Behind the trend of Englishing the business names in Aceh, Indonesia: A postcolonial analysis

Jarjani Usman[*]
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia
jarjani@ar-raniry.ac.id

Nurul Faridah
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia
nurulfrdayub@gmail.com

Mulia Mulia
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia
mulia@ar-raniry.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study critically analyzes the recent trend of Englishing shop names in Aceh province. Borrowing Bhabha's postcolonial theory, this study attempted to uncover the shop owners' perceptions of privileging English and marginalizing local languages, even though their customers are mostly local. Data collection was by taking pictures and interviewing 20 owners of the shops, four females and 16 males. Results show that the 120 shop names in Banda Aceh and surrounding it are in English, modified English and Indonesian ordering, hybridized English and Indonesian ordering, hybridized English Acehnese language and English, English and English ordering, and mixed owner's names and English ordering. They voluntarily mimicked the Western culture by using English names because they believe that English is marketable, modern, practical, flexible, familiar, and short for shop branding, while the local language looks not modern, unpractical, and weird. In conclusion, most shop owners in the two districts in Aceh negotiate the Western hegemony for the economic benefits.

Keywords: *Hybridity; Mimicry; Negotiation; Postcolonial theory; Shop names*

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[*] Corresponding author

1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a new phenomenon in Aceh, a province where Islamic law has been implemented for decades. Many shops have been named with English words or orderings. They prefer English to local languages and Arabic, even though their customers are mostly Indonesians and Muslims. Among the shop names are T Café, A Plus Café, Ring Road Café, to name just a few, indicating that English has been highly privileged and local languages are marginalized. The orderings have also been changed or adapted to the English orderings. Bahasa Indonesia uses noun + modifier ordering (for example, "*warung kopi*"), whereas English modifier + noun (for example, "*kopi warung*"). This phenomenon suggests that people in the province are suppressing their own cultural identity (i.e., language) through linguistic hybridity and mimicry of English as a representation of the Western/imperial cultures or values.

Several scholars from Indonesia have put their concerns on the negative influences of English on local languages, particularly the Indonesian language, such as Gunarwan (1998), Hassall, Murtisari, Donnelly, and Wood (2008), Murtisari and Mali (2017), Sadtono (2013), and Sunarto, Sejati, and Utomo (2020). As Murtisari and Mali (2017) cited, Gunarwan (1998) argues that English constrains Indonesian language learning as the people in Indonesia tend to associate English with high status and prestige. Even Sadtono (2013) believes that English has made the Indonesian language as an Indonesian identity suffered, which he calls the "English tsunami." Of the scholars, only Sunarto et al. (2020) use postcolonial concepts (e.g., mimicry and hybridity) to analyze the Congrock music in Semarang. A postcolonial analysis of the business names is scant in Indonesia. This is probably due to the beliefs of many people that Indonesia was not colonized by the British.

We argue that Acehnese people's privileging English and marginalizing Indonesian or Acehnese is an effect of colonialism, directly or indirectly. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006, as cited in Sharma, 2011), the English language carries with it its colonial form from four perspectives, including scholastic, linguistic, cultural, and economic. By the scholastic dimension, Kumaravadivelu means disseminating Western knowledge, which degrades local knowledge value, whereas the linguistic dimension means the global spread of English that negatively affects local languages and knowledge. The cultural dimension is about the effect of English teaching that carries with it the English-speaking countries' culture that devalues the local culture. The last one is the economic aspect, which is about the financial gain for the English-speaking countries and their ELT professionals receive due to English teaching commodification.

The trend behind privileging English and marginalizing Indonesian or Acehnese in Aceh looks normal if seen on the surface. It is actually a manifestation of subjugation by a particular dominant ideology. In this regard, Fairclough (2010) views language use as an ideological material form. By ideologies, Fairclough (2003) means "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and

exploitation" (p. 9). Moreover, Harrison and Boyd (2018), dominant ideologies permeate all aspects of society. Bhabha (1994) believes that identity is shaped not due to a self-reflection in human nature or a place to show the self in culture and nature but due to the interaction with the other. In the phenomenon of the Acehnese, people's identity privileging western values is inseparable from the interaction with globalization.

