunities for language use. The study does not establish measurable learning gains or treat schoolscape as a tested instructional intervention. However, it shows how systematically designed linguistic displays can complement formal instruction, while more intentional multilingual representation can strengthen the cultural and linguistic inclusivity of the school environment.



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1. Introduction

Language is not only a medium of communication but also a visual resource through which institutions construct identities, negotiate ideologies, and shape learning experiences (Gorter, 2018; Malinowski, 2015; Shohamy, 2015). This visible dimension of language has been examined through the concept of linguistic landscape (LL), which refers to the presence and display of languages in public spaces and places (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). As LL research expanded into educational settings, scholars introduced the notion of schoolscape to capture the linguistic and educational resources embedded within schools, including signs, posters, bulletin boards, classroom displays, murals, and other visual texts that collectively reflect and reproduce institutional language ideologies (Brown, 2012). Far from being merely decorative features of educational environments, schoolscape function as pedagogical, symbolic, and

ideological spaces in which language learning, identity formation, cultural representation, and institutional power intersect (Gorter et al., 2021; Krompák et al., 2022; Szabó & Brown, 2025; Schvarcz & Warren, 2025)

Growing research has highlighted the pedagogical potential of schoolscape, particularly their capacity to provide authentic and repeated exposure to language beyond formal classroom instruction. Visible language resources may support vocabulary development, contextualized meaning-making, multilingual awareness, learner engagement, and language awareness (Gorter et al., 2021; Bernardo, 2024; Eliawati et al., 2024). From this perspective, the physical environment becomes part of the language-learning process, offering learners opportunities to encounter and interpret linguistic resources in meaningful contexts. However, exposure alone does not constitute learning; the pedagogical value of schoolscape texts depends on learners' attention to, interpretation of, and engagement with the resources available in their surroundings (Gorter et al., 2021; Hancock, 2022).

Several complementary theoretical perspectives help explain the relationship between language visibility and learning. Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) Language Choice Theory situates language selection within audience, perceived proficiency, and identity, suggesting that visible language choices may reveal how institutions assign value to particular linguistic resources. Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space further positions the school as a socially produced environment shaped by institutional decisions, pedagogical practices, and everyday experiences, while Tupas (2024), Pennycook (2008), Stroud and Mpendukana (2009), Im (2023), and Sadiq (2024) emphasize that linguistic signs can actively co-produce spaces and their meanings. Together, these perspectives allow schoolscape to be understood as a site where institutional language ideologies become materially visible and where particular languages, identities, and forms of knowledge may be given greater presence than others.

The connection between schoolscape and language learning is further illuminated by incidental language learning, ecological perspectives, and affordance theory. Cenoz and Gorter (2008) identify linguistic landscapes as potential resources for incidental language learning, as everyday encounters with written texts may create opportunities to notice and process language outside deliberately structured lessons. Van Lier (2000, 2004) similarly views learning as participation in a semiotic environment in which learners interact with people, texts, spaces, and other available resources, while Gibson's (1979) concept of affordance explains how environmental features become learning opportunities when learners perceive and act upon their potential. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that English signs, displays, announcements, and other schoolscape texts become pedagogically meaningful not simply through their presence but through learners' active engagement with them.

Empirical studies have shown that schoolscape can contribute to language awareness, intercultural competence, multilingual literacy, identity construction, and learner engagement (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Menken et al., 2018; Dumanig & David, 2019; Riadi & Warti, 2021). Research also indicates that English frequently occupies a privileged position in educational linguistic landscapes, where it may function as a language of academic authority, institutional communication, and broader educational mobility (Dressler, 2015; Wang, 2015; Hult, 2014; Muriungi & Mudogo, 2021). Yet much of the literature remains concerned with documenting the presence and distribution of languages, leaving less attention to how schoolscape practices are interpreted and used as resources for English language learning and teaching. This gap is particularly relevant in educational settings where linguistic visibility reflects not only pedagogical considerations but also institutional, cultural, and ideological priorities.

The Philippine context presents a similar pattern. Studies have documented the prominence of English in educational linguistic landscapes, particularly its association with authority, instruction, and institutional communication (Astillero, 2017; Magno, 2017; Abbas et al., 2022; Reintegrado-Celino & Bernardo, 2023). Although this scholarship has advanced understanding of language hierarchies and institutional language ideologies, much of it has focused on public schools, universities, and mainstream educational settings. Less is known about schoolscape in institutions where formal education intersects with religious commitments and culturally embedded language practices, particularly Islamic schools in which language visibility may index religious affiliation, cultural belonging, institutional authority, and orientations toward broader educational opportunities.

This gap is especially relevant to Islamic educational settings, where Arabic and English may occupy different yet overlapping ideological and pedagogical positions. Arabic may carry religious and symbolic authority through its association with Islamic knowledge, worship, and communal identity, whereas English may be valued for its role in formal education, academic discourse, and participation in wider

national and global domains (Eliawati et al., 2024; Indrasanti & Wita, 2023; Rohmah et al., 2024). Their coexistence, therefore, cannot be understood simply as evidence of harmonious multilingualism; rather, the positioning and functions of these languages may reveal how different forms of value and legitimacy are negotiated within the same educational space (Eliawati et al., 2024; Nurseha, 2025). Examining such schoolscape can thus illuminate how religious identity, cultural continuity, academic priorities, and educational aspirations are made visible through institutional language practices (Eliawati et al., 2024; Rohmah et al., 2024).

