

*A Model for Linguistic Landscape Management:
A Case Study on National Language Development in Government Public Spaces*

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Abstract

Public space is a picture of language use that is easy to observe. Public space becomes an uncontrollable language space if it is not well regulated. In Indonesia, public space has become a shared space that shows language contestation. This research seeks to describe the language of the government's public space as well as efforts to foster the language of the public space. This research is a descriptive qualitative study with a model of public space coaching issued by the Language Development and Guidance Agency, Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. This research uses the framework of observation, education, and appreciation coaching. The results of this study describe four categories of public space language that exist in government institutions, namely the use of Arabic, the use of English, the use of mixed languages, and the use of Indonesian. After coaching, the use of foreign languages and mixed languages that are not in accordance with Indonesian language rules is reduced. This result can show the existence of the Indonesian language and a sense of pride in the Indonesian language. The coaching model is very effective to be the basis for fostering the prioritization of national languages in government institutions.

Keywords: Language Development, National Language, Public Spaces, Government Institutions

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Introduction

Public spaces are often viewed as domains of information exchange, but they are less frequently recognized as arenas for linguistic dynamics. The language of the public sphere is not only a means of communication, but is a marker of identity and a marker of national pride. The study of linguistic landscapes was initially carried out by Landry and Bourhis (1997) who focused on the language of the public sphere as limited to language studies, then Gorter (2006) expanded the initial study by exploring the interaction between majority and minority languages.

In many countries, language has become a crucial issue that has led to national conflict. In Belgium, the use of Dutch and French became a state issue. Cultural identity issues escalated into social unrest. A clear illustration is that there is a lot of graffiti on the names of Dutch-language signboards. The dominance of Dutch speakers rendered French speakers marginalized, exemplified by deliberate vandalism of Dutch road signs to favor French (Black et al., 2011).

In Ukraine, one pretext for Russia's invasion was alleged discrimination against Russian speakers. Interestingly, the invasion prompted a shift among Russian speakers toward adopting Ukrainian (Lonngren, 2023). Meanwhile, India faces language conflicts despite its 20+ official languages. Efforts to promote Hindi as a national language sparked protests in non-Hindi-speaking regions, entangling linguistic and religious identities—Hindi symbolizing Hinduism and Urdu representing Islam (Das, 2002).

These examples underscore the potential for language to fuel conflicts when mismanaged. Thus, language conflict mitigation is essential, particularly in multilingual nations. National language development initiatives, starting early and focusing on harmonious multilingualism, are critical. In Indonesia, the national language policy emphasizes prioritizing Indonesian education while preserving regional languages and promoting foreign language proficiency.

Based on the Previous Research

Prior research on national language development spans diverse perspectives, including cultural identity (Shohamy, 2006), globalization (Backhaus, 2007), multilingualism (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009), education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), tourism (Phoocharoensil & Pongpairoj, 2017), and linguistic disparities in Indonesian public spaces (Fatmawati, 2018; Dibah, 2023; Arianto, 2023, 2024). In general, these studies are dominated by technical aspects and descriptions of language in the public sphere. Although there are, not many clearly regulate language policies to reduce language contestation in the public sphere.

This paper aims to provide a real picture of language use in government public spaces and language prioritization management through the national language development method that has been launched by the Language Development and Development Agency. This model uses elements of national language prioritization, regional language preservation, and foreign language acquisition.

The Concept of National Language Development

National language development and development is a structured and systematic effort to prioritize, improve, preserve, and promote language as a marker of national identity.

Language development and coaching are closely related to national language planning, which includes three main aspects: social function planning (Kloss, 1969), corpus planning (Haugen, 1983), and competency planning (Cooper, 1989).

In Indonesia, national language development is governed by Law No. 24 of 2009 on the National Flag, Language, and Emblem. This law regulates the use of Indonesian as the official state language. Government Regulation No. 57 of 2014 on the Use of Indonesian provides more detailed guidelines on the obligation to use Indonesian in various sectors, including in public spaces, advertisements, announcements, and signage. Furthermore, Ministerial Regulation No. 50 of 2015 on the Enhancement of Indonesian Language Use directs the proper and accurate use of Indonesian in public spaces, especially in communication media such as advertisements, signage, and slogans, to strengthen national identity.