Many researchers have explored the phenomena of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence experienced by the people living in the previously colonized countries (Ghandeharion, 2018; Mostafaee, 2016) or those (diaspora) of colonized countries moving to and living in the colonizing countries (Singh, 2009). The hybridity and mimicry, and ambivalence happen as the result of the interactions of the colonizing countries' cultures over the culture of those in the colonized countries. People in the colonized countries, voluntarily or by force, mimic or imitate the ways of life of those of colonizing countries, including their language. To uncover the practices, many researchers use the postcolonial theories, a theory that explores the colonials' remnants in the colonized countries.

Postcolonial theories have substantially been discussed and researched in many disciplines. Some are used to analyze literary works (Emezue, 2004; Connel, 2003; Malik & Umrani, 2015; Mostafaee, 2016; Singh, 2010), education (Nduati, 2016; Viruru, 2005; Wu & Tarc, 2016), linguistics (Bigon & Hart, 2017), politics (Craggs, 2018), economics (Movuh, 2015), and arts (Ghandeharion, 2018; Sunarto et al., 2020). They found that some people were resistant and or negotiated with colonial/Western values. Their resistance is vivid through their disagreement with the colonial/Western values. Meanwhile, the negotiation with an agreement with (some of) the values, as shown in their daily practices. The agreement and or disagreement are inseparable from their beliefs or perceptions or identity, as many scholars argue that beliefs affect practices (Fives, Lacatena, & Gerard, 2015; Pajares, 1992).

Notwithstanding these studies, research about language that employs postcolonial theory is relatively few. Nevertheless, all the reviewed studies have provided valuable references for this study by providing the framework to understanding the use of postcolonial theory in analyzing the colonial legacy in the ex-colonized countries, particularly on resistance, negotiation, mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and identity. This paper argues that privileging English but at the same time marginalizing local languages much depend on the shop owners' beliefs and identity, particularly their resistance or negotiation with Western values. Therefore, understanding their beliefs and perceptions behind the naming of their shops through the lens of postcolonial theory is crucial. It needs a few insights of postcolonial theory and how this framework informs our study.

Drawing upon the postcolonial theory, this study attempts to investigate and critically analyze the shop owners' beliefs behind their westernized shop names in the sharia implemented province of Aceh. It intends to focus on the shop owners' mimicry

and hybridity through unmasking their beliefs and practices of mimicking and hybridizing Western values.

2. Literature review

2.1. Postcolonial theory

The theory was firstly influenced by the publication of the book *Orientalism* by Edward Said in 1977 (Wang, 2018), has inspired other scholars in various disciplines. According to Singh (2009), postcolonial studies refers to a broad range of inquiries related to the formerly colonized world, especially in literature, cultural anthropology, history, political science, religious studies, and sociology. Inspired by Said's work, Bhabha (1984) develops a set of thought-provoking concepts of postcolonial theory, such as hybridity, mimicry, difference, ambivalence. Bhabha and his proponents believe that even though the Western/European colonization has physically ended, their legacy continues to prevail around the globe and shapes the people's identity in the colonized countries. Some people mimic the culture of the colonial or colonizing countries. Postcolonial theory is a critical theory that problematizes unchallenged colonial hegemonies of the European/Western imperial.

As widely known, in 1914, nearly 85 percent of the countries in the world were colonized by European colonial powers (Huddart, 2005). When the colonialization has ended, its legacy remains in the colonized countries, colorizing and creating its hegemonies in all sectors. Colonialization, as Huddart (2005) argues, is going on, probably in cultural values. Therefore, the emergence of postcolonial theory is considered crucial in challenging Western values' dominant perspectives. It seeks justice for those who have been psychologically suffered, exploited, violated, and enslaved in the colonized countries (Parsons & Harding, 2011). This way can pave the way for creating awareness and empowering the marginalized and subordinated.

These concepts describe how colonized peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer (Huddart, 2005). According to Bhabha, the three concepts (ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry) are meticulously interwoven to interpret the postcolonial (Burke, 2018). These concepts emphasize how people in the formerly colonized countries have resisted the power of the colonizer. However, a contrasting argument was made by During (2000), contending that these concepts "effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category" (p. 386). The sections below shed light on two of the three concepts focused on this research. However, according to Bhabha (1984), mimicking the colonial culture is not always all negative. One imitates the person in the dominant power hopes to have access to the same power.