This issue is particularly salient in Marawi City, where Meranaw, Filipino, Arabic, and English participate in a complex sociolinguistic environment shaped by Islamic traditions and formal educational institutions (Latip-Yusoph, 2016; Lomangco, 2025). Situated in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the city provides a context in which language practices are closely connected with cultural identity, religious life, and educational experience (Abbas et al., 2022). Its multilingual visual environment, including religious expressions, Arabic calligraphy, and culturally meaningful signs, demonstrates how language visibility can carry meanings that extend beyond communication. Within schools, such resources may signal which languages are associated with religious belonging, local identity, academic authority, and access to wider educational domains.

Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation (DIIF), an Islamic school in Maraw City, provides a relevant setting for examining these relationships because it brings religious and formal educational orientations together within a multilingual environment. Arabic, English, Filipino, and Meranaw occupy different social, cultural, and educational positions, raising questions about how an Islamic educational institution constructs and negotiates its identity through visible language practices. Examining the DIIF schoolscape can reveal how institutional language choices make particular values visible, how these values are positioned in relation to one another, and how the resulting environment relates to English language learning and teaching. The schoolscape is therefore approached not merely as a collection of signs but as a social and pedagogical space where language ideologies, religious identity, institutional priorities, and educational aspirations become materially visible.

In response to these research interests and gaps, the present study examines the schoolscape of DIIF in Marawi City as a site where multilingual, ideological, and pedagogical resources intersect. Rather than treating English representation as an isolated feature of the visual environment, the study considers English alongside Arabic and other languages that participate in the institution's religious, cultural, and educational life. It specifically examines how English is represented in the schoolscape and how this linguistic environment contributes to English language learning and teaching. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is English represented in the schoolscape of Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation?
2. How does the schoolscape contribute to English language learning and teaching among English language teachers and learners at Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation?

The study contributes to scholarship on linguistic landscapes and schoolscape by examining an Islamic educational setting in which language visibility is closely intertwined with religious identity and educational aspirations. Theoretically, it brings Language Choice Theory and spatial perspectives into dialogue with incidental language learning, ecological, and affordance perspectives to examine how visible language practices operate within an Islamic integrated school. Empirically, it adds evidence from a comparatively underrepresented Philippine educational context while connecting the analysis of linguistic representation with English language learning and teaching. More broadly, the study demonstrates how schoolscape can serve as spaces through which institutions negotiate cultural and religious continuity alongside participation in wider academic and global domains.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design grounded in linguistic landscape (LL) inquiry to examine the representation of English in the schoolscape of Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation (DIIF) and its perceived contribution to English language learning and teaching. The study was conducted at DIIF in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines, an Islamic integrated school where religious and formal educational orientations intersect. The coexistence of Arabic, English, Filipino, and Meranaw within the institution provided an appropriate

setting for examining how language visibility, institutional practices, cultural identity, and pedagogical experiences intersect in a multilingual Islamic educational environment.

The study drew on two complementary sources of data: a visual schoolscape corpus and semi-structured interviews. The visual corpus comprised 182 linguistic and semiotic signs documented across classrooms, corridors, administrative offices, and other institutional spaces, including announcements, bulletin materials, classroom charts, school designs, labels, posters, schedules, signboards, slogans, and banners. The unit of analysis was an identifiable linguistic or semiotic token functioning as a distinct communicative element; a unified display was treated as one token when its components served a single communicative purpose, while duplicate photographs, repeated representations, and materials outside the schoolscape were excluded. Each sign was photographed, catalogued, and classified according to its physical and communicative type (see Table 1), monolingual or multilingual status (see Table 2), specific language used/composition (see Table 3), and predominant communicative function (see Table 4).

Table 1. Distribution of Types of Signs

Types of Signs	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Announcements/Notices	4	2.20
Bulletins/Bulletin Board Material	12	6.59
Certificates/Placards Displayed	3	1.65
Classroom Charts	49	26.92
Classroom/School Designs	53	29.12
Labels/Tags	4	2.20
Memoranda	1	0.55
Mural/Artwork	5	2.75
Policy Boards/Rule Signages/Rule Prints	10	5.49
Posters	4	2.20
Printed Learning Displays	2	1.10
Schedules/Timetables	12	6.59
Signboards/Nameplates	11	6.04
Slogans/Quotations	6	3.30
Streamers/Banners/Tarpaulins	6	3.30
Total	182	100.00

Table 2. Distribution of Monolingual and Multilingual Signs

Category of Signs	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Monolingual	117	64.29
Multilingual	65	35.71
Total	182	100.00

Table 3. Distribution of Languages Used in the Signs

Types of Signs	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
English only	106	58.24
English and Arabic	50	27.47
English and Filipino	5	2.75
English, Arabic, and Filipino	10	5.49
Filipino only	5	2.75
Arabic only	6	3.30
Total	182	100.00

These frequencies and percentages, as presented in the four tables, were used solely to provide a descriptive profile of the corpus and were not treated as inferential statistical measures. Moreover, the interview component involved fifteen (15) purposively selected participants: three (3) school administrators, four (4) English language teachers, and eight (8) Grade 12 students. The administrators were selected because of their leadership responsibilities and knowledge of institutional language practices; the English teachers had taught at DIIF for at least three years and were included because of

their direct involvement in English instruction; and the students had been continuously enrolled at DIIF from either preschool or Grade 1, providing sustained experience of the school's linguistic and educational environment.