Language Landscape

Landry and Bourhis (1997) initially conceptualized language landscapes as visual representations of language in public space elements. The main functions of the language public space are information and symbolic markers. The former is a practical function that focuses on communication, while the latter emphasizes pride of national identity. The study emphasized that language in public spaces reflects the status, power, and identity of ethnic and social groups.

The language of public space is also intertwined with the multimodal aspects of public space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Multimodal in public space discourse also needs to be considered because public space is not limited to writing, but also images, symbols, and other visual elements.

Shohamy (2006) reinforced Landry and Bourhis's viewpoint, asserting that linguistic landscapes are areas where language policy is at stake, addressing the complex issues between the national language and other languages. In the political realm, the language landscape of the public sphere is interpreted as a form of resistance to the dominance of the superior language over the language of minority groups (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). On the other hand, the language of the public sphere is a reflection of the application of the use of the national language (Hult, 2010).

The conclusion from these views is that the national language in the public sphere is important to foster a sense of language pride, implement national policies widely, and strengthen national unity.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach in examining the phenomenon of language use in public spaces of government institutions. The source of data comes from the use of language in public spaces of government institutions. Data in the form of language in public spaces of government institutions. This research was conducted through the stages of observation, education, and appreciation. The observation stage is applied through data searches in government institutions, reporting, and proposing a memorandum of understanding between institutions. The education stage is a structured and massive assistance to fostered institutions on the use of language rules in public spaces. The

appreciation stage is a sign of respect to institutions that have made serious efforts in prioritizing the national language in the public sphere.

Findings

Some of the findings in this study will be presented in the form of images and tables to validate the data in accordance with the conditions observed in the field.



Figure 1: Data of Public Space in a Foreign Language (Arabic)