2.1.1. Mimicry

Mimicry is one of the concepts proposed by Bhaba (1984), which means that the people in ex-colonized countries imitate or mimic the colonial society's values. In the same vein, Tyson (2006) stated that people of the formerly colonized countries were

encouraged to mimic their master manner, point of view, and values in the colonial discourse. This results in many kinds of mimicry, including iconic, linguistic, and visual. Iconic mimicry denotes Western icons' imitation (e.g., logos), whereas linguistic mimicry refers to the imitation of Western languages (e.g., English). Meanwhile, visual mimicry is imitating the Western-looking models and female bodies' presentation. Furthermore, Tyson (2006) divides the causes of mimicry into two, including the colonized individuals who want to be accepted in the colonizer's society, and because the colonizer's hegemony has successfully made the colonized see their own culture as inferior. In addition, Singh (2009) argues that mimicry also happens to those who have been the west countries and transformed themselves by mimicking western values.

Several studies have been conducted regarding the mimicry of western values. One of them is the research by Ghandeharion (2018), analyzing Iranian advertisements using the postcolonial semiotic reading approach. This study found that there are both negotiation and resistance to the Western hegemony; negotiation through performing mimicry to standard principles in the West is salient. The Western hegemony has influenced Iranian advertisements' designs and uncovers the meanings behind the many advertisements, logos, and brand names, as the paragons of the identity and images of the products. This suggests that even though Iran is opposed to Western countries on the surface, they prefer to adopt western values in their advertisement.

2.1.2. Hybridity

The contact between two cultures can create a new cultural form, a third space, called hybridity in the colonized country. Borrowing the notion of hybridity from a French philosopher Jacques Derrida, Bhabha (1994, p. 112) defines hybridity is "a productive cultural fusion formed by the cultural contact between the colonizer and the colonized." Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) stated that hybridity means the emergence of "a new transcultural form within the contact zone produced by colonization" (p. 108). Bhabha calls this new culture the hybrid third space, in which people are neither of the colonizers nor colonized. In this regard, Singh (2009) elaborates on many kinds of hybridity, including linguistic hybridity, racial hybridity, cultural hybridity, and religious hybridity. However, this paper focuses on linguistic hybridity as it intends to research the shop names in Aceh province linguistically.

In this regard, Singh (2009) points out that linguistic hybridity occurs when a foreign language is used in a specific language. Components of a foreign language are incorporated into a particular language, such as the use of English words in a language like Asian or African, in ex-colonized countries, or vice versa. Sing exemplified many vocabularies as a result of linguistic hybridity, such as "pajamas" and "bungalow," derived from the Indian language and "mumbo jumbo" from the African language.

2.2. The beliefs and attitudes behind the privileging English

People's beliefs are not neutral or free from being colonized because beliefs are not shaped and reshaped in isolation. Beliefs one holds are socially shaped and culturally transferred (McAlpine, Eriks-Brophy, & Crago, 1996). In this globalized era, people's beliefs have been shaped by the dominant culture, primarily western cultural values. Moreover, it is essential to note that beliefs are very influential in one's practices, including the trend of Englishing the shop names in Aceh. For instance, teachers' beliefs can direct and control classroom actions (Muller et al., 2008). That is why when researchers intend to explore one's practice, belief is one of the crucial components researched.

Nevertheless, what constitutes belief is still "messy" today. Some see nearly similar to the notions' worldview' (Schraw & Olafson, 2002), 'attitude' and 'knowledge' (Davis & Andrzejewski, 2009) and 'knowledge' (Joram, 2007). Meanwhile, Richardson (1996) conceptualizes belief as "thought of as psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are thought to be true" (p.104). Calderhead (1996) defines beliefs as "suppositions, commitments and ideologies," while knowledge to "factual propositions and understandings" (p.715). Ertmer (2005) agrees with Calderhead's definitions because we are still free to accept something as true or false after gaining knowledge of a proposition. Hence, what is practiced in the society, like the privileging English for local shop names in Aceh and marginalizing their own languages, can be said as the people's acceptance and submission to the western values. However, this claim needs to be proved through analyzing their perceptions or beliefs for naming their shops with English language.