Table 4. Distribution of Functions of the Linguistic Tokens

Function	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Information	158	86.83
Symbolic	3	1.64
Economic	0	0.00
Cultural	0	0.00
Beautification	21	11.53
Total	182	100.00

Gender was not used as a sampling or analytical criterion. The eight student participants were considered appropriate for this focused qualitative inquiry on the basis of information power, which emphasizes participant specificity, study focus, theoretical grounding, quality of dialogue, and analytical strategy rather than numerical representativeness (Malterud et al., 2016). The three participant groups provided complementary institutional, pedagogical, and learner perspectives on the production, use, and experience of the schoolscape.

Three instruments were employed: a structured schoolscape inventory checklist, semi-structured interview guides, and a smartphone for photographic documentation and audio recording. The inventory recorded the type of token, languages represented, language prominence, communicative function, target audience, and source of production, while separate interview guides were prepared for administrators, teachers, and students according to their respective roles. Data collection began after institutional permission and ethical approval had been obtained, followed by participant recruitment, informed consent, systematic documentation of the school environment, and face-to-face interviews lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Photographs, inventory records, audio recordings, field notes, and transcripts were securely stored and anonymized through participant codes, with interviews transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis integrated the visual corpus and interview accounts through an iterative qualitative process. The visual signs were organized according to their linguistic composition and communicative functions, after which their language choices and institutional contexts were examined. Interview transcripts were repeatedly reviewed, coded inductively, and grouped into broader themes concerning English exposure, reinforcement of classroom learning, motivation, confidence, classroom integration, and the role of other languages in the school environment. The visual findings were then compared with administrators' explanations of language choices, teachers' accounts of pedagogical use, and students' experiences of encountering and engaging with English. Convergence across these sources strengthened the interpretation, while differences were retained as potentially meaningful distinctions between institutional representation and stakeholder experience.

Coding decisions were reviewed systematically, particularly where the linguistic composition or function of a sign could support more than one interpretation. The analysis maintained clear distinctions between the language displayed, the communicative purpose of each sign, and its potential pedagogical relevance. Finally, the integrated findings were interpreted through Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) Language Choice Theory and Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space, which together provided a basis for examining the social and contextual considerations underlying language visibility and the schoolscape as a socially produced institutional environment.

Finally, since the study did not employ language proficiency tests, pre- and post-assessments, or other measures of learning gain, it does not establish causal effects of the schoolscape on English proficiency or language acquisition. References to vocabulary development, motivation, confidence, exposure, and learning were therefore interpreted as participants' reported or perceived experiences rather than independently measured outcomes. This methodological boundary ensured that the findings remained consistent with the study's descriptive qualitative design while allowing the visual corpus and participant accounts to illuminate how the DIIF schoolscape represents English and how it is experienced as a resource for English language learning and teaching.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the data and results of the study. This includes the analyses and interpretations of the schoolscape and the interviews.

3.1. English Language Representation in the Schoolscape of Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation

The analysis of the 182 photographed signs shows that English-only signs (58.24%) occupy the most dominant and visibly legitimized position in the schoolscape of DIIF. Among the documented signs, English-only signage was the most prevalent. Even among bilingual and multilingual signs, which together account for 35.71%, English remained the primary or first language in most cases, while the remaining 6.05% represented signs using other languages. This strong visual presence highlights the central role of English as a communicative and symbolic code across the school's academic, administrative, and public spaces. The interview data further supports this pattern, particularly in terms of how English is represented and perceived within the schoolscape. These findings are discussed thematically in the following section.

a) *English as the default academic and institutional language*

A clear theme across school administrator narratives is the treatment of English as the natural and expected code for academic and institutional communication, as illustrated in Figure 1. School Administrator 1 explained, *"The decision is based on the formality of the text, and English usually makes it formal,"* and further emphasized its readability, stating that English is used because *"it is readable and comprehensible to many students."* Similarly, School Administrator 2 shared that *"we choose languages based on what our students and teachers commonly use, mainly English, Filipino, and Meranaw."* School Administrator 3 likewise explained that *"language inclusion in our schoolscape is guided by relevance, audience, and function. We prioritize languages that ensure clarity, accessibility, and cultural alignment... Thus, English is used for academic and formal communication."*

These views are consistent with the visual data, where English is widely used in academic reminders, classroom charts, posters, and official announcements. The findings support Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) Language Choice Theory, which suggests that language choices in signage are influenced by language management or policy, language ideology or perceived prestige, and assumptions about the audience's language proficiency. The prominence of English in the schoolscape also reflects Lefebvre's (1991) concept of perceived space, as its repeated presence in academic and institutional settings contributes to the normalization of English as a language of authority, learning, and formal communication.



Fig 1. Examples of signs showing English as the default academic and institutional language

Moreover, this finding coincides with studies such as Backhaus (2007) in Tokyo and Bernardo (2024) in the Philippines, where English is shown to dominate formal and instructional signs. These parallels indicate that in many educational and urban settings, English often emerges as the preferred code for institutional communication because it carries prestige, global utility, and perceived neutrality. Such dominance arises from language ideologies that position English as the most effective medium for academic access, modernity, and upward mobility, prompting schools and other institutions to rely on it in producing formal signage.

However, the present results contradict the findings of Gorter and Cenoz (2015) in Basque schools, where local and minority languages receive equal, or even greater, visibility to reinforce regional identity

and promote linguistic revitalization. This contrast occurs because Basque schools operate within a strong policy and sociocultural framework that explicitly mandates and values the public presence of the Basque language, making multilingual visibility a deliberate political and pedagogical choice. In this study's context, the absence of similarly strong local-language mandates and the dominance of English-based academic expectations contribute to a schoolscape where English overshadows other languages, which manifests institutional priorities rather than cultural or identity-driven language planning.

