

# LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE: COMPLIANCE WITH LANGUAGE PRACTICE AND POLICY IN M BLOC SPACE

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## ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the linguistic landscape of M Bloc Space, a prominent creative hub in Jakarta, analyzing the relationship between language policy and practice. Addressing concerns that foreign languages prevalence in Indonesian public spaces could undermine national identity, this research examines how language usage in M Bloc Space's signage aligns with governmental regulations, specifically Law of Republic Indonesia No. 24/2009 and Presidential Decree No. 63/2019. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, gathering primary data through direct observations (capturing photographs of public signs) and distributing questionnaires to 30 visitors aged 18-30 who live in Jakarta and Tangerang. This information was analyzed from a sociolinguistic perspective, drawing upon theories concerning multilingualism (Cenoz, 2013) and language attitude (Baker, 1995). Findings reveal a diverse linguistic landscape at M Bloc Space, with 72% of all signs being monolingual (Indonesian and English each accounting for 33%, and Japanese 6%), and 28% bilingual, predominantly Indonesian-English (19%). Public perceptions of these languages varied considerably: Indonesian signs were highly comprehensible (97% ease of understanding) and evoked strong positive sentiment (77%), consistently proving highly effective (90%). English signage also demonstrated good comprehension (74%) and positive appeal (83%), contributing to overall effectiveness (87%). Conversely, vernacular and other foreign languages presented significant comprehension barriers and less positive responses, proving less effective. Crucially, the study identifies several instances of non-compliance with national language policy, particularly purely foreign language signs and bilingual combinations omitting or downplaying Indonesian. This highlights persistent challenges in applying language regulations within vibrant, multilingual commercial settings.

## I. INTRODUCTION

M Bloc Space, a creative hub located in South Jakarta, opened in late 2019, taking over the former PERURI complex (the State-owned Enterprise for Indonesian Rupiah Printing). It is described as an ideal classic setting for relaxing, socializing, and enjoying company (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Its increasing status as a popular destination for creative activities is evident from the constant large crowds, particularly of young visitors. Currently, M Bloc Space sees around 6,000 visitors daily, a number that can surge to 11,000 on weekends. Its appeal as a top hangout spot for youth, especially on weekends, is fueled by its frequent hosting of major events like talk shows, exhibitions, and live music performances. Consequently, M Bloc Space has evolved into a vibrant melting pot of various cultures and languages.

Languages are more than just words and grammar; they also help people connect and interact with each other. A language is spoken by people who consider themselves part of the same group. This language helps them feel united and represents who they are to others (Holmes and Wilson, 2022).

However, Indonesia has a diverse ethnicity, which means there are a lot of different cultures and languages. Not only the official language and vernacular language, but also foreign languages. Holmes and Wilson (2022) also stated that official signs in official language may contrast with unofficial signs, such as graffiti, in a vernacular language or foreign language. The effect of this phenomenon will show the linguistic landscape, which is the displayed language in a public sphere, either in administrative signs, private signs, or spontaneous signs, which reflects the multilingualism (Abramova, 2016).

The linguistic varieties that are able to be observed in public spaces can provide valuable information about the community. As Kostanski (2011) stated that the linguistic varieties capture the unique characteristics of the places it represents and will affect the public's perception about it. This perception towards the language used in the public signs will be reflected in the language attitudes within the community.

Given the social and cultural significance of languages, it is essential to preserve national languages in public spaces, especially in multilingual countries like Indonesia. As defined by Cenoz (2013), multilingualism signifies the active and regular use of multiple languages in the daily lives of societies, institutions, groups, and individuals. The widespread use of foreign languages in public spaces can pose several dangers, such as the erosion of national identity and inequality as not all individuals are able to get the same opportunities to learn foreign languages (Simpson, 2007).

By preserving national language in public spaces, we can protect cultural heritage, promote our language, and create more inclusive and equitable societies. Thus, the usage of national language in public space should be based on the language policy to protect the national and official language. Spolsky (2007) identifies three interconnected but separable components of language policy: practices, beliefs, and management. While language practices refer to the observable behaviors and choices people exhibit, encompassing the language they choose and use.

In Indonesia, the usage of language in public space has been regulated by the government in law of Republic Indonesia number 24 of the year 2009 about "*Bendera, Bahasa, dan Lambang Negara, serta Lagu Kebangsaan*" on article 36 until 38 which stated that any forms of publication, brands, and signs in the public space should use Indonesian. This policy is strengthened by the presidential decree number 63 of the year 2019 about "*Penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia*" on article 33 which stated that the Indonesian must be used for the names of buildings, apartments or residential areas, offices, and commercial complexes that are established or owned by Indonesian citizens or Indonesian legal institutions.