Besides, many researchers have also investigated Indonesian people's attitude towards the western language loanwords in Indonesia (e.g., Gunarwan, 1998; Hassall et al., 2008). Hassall et al. (2008) found that young, highly educated speakers have a strong liking and acceptance of western language loanwords. Meanwhile, Gunarwan (1998) found that Indonesian people believe that English carries high status and prestige.

3. Method

This study uses the qualitative method as it is relevant to study the shop owners' beliefs for naming their shops in English. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), the qualitative method enables researchers to listen respondents' inner experience, discover how meanings are constructed in a particular culture. Hence, it is also pertinent to exploring the "messy" construct of beliefs (Pajares, 1992), as the beliefs of the people in the ex-colonized countries are to some degrees subjugated by the colonialism for hundred years. Drawing upon Bhabha's (1984, 1994) mimicry and hybridity concepts, this study investigated the shop owners' beliefs in privileging English rather than Acehnese or Indonesian for their business names. Through this way, it can unearth whether they resist or negotiate with Western value hegemony, which English as one of

them. This qualitative research involves an interpretive naturalistic approach to elucidate the research participants' points of view (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

In having access to the participants, this study used convenient sampling was employed for practical reasons. Convenient sampling is a nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population meet specific practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate (Dornyei, 2007). However, before collecting data, we had the consent of the shop owners.

The data was collected by taking pictures the names of the shops, which were then followed by interviewing the shop owners. The researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the shop owners in 2019. In semi-structured interviews, the shop owners were purposively selected and asked questions about the reasons and beliefs behind naming their shops. The interviews were held in Bahasa Indonesia in order to make them freely express their perceptions. Moreover, the researchers asked their clarifications where necessary and followed up questions (Griffe, 2012). In analyzing the data, this study followed the steps by Hycner (1985) by transcribing the recordings, then listening to the interviews for a sense of a whole, eliminating redundancies, clustering units to relevant meaning, and finally summarizing themes. Meanwhile, the pictures of the shop names were analyzed by categorizing them according to their appearance.

4. Findings

4.1. Respondents' demography

This research involved 20 owners who consented to participate, four females and 16 males. In terms of age, they were still young, aged 13 to 37. Their educational backgrounds range from high schools to undergraduates.

4.2. Business sectors

The research found that the types of businesses that use English for business names range from food and beverage, goods and services, body and fashion, to technology and credit sales. They include modified English and Indonesian ordering (e.g., Anugrah Laundry, Pelita Mart, Rizka Boutique), modified English and English ordering (e.g., Cheeze Tea, Moody Steak), full Indonesian and English ordering (e.g., Ira Jilbab), full English and English ordering (e.g., New Fashion), mixing Acehnese with English and English ordering (e.g., Can Cell), and mixing owner name with English and English ordering (e.g., D3d3k Cell).

Table 1
Categories of linguistics mimicry.

No.	Business names	Categories
1.	Dezzert.Po	Modified English + Indonesian ordering
2.	Cheeze Tea	Modified English + English ordering
3.	Central Sticker Owner Distro	Full English + Indonesian ordering
4.	Ira Hijab	Full Indonesian + English ordering
5.	Moody Steak Limo Farm New Fashion Shopaholic Aigner Perfume	Full English + English ordering
6.	Sultan Bhai Laundry	Mixing English with Pakistan language + English ordering
7.	Ceudah Taylor Can Cell	Mixing Acehnese with English + English ordering
8.	Anugrah Laundry Pelita Mart Kanya House Riska Boutique Opin Cell D3d3k Cell Nozy Juice	Mixing owners name with English + English ordering

Table 1 above shows that the shop and business owners use diverse ways of linguistic mimicry, which are mostly rooted in English both the script and ordering.

4.3. Behind the naming of their shops

Twenty young shop owners had various reasons for naming their shops with English names. Their reasons can be categorized into themes, such as English representing modernity, youth, and global trends; the practicality and marketability of English names; and the familiarity of the customers with English. However, not all of their responses are presented in the following excerpts because many are similar.