In essence, while an English-rich environment is chosen and perceived to establish an academic setting, it may also consequently marginalize Filipino, Arabic, and Meranaw languages. The overwhelming visibility of English may indicate that students encounter it as the default institutional voice, shaping how they interpret authority, academic legitimacy, and formal communication. This occurs because LL does not merely reflect language use; it reinforces language hierarchies (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Brown, 2012). When English dominates the visual field, other languages may become symbolically peripheral, which may signal learners that they hold less institutional value.

b) *English as a symbol of prestige and legitimacy*

The interviews also indicate that English is symbolically valued for its association with academic success and legal compliance, as illustrated in Figure 2. School Administrator 2 asserted that “*English is seen as important for education, jobs, and communication,*” while Administrator 1 emphasized alignment with RA 12027, which discontinues the mandatory use of the regional mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction, reverting instruction to Filipino and English, noting, “*I think it has to do with the practical use of the English language. It is mainly the language of the school and the medium of instruction.*” These views demonstrate how English signs embody prestige and upward mobility.



Fig 2. Examples of signs showing English as a symbol of prestige and legitimacy

These perspectives indicate that English signage should not be understood as a merely functional or administrative choice; rather, it is deeply embedded in ideological formations that associate English proficiency with socioeconomic mobility, institutional credibility, and educational quality. This interpretation is consistent with Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) Language Choice Theory, particularly the ideology condition, which posits that language selection is often guided by beliefs regarding prestige, authority, and symbolic capital attached to specific linguistic forms. In the Philippine context, these ideological associations are historically and structurally reinforced. Socioeconomic transformations have gradually consolidated English as one of the most powerful linguistic resources in the country, despite long-standing nationalist critiques since the postcolonial period. As Tupas (2024) emphasizes, the continued expansion of capitalist globalization has not only sustained but further intensified ideologies positioning English as superior, desirable, and as a perceived social equalizer, thereby deepening its symbolic dominance in institutional and public domains. Within education, this has translated into the widespread perception of English as a marker of academic excellence, employability, and access to global opportunities, making it a preferred language in school signage for institutions seeking to project prestige and legitimacy.

Furthermore, the respondents' references to legal and policy alignment, such as RA 12027, indicate that the use of English is intertwined with institutional compliance and regulatory expectations. This echoes Mahboob and Cruz (2013), who argue that English maintains its dominance in Philippine education because it is deeply embedded in language policy frameworks and sustained by ideologies of linguistic capital. The administrators' views also reflect Lefebvre's (1991) notion of conceived space, where institutional actors design school environments in ways that reproduce formal structures and dominant ideologies. By foregrounding English in signage, they reaffirm the school's alignment with national educational standards while simultaneously reinforcing the belief that English is the most legitimate language of learning. Hence, these perspectives demonstrate that English signage operates as both a practical instrument and a symbolic marker of prestige, authority, and aspiration. It embodies the promise of upward mobility, communicates institutional compliance, and perpetuates the widely held belief that mastering English is essential for academic and professional success.

Moreover, the primacy of English aligns with Lefebvre's (1991) conceived space, wherein planners and school administrators design the environment according to ideologies of global competitiveness and academic excellence. English becomes visually privileged because it symbolizes academic achievement, international mobility, and institutional modernity, making it the logical choice for a school seeking to project professionalism and compliance with national standards. This interpretation resonates with Dumanig and David's (2019) observation that English-dominant schools often serve aspirational and professional purposes, reinforcing the belief that English proficiency is tied to socioeconomic advancement.

In contrast, the findings diverge from Menken et al. (2018), who showed that New York City schools intentionally prioritized culturally symbolic and multilingual signage to affirm student identities, an approach driven by strong advocacy for linguistic inclusivity. The difference lies in institutional priorities: while the New York schools center cultural recognition, the present schoolscape is perceived to center academic legitimacy, resulting in English occupying the symbolic high ground. Consequently, this dominance strengthens the institution's academic aspirations but simultaneously creates a linguistic hierarchy where Filipino, Arabic, and Meranaw occupy secondary visual positions, despite their vital roles in shaping the cultural and religious identities of learners in Marawi City.

c) *Attempts toward linguistic balance but unequal representation in practice*

School administrators expressed a desire to reflect the school's multilingual identity as illustrated in Figure 3, with School Administrator 2 stating, "We try to balance English with Filipino, Meranaw, and Arabic," and Administrator 3 asserting that "*While English supports academic excellence, Arabic nurtures our Islamic identity, and Meranaw strengthens cultural pride. We intentionally design the schoolscape to reflect all these facets in a harmonious and inclusive way.*" This demonstrates an ideological commitment to inclusivity and cultural representation.