There are some examples about the relation of language policy and practice in public spaces. For example, Zaman (2021) stated that the language used in the Kota Tua area has shown a positive attitude towards Indonesian, particularly in the naming of museums, which are all in Indonesian. However, a less positive attitude can be seen in the use of language on public signage and information boards, where some still exclusively use foreign languages. The study of Hasriani and Sofyan (2023) reveals that there is a strong presence of English in public areas of Makassar, from apartments to eateries, with the exception of street names. To counter this dominance, policymakers must take action to safeguard Indonesian and vernacular languages. Simultaneously, it's imperative to raise public awareness and encourage the use of Indonesian and local languages in public spaces.

Another research from Kumala (2021) stated that the mix of languages used in the Pasar Lama, Tangerang shows how well the culture coexists between the Chinese Peranakan and the

surrounding communities. This shows that the richness of language variation within an area is clearly shown by how languages are distributed in that area.

This research aims to investigate the distribution of languages used at M Bloc Space and the public's acceptance towards it. By examining the distribution of language variation at M Bloc Space, the researcher would like to see the relation of language policy and practice at M Bloc Space.

## II. METHODS

This study takes a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative research as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), to analyze the linguistic landscape of M Bloc Space. Mixed methods research is considered essential because it offers a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem by intentionally combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This integration goes beyond the mere collection and analysis of different data types; it involves the *tandem* use of both methodologies (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This approach provides a richer understanding of the research problems, which are to identify the languages used on public signs, visitors' attitude, and assess their compliance with Indonesian language policy, providing a complete picture of language practice and public perception.

The researcher employs primary data, through on-site observations and surveys. This choice of primary data enables a more direct and personal engagement with the subject matter, specifically visitors' attitude about the language usage in the public signs in M Bloc Space. This approach also allows for the identification of subtle details and contextual factors that may not be apparent in secondary data sources. By focusing on primary data, the researcher aims to understand how language serves as a cultural marker and reveals the complex cultural and social dynamics, such as social identity and group belonging, at M Bloc Space.

The researcher employs a dual approach to gather primary data by doing observation and surveys, focusing on the most recent and up-to-date information. This primary data is meticulously collected in Jakarta, specifically within the M Bloc Space, with a specialized emphasis on the distinctive public signs. Direct observation was conducted by visiting the site and capturing the visual data through photography of the public signs, which are defined as signs that offer warning, direction, notification, and other closely related literal or graphical information. The public signs examined in this research include: building sign boards, directions, information boards, places names, product catalogs, and banners. The scope of this study is sociolinguistic, focusing on the written language displayed in M Bloc Space. Due to time constraints, the study is limited to the public signs that serve a public information function, excluding items like personalized social media posts or private graffiti not meant for general guidance.

In addition to visual data, surveys were conducted with M Bloc Space visitors. A questionnaire was used, combining 16 close-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions. The close-ended questions utilizing a 5-point Likert scale from Gardner's (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to measure the opinions and attitudes of the participants on a continuum from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' The use of the Likert scale was chosen to accurately gauge the strength and direction of the visitors' perceptions towards the language use. The questionnaires were restricted to 30 individuals living in Jakarta and Tangerang, aged 18 to 30, who had visited M Bloc Space at least once, enhancing the depth and richness of the collected data by targeting a key demographic. The data were collected over 10 weeks, from March 16th, 2025, to May 25th, 2025.

The analysis of the collected data requires several steps. First, the researcher uses Cenoz's (2013) theory to classify the languages on the 184 public signs as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, using online dictionaries to ensure accuracy. Second, based on the results of the survey, the researcher identifies the visitors' attitudes (positive or negative) towards the language used by applying Baker's (1995) theory of language attitude. Third, the researcher checks the languages

used on the public signs whether it is in compliance with Indonesian language policy, specifically Law number 24 of the year 2009 and Presidential Decree number 63 of the year 2019. Finally, the researcher synthesizes the findings and provides an analysis of the linguistic landscape at M Bloc Space.

### III. RESULTS

This study's are grounded in Cenoz's (2013) theory, Baker's (1995) language attitudes model, and relevant Indonesian language regulations. It provides a thorough perspective on the linguistic landscape present in M Bloc Space, considering both 184 static signs as well as additional dynamic signs that shift depending on specific events held on site. The analysis highlights a complex interaction among language usage, visitor sentiments, and adherence to the law, thus providing useful insights into the sociolinguistic dynamics of a modern creative hub in Jakarta.

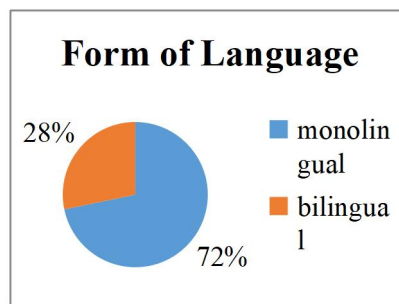


Figure 1. Form of language

The initial finding addresses the distribution of languages on M Bloc Space's public signs. A key feature of the signage observed at M Bloc Space is that monolingual signs make up a majority (72%) of the total signage, as visually represented in figure 1. This result strongly suggests a dominant strategy within the venue to primarily communicate with a specific linguistic group or perceived majority audience by presenting information only in a single language. The high occurrence of monolingual communication sets a distinct tone for the linguistic landscape of M Bloc Space, emphasizing singular linguistic clarity over a more diverse linguistic approach in the majority of its visual materials.