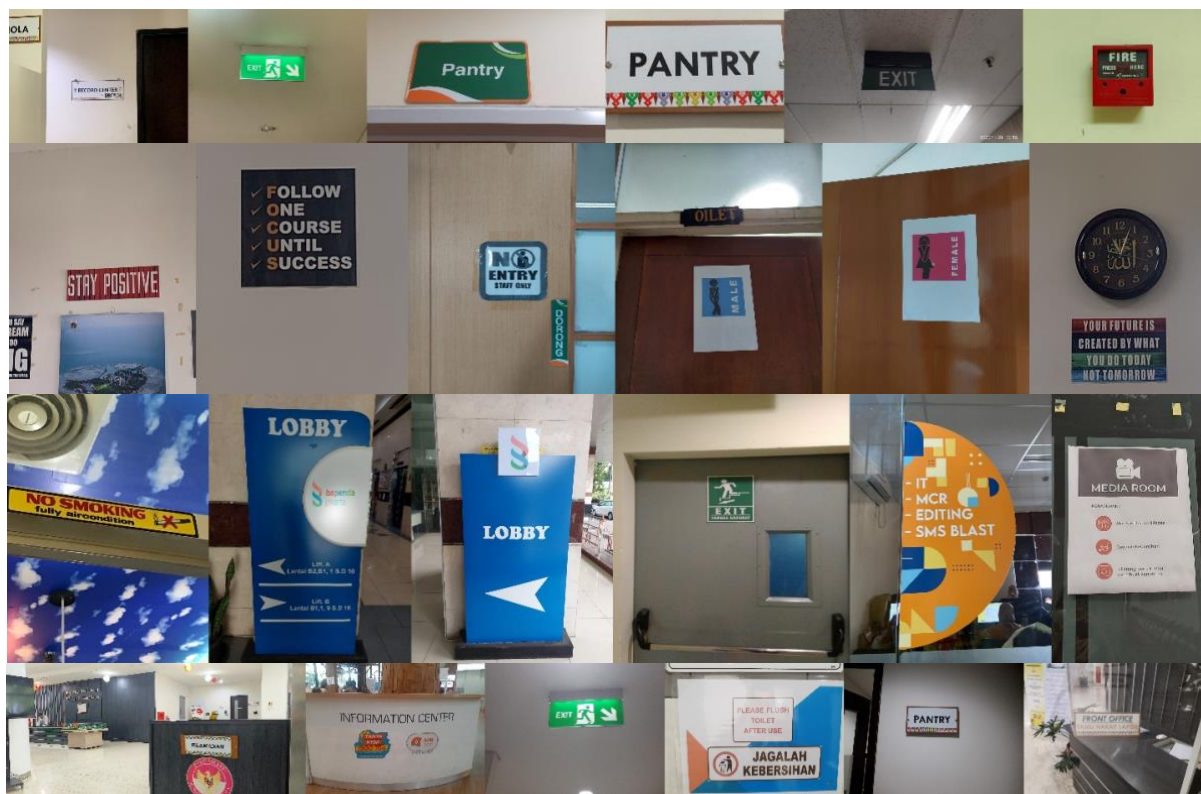


Figure 2: Data of Public Space in a Foreign Language (English)