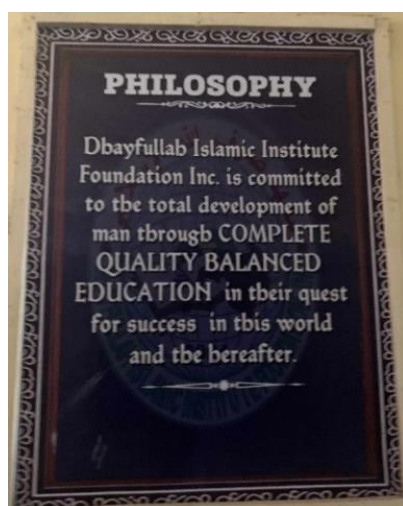


Fig 3. Examples of signs showing attempts toward linguistic balance but unequal representation in practice

However, the visual data reveal a gap between intention and practice. Filipino-only (2.75%) and Arabic-only (3.30%) signs remain scarce, and multilingual signage (English and Arabic; English and Filipino; English, Arabic, and Filipino) accounts for only 35.71% of the total, making the remaining

58.24% account solely for monolingual English-only signs. This discrepancy suggests that while administrators express support for linguistic inclusion, actual sign-making practices remain guided by long-standing priorities of clarity, institutional order, and perceived audience comprehension. This aligns with Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) argument that language choices in signage are rarely neutral; sign-makers tend to select the language that is easiest to produce, most widely understood, and most institutionally expected, conditions that overwhelmingly favor English. The finding coincides with De Los Reyes (2020) in Manila schools, where English continued to dominate the schoolscape even though administrators publicly advocated for linguistic diversity, which may indicate that ideological support alone does not guarantee multilingual visibility.

Conversely, it contradicts studies such as Shohamy and Waksman (2009), which documented successful implementation of balanced multilingual schoolscales through deliberate policy actions, strong administrative will, and active participation from teachers and students. The contrast highlights why the present schoolscape remains uneven: without explicit policy directives, structured programs, or intentional visual planning, multilingual signage tends to occupy a secondary role. Thus, the results posit that multilingual ideals require institutional commitment and systematic implementation; otherwise, the LL naturally defaults to the practical and dominant language, that is perceived to be English, leaving culturally significant languages visually underrepresented.

In essence, despite intentions to honor the school's Islamic and multilingual situation, the schoolscape continues to construct a linguistic hierarchy that seems to privilege English. This occurs because institutional practices still prioritize the language associated with academic legitimacy, formal communication, and national assessment, causing English to overshadow other languages even when cultural inclusivity is stated as a goal. In Marawi City, where Arabic holds profound cultural and religious significance, the limited visibility of Arabic signage reduces opportunities for identity reinforcement, communal belonging, and the affirmation of learners' Islamic heritage. The same is true for Filipino and Meranaw languages, whose marginal presence constrains the representation of national identity and local linguistic identity within school spaces.

This imbalance demonstrates that symbolic recognition alone is insufficient; visual practices must be intentionally designed to highlight the languages that matter to the community. Without deliberate efforts to elevate Filipino, Arabic, and Meranaw signage, the schoolscape risks perpetuating an English-centric environment that does not fully reflect the sociocultural realities of its learners. Therefore, greater intentionality is needed to ensure that linguistic representation aligns with the school's cultural, national, and religious commitments, which may allow the visual environment to function not only as a tool for regulation and instruction but also as a space for cultural affirmation and identity preservation.

3.2. Perceived Role of the Schoolscape in English Language Learning and Teaching

The analysis of interview data from teachers and students reveals that the schoolscape of Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation plays a facilitative yet uneven role in supporting English language teaching and learning, which are thematically discussed below.

a) *Schoolscape as a Source of Natural and Incidental Exposure to English*

A prominent theme across teacher and student responses is the schoolscape's role in providing learners with daily, incidental exposure to English, as illustrated in Figure 4. Students repeatedly emphasized that the visual presence of English throughout the school enables them to encounter the language beyond formal instruction. One student affirmed, "*The posters, announcements, and bulletin boards often include English words or messages that help expose us to the language*" (Student 2). Another noted that constant contact with English signage improves comfort and familiarity: "*These visuals make English more familiar because I see it everywhere I go*" (Student 3). These narratives suggest that students perceive repeated visual encounters with English as supporting familiarity with words, phrases, and written forms of the language.

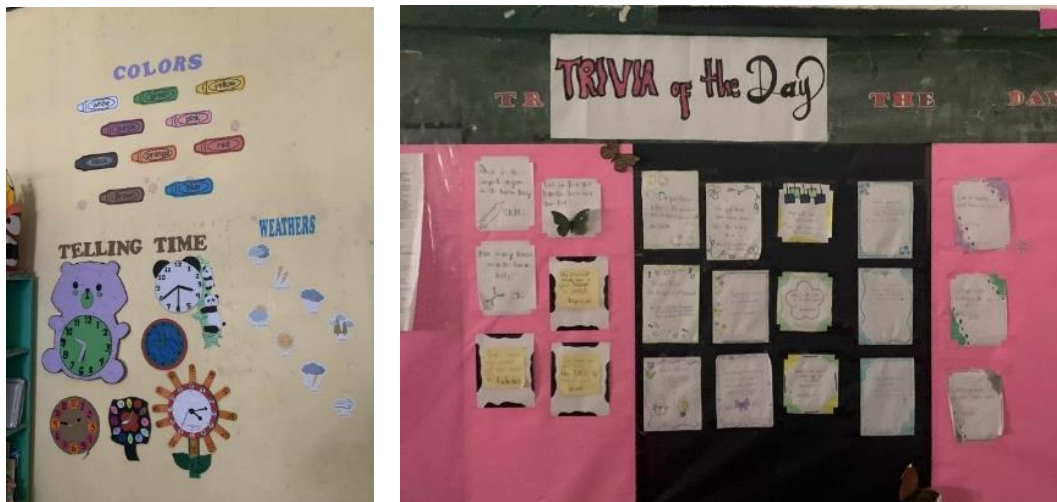


Fig 4. Examples of schoolscape as a source of natural and incidental exposure to English

The recurring presence of English across institutional displays can be understood through Lefebvre's (1991) view of everyday spatial practices and Landry and Bourhis' (1997) conception of linguistic landscape as an informational resource. English becomes part of students' routine spatial experience rather than remaining confined to formal lessons, while its continued visibility may support language awareness and normalize its use in academic and institutional communication. The schoolscape thus may function as part of the linguistic environment through which students routinely encounter English.