4.3.1. English sense of modernity, youth, and global trend

Many of the shop owners reasoned that their use of English for their shop name was because it represents modernity, luxury, and attractiveness for youths. One of the shop owners said:

> I get the concept from many traders who sell the same products. The second reason, our **customer target is youth.** Therefore, we use English to have the senses of **youth, high class**, and **eyes-catching.** These senses are not in Indonesian or Aceh language. **English sounds different, luxurious, classy, modern and familiar** in Banda Aceh.

One of them added that the shops in Banda Aceh and its surroundings need to use English because their customers are young people, especially students. As he said, "Banda Aceh is the capital city which has many university students who get used to English, therefore, I think at present many Aceh youths who have understood many English vocabularies." Besides, many of their young customers prefer using English when buying the products. One of them said, "In average, my **customers are teenagers** with range of 19-26 years old... Even majority of customers use such terms such as, belt, size, instead of *"tali pinggang"* and *"ukuran"* and many others."

Using English to attract foreign customers/buyers is another reason for the shop owners to name their shops by mimicking and hybridizing the names in English speaking countries and English ordering. He said that many foreigners often buy things from his shop. He said, "I use the word "cell" in order **the foreigners** who need it could **recognize** this shop, so they would buy here because I had experience was visited **by foreigners** who came here." This reason implies that Acehnese are also not confident to use Indonesian and Acehnese languages, even though for the shops located in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar where majority of population use local Acehnese and Bahasa Indonesia. Another owner said, "English sounds **cool and young**. Besides, my shop name has addicting meaning, so I expect at once they want to go shopping they would go here. Another reason is to represent the goods I offer."

It is also apparent from the shop owners' preference of using English rather than local and national languages, such as Acehnese and Bahasa Indonesia, that they believe local languages are not modern. Besides, local languages are not practical, nor represent the youths' languages. Put differently, youths in this globalized era, according to the shop owners' beliefs, have no longer preferred their local and national languages.

4.3.2. *The feelings of pride, practicality, and marketability of English*

The shop owners felt that using English for shop names is a pride for him. Besides, English is practical, unique and marketable. These can be understood, among others, through the following excerpt:

> There are many reasons, first because **Indonesian is not really marketable,** not like English. T**o avoid a low-rate and cheap impression of our products**, I use English to **increase market value.** English use gives a classy impression, which can attract customers and be **proud to buy our products**. Another reason English is **efficient** since the word does not spend much space as a product label.

Another owner said that he uses English for his shop name because of its simplicity and suitability for shop names. He said, "We name our shop "central sticker" because **sounds simple and better** than use Indonesian, *"pusat stiker",* which sounds **not good**." He also added that, "we created the logo earlier, CS, then chose any words that suits the initial of our logo. Finally, we thought the words, "central sticker", which

each word begins with letter C and S fits the logo." Similar thing was said by an owner, "Because if translated to Indonesian, it becomes *"teh keju"* which sounds **weird** and **inappropriate** to use. In addition, as pronounce English is felt **more suitable** and occasionally is **more flexible** and sounds not quite formal than Indonesian."

The excerpts also indicate that the functions of local languages (e.g., Acehnese and Indonesian languages) have been reduced. Local languages are no longer functional in marketing, nor flexible. More importantly, they believe that it will look weird and does not attract young local people as their potential customers or buyers, if words of local languages are used for the shop names. However, using English, according to the shop owners, can increase customers' pride.

4.3.3. *The customers' familiarity with English*

Ten business owners stated that they used English names for their shops because of their customers' preference. They believe that their customers have been (more) familiar with the English words. Among their reasons are: "Because people have been **familiar** with the word 'perfume.' Generally, perfume business uses this word for their shops names. Meanwhile, if I use the word *"minyak wangi"* it sounds **not marketable**." Not only the seller of perfume, the owner of food shop also has similar reason, "**My focus business** is in dessert, so its brand name suits the product. In addition, many people have been **familiar** with the term dessert which means *"makanan pencuci mulut"* in Indonesian."