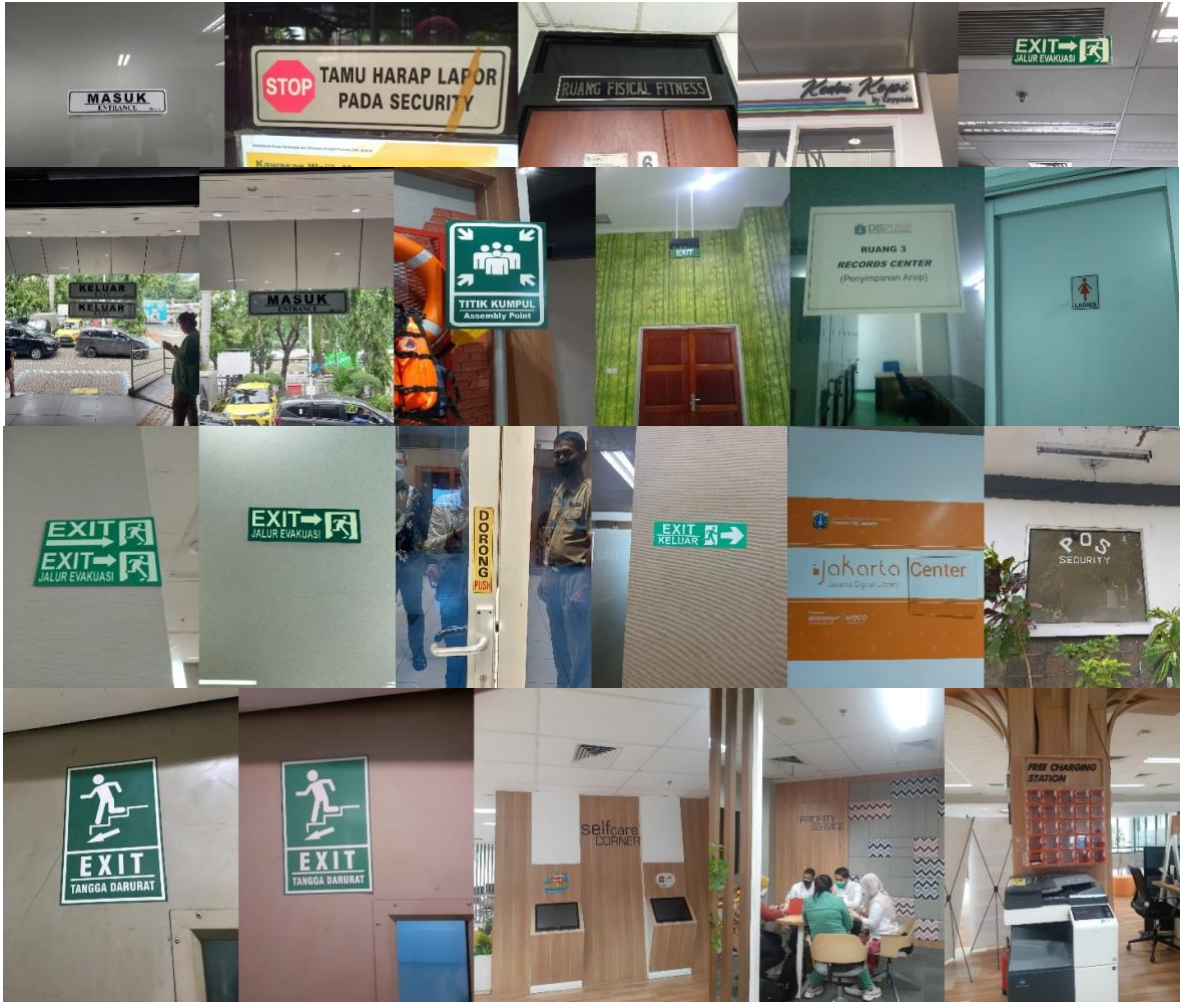


Figure 3: Data of Public Space in a Mixed Language



Figure 4: Data of Public Space in the National Language



Figure 5: Data of Public Space That Has Been Developed

Table 1: Data on Language in Public Spaces of Government Institutions

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| Data 1 | Public Space in Foreign Language (Arabic) | MUSHOLA, MUSHOLLA, WUDHU, SHOLAT, |
| Data 2 | Public Space in Foreign Language (English) | RECORD CENTRE, EXIT, PANTRY, FIRE PRESS HERE, STAY POSITIVE, FOLLOW ONE COURSE UNTIL SUCCESS, NO ENTRY STAFF ONLY, MALE, FEMALE, YOUR FUTURE IS CREATED BY WHAT YOU DO TODAY NOT TOMORROW, NO SMOKING FULLY AIRCONDITION, LOBBY, EDITING, SMS BLAST, FRONT OFFICE, PLEASE FLUSH TOILET AFTER USE, SECURITY, INFORMATION CENTER |
| Data 3 | Public Space in Mixed Language | MASUK (ENTRANCE), TAMU HARAP LAPOR PADA SECURITY, RUANG FISICAL FITNESS, KEDAI KOPI BY KOPPADA, EXIT (JALUR EVAKUASI), KELUAR (EXIT), TITIK KUMPUL (ASSEMBLY POINT), RUANG 3 RECORD CENTER (PENYIMPANAN ARSIP), POS SECURITY, EXIT (TANGGA DARURAT) |
| Data 4 | Public Space in Indonesian Language | BADAN PENGEMBANGAN SUMBER DAYA MANUSIA, BADAN PENGELOLAAN KEUANGAN DAERAH, DINAS KESEHATAN, DINAS PERPUSTAKAAN DAN KEARSIPAN, BADAN PEMBINAAN BADAN USAHA MILIK NEGARA, BADAN PENGELOLAAN BENCANA DAERAH, DINAS PENDIDIKAN, DINAS KEBUDAYAAN, JALUR EVAKUASI, KAWASAN DILARANG MEROKOK, PINTU DARURAT, TOILET WANITA, TOILET PRIA, KLINIK PELAYANAN KONSULTASI |
| Data 5 | Public Space has been developed | PANTRI, MUSALA, TITIK KUMPUL (ASSEMBLY POINT), JEJARING NASIONAL (Procurement Champions), PINTU KELUAR (ACCESS HERE), DILARANG MEROKOK (NO SMOKING), JALUR EVAKUASI (EVACUATION ROUTE), RUANG SINIAR, EXIT (KELUAR), TOILET DAN MUSALA, SUDAH LENGKAPKAH ATRIBUT ANDA? KEDISIPLINAN DAN KERAPIAN ADALAH CERMINAN KEPERIBADIAN ANDA, KELUAR (TANGGA DARURAT), KELUAR, RUANG TINDAKAN, RUANG FITNES, RUANG REKAM MEDIS. |

Discussion

Linguistic landscape refers to the study of language use in public spaces, including signboards, traffic signs, and symbols that are part of visual communication in a given area. In the context of Indonesia, the use of the Indonesian language in public spaces is regulated by government policies to strengthen national identity and ensure accessibility of information for the entire population.