Teachers' narratives further show how environmental exposure can reinforce formal instruction. Teacher 1 explained, "*Students learn faster when they see English in the environment. It reminds them of what we discuss in class,*" while Teacher 3 described using "*English in simple instructions*" and "*posting key vocabulary on the walls.*" These practices indicate that teachers use the schoolscape to keep classroom language visible beyond individual lessons, allowing environmental texts to complement rather than replace formal instruction.

This finding is consistent with Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) discussion of incidental language learning through linguistic landscapes, where learners encounter language during ordinary activities without explicit instructional intent. The concept of affordance also helps explain how such exposure may become meaningful. As van Lier (2004) argues, environmental resources provide possibilities for action that depend on learners' attention and engagement. In the present study, students' reports of increased familiarity and teachers' deliberate use of displays suggest that some English texts are noticed and incorporated into everyday learning, although the data do not directly establish language acquisition.

The finding is further supported by Bernardo (2024), Brown (2012), and Dressler (2015), whose work highlights the potential of schoolscape to extend language exposure beyond formal lessons. Riadi and Warti (2021), by contrast, reported limited English visibility in a rural Indonesian school, illustrating how the availability of environmental English can affect opportunities for incidental contact. These studies support the present interpretation that visible English can create additional opportunities for language engagement, while also underscoring that exposure alone does not guarantee learning.

Overall, the findings position the schoolscape as a supplementary environment for English exposure and engagement. Its recurring displays allow students to encounter and revisit English during ordinary school routines while reinforcing selected classroom content. Educators can strengthen these opportunities by intentionally connecting environmental texts with classroom instruction, without assuming that increased exposure alone results in measurable language development.

b) *Schoolscape as a Pedagogical Resource for Classroom Teaching*

As illustrated in Figure 5, another strong theme is the perceived schoolscape's function as a supplementary instructional tool used by teachers to reinforce lessons, provide visual cues, and contextualize learning. Teacher 2 stated, "*Sometimes I use the posters on the wall to explain grammar or vocabulary. They help make the lesson clearer.*" Equally, Teacher 1 emphasized, "*The schoolscape serve as reminders of the lessons. Students recall faster if there is something they see every day.*" These excerpts

indicate that teachers intentionally incorporate elements of the schoolscape into classroom practice, particularly when visual materials can clarify concepts or keep previously introduced content accessible to learners.



Fig 5. Examples of schoolscape as a pedagogical resource for classroom teaching

This use of the schoolscape can be understood through Lefebvre's (1991) concept of representations of space, referring to the planned organization of space for particular purposes. Posters, vocabulary displays, and other instructional materials reflect pedagogical priorities and become extensions of classroom planning when teachers use them to explain concepts or reinforce previously taught content. Schoolscape, thus, is perceived to connect the physical environment with instructional practice by making selected learning resources continuously accessible.

The finding also aligns with Gorter and Cenoz's (2017) view of schoolscape as potential resources for language awareness. Their pedagogical value, however, depends not simply on what is displayed but on how teachers incorporate these materials into instruction. The present findings demonstrate such mediation, as teachers reported directing students' attention to existing displays when explaining or reinforcing lesson content.

Students likewise described the schoolscape as a readily available reference during learning. Student 6 stated, "Sometimes when I forget something, like a meaning, I look at the posters. It helps me remember," while Student 3 described English schoolscape as "clues" for completing challenging activities. These responses show that students sometimes actively consult environmental texts for recall and task support, extending their function beyond passive visual exposure.

Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) claim on incidental language learning further explains this interaction between intentional pedagogy and spontaneous engagement. Although the materials are deliberately displayed for educational purposes, students may consult them independently when a particular learning need arises. The schoolscape, therefore, is perceived to supplement formal instruction by keeping linguistic forms available for observation and reference beyond the immediate lesson.

Moreover, Van Lier's (2004) ecological perspective similarly situates these materials within a broader learning environment composed of people, objects, texts, and spaces. When teachers refer students to a poster or students independently consult one for clarification, the physical environment becomes part of the learning activity. Schoolscape consequently may function as a semiotic resource whose value emerges through its integration into classroom interaction.

The concept of affordances further explains why the same material may support learners differently. Drawing on Gibson (1979), van Lier (2004) describes affordances as possibilities for action that emerge through the relationship between learners and their environment. Student 6's use of a poster to recover a forgotten meaning illustrates this process: the display is perceived to be pedagogically useful because the learner notices and acts upon the opportunity it provides.

The findings are also consistent with Eliawati et al. (2024), who identified English schoolscape as resources for pedagogical interaction and contextualized language learning. Philippine studies by Astillero (2017) and Magno (2017) likewise provide a basis for understanding the instructional relevance of English within educational environments. At the same time, Menken et al. (2018) demonstrate that schoolscape may serve broader identity and symbolic functions in multilingual settings, suggesting that their purposes vary according to institutional priorities, language practices, and community contexts.