The above descriptions show that the shop owners' practice has been shaped by their beliefs that English is better than Acehnese and Indonesian languages. Their beliefs infer that local languages are no longer familiar for young generations in Aceh. In the other words, Acehnese or Indonesian language has been alienated by the local people.

4.3.4. *Owners' educational background and living experiences*

Two of the shop owners reasoned that they name their shops with English words because their educational background and the suggestion of his sister who studied at English department. One of the shop owners said, "My **education background is English** Education Department so that is why I put the word "house" and I just do not want use Indonesian or Aceh language." Nearly similar to the opinion, another owner reasoned, "Besides those reasons, the shop name selection is also helped by the owner's sister who **studies in English Department** and I think since her educational background she considers choosing that words." Another shop owner expressed that he names his shop in English because used to live abroad: "My other reasons to use English is also because of my **experiences living in Malaysia** for ten years where most people there use the combination of English and Malay language in daily life."

The excerpts above clearly show that their English learning has made them change their cultural identity to mimicking the western values. This is an evident that

learning a language, such as English, is not only learning to use it, but also to learn its cultural values. The names of shops found in foreign countries they used to live have inspired the shop owners in Aceh to mimic them.

4.3.5.   Unawareness of using English

It appears that not all of the shop owners were not really aware of using English for their shop names. At least, two of them expressed similar reason:

> The word "farm" for me who studied in the Faculty of Veterinary has been very familiar, because it was used by my lecturers in the classroom every day. The word has been very commonly used and mixed with Indonesian word. **I did not realize** that the word "farm" originates from English language.

> I thought "cell" is in Indonesian language, while cellular is English language. But now I **realize that "cell" is an English word.** However, I think there is no appropriate word to say cell in Indonesian, so I just continue using this word. In addition, the word cell is normally used in Banda Aceh.

The two excerpts above clearly show that the shop owners mimic the trends in the business world in the province. They mimic what has commonly been practiced in the formerly colonized by British, Malaysia, where people have also mimicked their master's values.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the shop owners' mimicking the western trends is strongly influenced by the beliefs and feelings of the shop owners. They believe and feel that English is a language that represents modernity, youngness, global trend, pride, practicality, and marketability, whereas Indonesian and Acehnese languages do not. This may suggest that their views and beliefs have been subjugated to privilege Western values. They have also negotiated with Western hegemony, and have marginalized their local and national languages.

To some extent, the finding is contrary to a previous study by Ghandeharion (2018) revealed that Iranian advertisements negotiate with and resist Western hegemony with negotiation more widespread than resistance. Ghandeharion found that Easterners mostly reject their traditions because of not-modernized. The finding shows that although the customer target is majority Acehnese who lives in the province where Sharia law has been implemented, they do not use the Arabic language for their shop names. It does not mean that they are anti-western influence. However, the Arabic language as the Islamic language seems absent to be used in shop or business names.

The findings are consistent with what Singh (2009) stated that people tend to suppress their own cultural identity, if they feel unclear their existing identity. They

have been unable to find the pride, practicality, and marketability of their own language as a cultural identity. Besides, the finding corresponds with Tyson's (2006) that the ex-colonizers' hegemony has created inferiority in colonized people's minds toward their own culture. Their living abroad, for instance, has made them feel ambivalent with their cultural identity and feel inferior with their own language. Singh (2009) argues that people who have been abroad, particularly to the West, frequently transform themselves to mimic the western cultural values.

6. Conclusion

After analyzing and discussing the results, the present study reveals twofold conclusions. Firstly, the shop owners in the Islamic Sharia-implemented province have privileged English, marginalized the local language, and changed the local language order. Secondly, the shop owners have linguistically mimicked and hybridized their shop or business names in Banda Aceh and its surroundings. They did it because of the inferiority of their own languages. In other words, they have negotiated with Western hegemony, even though they embrace Islamic laws.

Despite the findings, this study has some limitations that might have affected the results and conclusions. The respondents of this study were only those living in Banda Aceh and some parts of Aceh. Accordingly, the findings cannot be generalized. Moreover, the business sectors researched were only shop names, without researching other business types, like wedding organizers, catering, et cetera. Therefore, we recommend future studies on language awareness to result in better findings, such as investigating the owners' perceptions of Englishing their shop names in each district in Aceh.

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