Based on the provided data, here is an analysis of the use of the Indonesian language in various public space elements:

- **Government Institutions:** Names such as *Badan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia* (Human Resource Development Agency), *Dinas Kesehatan* (Health

Department), and *Dinas Perpustakaan dan Kearsipan* (Library and Archives Department) reflect efforts to use standard, formal Indonesian by government regulations.

- **Public Facilities:** Signs such as *Jalur Evakuasi* (Evacuation Route), *Kawasan Dilarang Merokok* (No Smoking Area), *Pintu Darurat* (Emergency Exit), *Toilet Wanita* (Women's Toilet), and *Toilet Pria* (Men's Toilet) demonstrate the use of simple, clear, and direct Indonesian for general public needs.
- **Special Services:** Examples such as *Klinik Pelayanan Konsultasi* (Consultation Service Clinic) show the use of formal Indonesian to convey the specific function of these services.

The use of Arabic in government public spaces, such as *Mushola*, *Musholla*, *Wudhu*, and *Sholat* reflects the use of language influenced by Islamic culture and religion in Indonesian society. Indonesian society is thick with the influence of Islam so that the use of Arabic is inevitable. Religious symbols, markers and language become spiritual and functional functions that are taboo to change in a religious society. *Mushola* and *Musholla* both mean a place for prayer, and *Wudhu* refers to the ritual of self-purification before prayer. According to Indonesian spelling rules, there should be no double consonants such as *sh*, *ll*, and *dh* so the correct spellings are *Musala*, *Salat*, and *Wudhu*.

The use of English in Indonesian public spaces is an influence of globalization. This internationalization of the national language is part of modernity, global accessibility, and convenience for foreigners. The use of the terms Record Center, Exit, Pantry, and Lobby are often seen in public spaces. This use presents challenges in terms of maintaining the national language and linguistic policy.

These English terms are not accompanied by their Indonesian equivalents, which contradicts Law No. 24 of 2009 on the Flag, Language, and State Symbols. This reflects a lack of implementation of national linguistic policies that prioritize the use of Indonesian. Excessive use of English without supporting the Indonesian language may undermine national values and cultural identity.

According to Law No. 24 of 2009, the Indonesian language must be used in public spaces, especially for official, safety-related, or general public information. Foreign languages are intermediary languages between multilingual speakers, but their use should not replace Indonesian as the national language.

The Indonesian government, through the Language Development and Fostering Agency, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, has created equivalent terms for foreign words, which can be accessed freely on the website [Pasti.Kemdikbud.go.id](https://pasti.kemdikbud.go.id) (<https://pasti.kemdikbud.go.id/home.php>). This open access makes it easier for the public to find Indonesian equivalents for foreign words.

The use of mixed languages (English-Indonesian, Arabic-Indonesian, and English-Arabic) reflects the unique dynamics of language use in Indonesia. For Islamic-affiliated educational institutions, the consecutive use of Arabic, English and Indonesian is the general rule. Different things are found in nationally affiliated institutions. However, the use of foreign languages in public spaces requires national linguistic consistency in prioritizing Indonesian in public spaces.

The use of foreign terms, such as Exit, Record Center, out, in, and others reflects global language, but does not prioritize Indonesian so it needs a consistent arrangement, in the form of writing Indonesian at the beginning and foreign language at the end. These guidelines become a structured order that is consistent and can be applied to all linguistic conditions in public spaces.

Terms like *Ruang Fisical Fitness* demonstrate errors in both Indonesian and English. The term mixes Indonesian and English in its construction. In English, it should be written as *Physical Fitness*. This suggests a lack of attention to consistency and accuracy in the use of foreign languages. According to public space language guidelines, the correct usage should involve either only Indonesian (*Ruang Fitness*) or, in visual formats, an English translation presented in smaller font and placed below the Indonesian version.