In the present setting, however, participants primarily emphasized the instructional usefulness of visible English materials. Teachers mobilize these resources to explain concepts, reinforce previously taught content, and assist students with difficult tasks, while students sometimes appropriate them for recall and clarification. This reciprocal relationship shows that the pedagogical value of the schoolscape emerges through the interaction between institutional design, teacher mediation, and learner use.

c) *Visibility and Attractiveness of English Displays Influence Engagement*

As illustrated in Figure 6 below, both teachers and students emphasized that their engagement with English schoolscape materials is strongly shaped by the visibility, size, and aesthetic appeal of the displays. As Teacher 3 observed, “*Students engage more when words are big, visible, and placed in common areas,*” while Student 2 similarly explained that “*eye-catching materials make me want to read and understand the message.*” Student 8 further noted that the bulletin board is particularly effective because “*every time I read something written, I get the chance to test my vocabularies.*” These responses indicate that students’ engagement is perceived to be influenced not simply by the presence of English but also by how readily the displays attract attention and invite reading. In this sense, visibility and attractiveness appear to shape the initial conditions under which learners notice, attend to, and interact with English in the school environment.



Fig 6. Examples of visibility and attractiveness of English displays influence engagement

The participants’ emphasis on size, placement, and visual appeal highlights the importance of the spatial organization of linguistic resources. Backhaus (2007) and Gorter (2013) explain that the arrangement and visual characteristics of signs influence their visibility and accessibility within particular spaces. In the present schoolscape, displays located in common areas and presented in noticeable text are more readily encountered during students’ everyday routines, making visibility an important condition for subsequent attention and engagement.

This finding also aligns with Cenoz and Gorter’s (2008) argument on incidental language learning, which recognizes linguistic landscapes as sources of exposure beyond formal instruction. However, exposure becomes potentially meaningful only when learners notice and attend to the available linguistic resources. Student 2’s statement that “*eye-catching materials make me want to read and understand the message*” illustrates this connection between visual salience and willingness to engage, although the data do not demonstrate that attractive displays directly produce language acquisition.

Van Lier’s (2004) ecological perspective further explains this process through the concept of affordance. A visible English display can function as an affordance when its size, location, and design make language available for learners to notice and use. Student 8’s account of using the bulletin board to “*test*” vocabulary demonstrates this shift from environmental presence to learner action: the display becomes a learning resource because the student recognizes and uses it as such.

Lefebvre’s (1991) concept of representational space adds a complementary dimension by situating this engagement within learners’ lived experience of the school environment. Repeated encounters with attractive displays in familiar spaces can make them part of students’ everyday linguistic experience rather than merely fixed institutional signs. Thus, visual design matters not only because it increases visibility but also because it can shape how learners experience and interact with particular school spaces.

The finding is broadly supported by Bernardo (2024), Brown (2012), and Dressler (2015), whose studies demonstrate the potential of schoolscape to extend learners' exposure to English through everyday school environments. Riadi and Warti (2021), meanwhile, reported limited English visibility in a rural Indonesian school context, illustrating how the extent and accessibility of English can affect opportunities for environmental language contact. Across these studies, the evidence supports the pedagogical potential of visible English resources, while also indicating that visibility alone does not account for how learners engage with or learn from the schoolscape.

The pedagogical implication is, therefore, to design displays not merely for decoration but for accessibility and purposeful engagement. Materials placed in common areas, presented in readable formats, and connected where appropriate to classroom content may provide learners with additional opportunities to encounter and use a language during routine school activities. Such practices can complement formal instruction without assuming that increased visual exposure necessarily results in measurable language development.

d) *Schoolscape as a Motivational Tool for English Learning*

Students consistently described the presence of English signage as a source of motivation and academic aspiration, as illustrated in Figure 7. Student 3 noted that seeing English around the school “reminds me that the language is important for communication,” while Student 4 emphasized that English announcements for “club or college exams” increase motivation because they highlight future opportunities linked to proficiency. Student 6 similarly shared that the schoolscape “pushes me to practice more, even if it’s just through simple things like how I react, speak, or write. It motivates me because it shows that English is part of everyday communication.” These insights reveal that English schoolscape is perceived to convey implicit messages about the significance and instrumental value of the language.



Fig 7. Examples of schoolscape as a motivational tool for English learning

Landry and Bourhis's (1997) distinction between the informational and symbolic functions of linguistic landscapes helps explain this finding. Although the displays serve practical purposes by communicating announcements and school-related information, their repeated visibility also gives English a symbolic presence associated with communication, academic participation, and future opportunities. Schoolscape therefore contributes to students' perceptions of English as a language with relevance beyond individual classroom activities.

This interpretation is further supported by the concept of language-learning affordances, particularly van Lier's (2004) ecological perspective. Environmental resources become affordances when learners recognize possibilities for attention, reflection, or language use, as reflected in Student 4's reference to examinations and club activities and Student 6's description of practicing how to “react, speak, or write.” The motivational value of the displays is perceived to emerge from the interaction between visible English and the goals that students associate with it.

The findings also corroborate Bernardo's (2024), Dumanig and David (2019), Algryani and Syahrin (2021), da Silva (2023), and Fajardo-Dack et al.'s (2024) claims of schoolscape as pedagogical resources that can extend English exposure beyond formal classroom instruction. In the present study, students attributed motivational meaning to these resources because English was embedded in familiar academic and communicative activities. This suggests that the schoolscape can complement classroom learning by situating English within experiences that students perceive as relevant to their educational learning.

Menken et al. (2018) provide a useful contrast by showing how multilingual schoolscape can recognize students' languages and cultures while reflecting broader shifts in language ideology, pedagogy, and policy. Their findings indicate that motivational meaning need not depend exclusively on English-dominant displays, as different linguistic orientations may serve different institutional and identity-related purposes. In the present study, students foregrounded the communicative and academic value of English, but this does not preclude multilingual schoolscape practices from supporting other forms of engagement.

Overall, the motivational role of the schoolscape appears to arise from the relationship among visibility, institutional meaning, and learner aspiration. Repeated encounters with English in announcements, school activities, and academic contexts connect the language with communication, participation, examinations, and anticipated opportunities. Viewed through linguistic landscape and affordance perspectives, these displays function as environmental resources whose motivational potential depends on how learners interpret and engage with them rather than on their mere presence.

e) *Schoolscape as an Avenue for Confidence-Building and Low-Stakes Practice*

Both teachers and students highlighted that interacting with English signage fosters confidence by providing low-pressure opportunities to engage with the language as illustrated in Figure 8. Teacher 2 noted that students “are not scared to speak or make mistakes” when the environment feels supportive and familiar, while Student 6 shared that “my small reactions to friends are sometimes in English without me noticing,” indicating that environmental exposure helps normalize the use of English in authentic interactions. These comments suggest that the schoolscape reduces anxiety and encourages spontaneous practice of English because it offers natural, non-evaluative encounters with the target language that feel embedded in routine daily movement rather than formal instructional pressure.



Fig 8. Examples of schoolscape as an avenue for confidence-building and low-stakes practice

This finding resonates with Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition is more successful when learners experience low anxiety and high motivation. By integrating English into students' everyday surroundings, the schoolscape functions as part of what Lefebvre (1991) terms Representational Space, the lived, affective dimension of the environment, where English becomes familiar, accessible, and non-threatening. This normalization reduces psychological barriers and encourages learners to use English spontaneously. The result also aligns with Gorter, Cenoz, and van der Worp (2021), who found that linguistically enriched school environments promote ease of language use and greater confidence in multilingual settings.

Furthermore, this finding reflects Philippine-based findings such as Astillero (2017) and Reintegrado-Celino and Bernardo (2023), who reported that repeated environmental exposure to English cultivates and minimizes apprehension, especially among learners who may otherwise feel intimidated by formal language tasks. However, the present result negates Wang's (2015) findings in a Japanese university, where students perceived English signage as intimidating and exclusionary. In contrast, learners may interpret English displays as supportive, encouraging, and empowering, suggesting that contextual cultural alignment and the school's integrated environment shape more positive affective responses.

Thus, schoolscape is perceived to function as a confidence-building mechanism that fosters spontaneous, low-stakes, and anxiety-free engagement with English, making language use more natural

and less performative. Maintaining and enhancing an English-rich, welcoming environment helps sustain this confidence and supports continued language development. Since this revealed that the schoolscape provides substantial, but uneven, support to English language learning and teaching through natural exposure, pedagogical reinforcement, visibility-driven engagement, motivational influence, and confidence-building opportunities, this implies that the schoolscape plays a significant facilitative role in shaping English learning experiences. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on the consistency, visibility, and strategic use of English-language materials across the school. Strengthening the design, placement, and variety of English signage, and integrating more interactive and culturally responsive displays would enhance the schoolscape's capacity to function not only as a passive source of exposure but also as an active pedagogical and motivational tool for both teachers and learners.

4. Conclusion

The findings show that English occupies the most visible and institutionally privileged position in the schoolscape of Dhayfullah Islamic Institute Foundation (DIIF). It dominates academic, administrative, and public displays, while Filipino and Arabic have more limited visibility and Meranaw is absent from the documented visual corpus. This pattern suggests a gap between the institution's expressed commitment to multilingual inclusion and the linguistic practices materialized in its everyday visual environment.

Schoolscape also functions as a perceived supplementary resource for English language teaching and learning. Teachers and students described English displays as providing repeated exposure, reinforcing classroom content, increasing language engagement, encouraging informal engagement beyond formal lessons, and a venue for confidence-building. These contributions, however, remain perceptual because the study did not employ proficiency measures or longitudinal assessments to determine actual language development.

The study contributes to advancing schoolscape and linguistic landscape scholarship by demonstrating how institutional priorities, language ideologies, cultural identities, and pedagogical purposes intersect in an Islamic educational setting. Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) Language Choice Theory helps explain how choices based on academic utility and institutional communication become materialized in the visual environment, while Lefebvre's (1991) perspective highlights how such preferences are reproduced through everyday school spaces and experienced by their users. The findings further support ecological and affordance-oriented perspectives by showing that schoolscape texts can function as potential learning resources whose pedagogical value depends on teacher mediation and learner engagement.

Pedagogically, educators can integrate schoolscape materials into activities involving vocabulary, reading, visual literacy, and multilingual awareness. Administrators can likewise adopt more intentional multilingual planning by attending to the placement, readability, relevance, and cultural representation of displays while retaining English as an important academic resource. Such practices would allow the schoolscape to reflect educational, religious, and multilingual context more closely.

The study is limited by its single-school qualitative scope, time-bound documentation, and reliance on reported experiences rather than direct measures of language development. Future research could examine multiple educational settings, trace schoolscape changes longitudinally, and investigate the classroom use of environmental texts through measurable language and visual-literacy outcomes. Further work may also develop culturally responsive multilingual schoolscape guidelines for Islamic and other linguistically diverse schools.

Overall, the DIIF schoolscape demonstrates how visual language practices can communicate institutional priorities while creating opportunities for English engagement beyond formal instruction. Its educational value depends not simply on the visibility of English but on how environmental texts are designed, interpreted, and used. A more intentional and culturally responsive schoolscape can therefore support English learning while providing greater recognition of the linguistic resources and identities of the school community.

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