The proper use of mixed terms can make it easier for local readers and, more importantly, emphasize pride in the national language. While English is often used to convey modernity or international appeal, overusing it without prioritizing Indonesian can diminish national identity.

The use of Indonesian in public spaces is essential for shaping national identity and strengthening unity among Indonesian citizens. Therefore, government policies must be implemented in a structured and systematic manner. Approaches such as observation, education, and appreciation can ensure that Indonesian is used optimally in public spaces, helping to achieve both communicative and normative objectives.

Observation, in this context, serves to gather data on the use of Indonesian in public spaces and to present findings to relevant government agencies for further action. The purpose of observation is to ensure that Indonesian is used in public spaces according to established regulations, identify issues or shortcomings in the implementation of language policies, and provide a strong basis for the government to formulate more effective policies in the future.

Observation is conducted through two main steps: data collection and submission to the relevant institutions. Data collection involves observing and documenting the use of the Indonesian language in various public spaces. The collected data includes the use of Indonesian, foreign languages, regional languages, and mixed languages in public spaces. This data collection should be done regularly and comprehensively to ensure that the results accurately reflect the implementation of the Indonesian language policy in public spaces.

Once the data is gathered and classified according to language standards, it is reported to the relevant institutions. This submission can take the form of a formal report detailing the language used in public spaces. The leadership of the institutions can use this data as a basis for decision-making to prioritize the use of the Indonesian language. Both the institutions involved in the language development process and the language agencies can establish a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to ensure good cooperation.

Education is an approach that involves the guidance and support of linguists for institutions. The aim is to raise awareness and understanding within the institution about the importance of using Indonesian in public spaces through direct and intensive mentoring. This approach focuses on fostering a sense of pride in Indonesian as the nation's unifying language, helping institutions and communities understand how to use Indonesian well in public spaces, as well

as encouraging government institutions to commit to using Indonesian on all communication platforms.

This assistance can be done through direct or indirect linguistic assistance by linguists to ensure the language development process runs effectively and efficiently. The essence of this support is to educate about the importance of Indonesian in public spaces. It can involve language experts to help enhance the institution's capacity to implement the Indonesian language in these spaces.

Appreciation is an approach that involves providing recognition or incentives to institutions that have successfully prioritized the use of the Indonesian language in public spaces. The aim is to encourage institutions to be more serious in implementing state policies related to language in public spaces, raise awareness that the use of Indonesian in public spaces is not only an obligation, but a positive value that should be appreciated, and motivate other institutions to consistently prioritize the use of Indonesian.

Institutions that have shown a strong commitment to using Indonesian in public spaces can be given official recognition. The form of appreciation to institutions can be in the form of award certificates, incentives for development costs, and/or media publications. The certificate of appreciation is in the form of an acknowledgement of the validity of the fostered and optimized institution in the use of the national language in public spaces. Incentives can take the form of financial support for further programs, additional training opportunities, or ease in the licensing process for institutions that implement language policies optimally. Public recognition can take the form of media coverage or social media exposure for institutions that are highly committed to the use of Indonesian in public spaces. This strategy can encourage other institutions to follow the good practices of language fostered institutions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the model for language development in public spaces, which includes three main components—observation, education, and appreciation—is an effective and efficient approach to improving the quality of language use in public spaces within government institutions. The observation process allows for identifying the use of foreign and mixed languages that do not comply with Indonesian language standards, as well as fostering inter-institutional collaboration. Education, through both online and offline guidance, maximizes the development of the national language in public spaces. Appreciation, in the form of awards for institutions that prioritize Indonesian in public spaces, can encourage other institutions to adopt similar practices.

Overall, this language development model has proven to have a positive impact on increasing the use of the Indonesian language in public spaces, while also supporting the government's efforts to strengthen national identity and facilitate effective communication. With consistent and sustainable implementation, this model can serve as a long-term solution to address the challenges posed by the use of foreign and mixed languages in public spaces, ensuring that Indonesian remains the primary language for public communication in Indonesia.

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