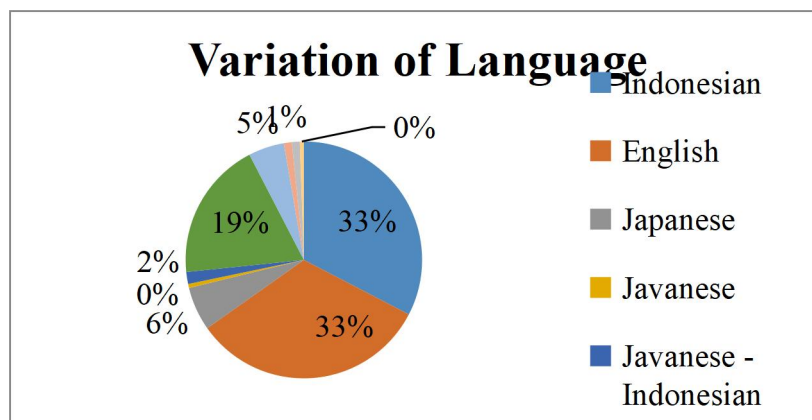


Figure 2. Variation of language

As figure 2 illustrates, *Indonesian emerges as the most prevalent language*, presents on 33% of the signs. This strong showing underscores the importance and official status of the national language in the public sphere of Indonesia. *English* appears with the same percentage, which is 33% of the signs, indicating a clear recognition of English as an important language in this context, likely serving international visitors or local people with English proficiency. Furthermore, *Japanese* appears as a sole language on 6% of signs, suggests a targeted effort to cater to specific visitor groups or to reflect the origins of certain tenants or products.

The remaining 28% of signs are bilingual, Indonesian continues to be a vital component. The most frequent combination is Indonesian and English, appearing on 19% of signs. This co-occurrence allows M Bloc Space to cater to both local linguistic norms and the needs of visitors who may be more comfortable with English. Other bilingual combinations also feature Indonesian, such as Javanese and Indonesian (2%), demonstrating an effort to incorporate regional languages alongside the national language. The remaining bilingual signs include Japanese and English (5%), Javanese and English (1%) as well as Korean and English (1%) highlighting a more nuanced approach to linguistic diversity of the national and international languages. There was also one single instance of an Amharic and English sign (representing 0% due to its sole occurrence). Ultimately, this distribution emphasizes a primary communicative focus on Indonesian and English, with other languages play a less significant position.

Table 1. Visitor attitudes

<b>Language Group</b>	<b>Cognitive Component</b>	<b>Affective Component</b>	<b>Behavioral Component</b>
Indonesian	97%	77%	90%
English	74%	83%	87%
Vernacular languages	23%	53%	50%
Foreign languages (other than English)	0%	47%	7%

The second main focus of the analysis was on visitor attitudes, as measured through the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of Baker's (1995) model as shown in Table 1. The study specifically examined Indonesian, English, vernacular language, and other foreign languages. It's important to note that English is not grouped as a "foreign language" in this research. This distinction acknowledges English's status as a global lingua franca, setting it apart from other less commonly encountered foreign languages. Therefore, the "foreign language" in this study refers to any language on public signage other than Indonesian, vernacular language or English.

The cognitive component offers a particular insight. As Baker (1995) explains it encompasses individuals' beliefs and knowledge about a language. This component assesses whether visitors 'understand' the messages on the signs. For the public signage at M Bloc Space, understanding is crucial for navigation, safety, and engagement with the environment. The high comprehension rate for Indonesian signs (97%) is expected, considering its status as the national language used daily. It indicates that these signs are highly effective in conveying information suggests that the participants, as a whole, have a solid foundation in the Indonesian language. Similarly, English signs are well-understood by a considerable portion of the audience (74%). This level of comprehension

suggests that a majority of the target demographic of M Bloc Space could comfortably grasp the information presented, which is largely comprised of young, educated urbanites. In contrast, the significant comprehension barriers posed by vernacular and other foreign languages (23% and 0%, respectively) indicate that these languages serve a more symbolic than functional purpose, often isolating visitors who are not familiar with them.

The affective component of attitude specifically investigates the *appeal of the language* used in M Bloc Space and the emotional responses and feelings individuals associate with it. The language used in public signage can significantly influence visitors' overall experience and their perception of the space's atmosphere. The strong positive appeal of both Indonesian (77%) and English (83%) signs. These findings provide empirical support for the earlier discussion, highlighting the considerable positive emotional resonance that the Indonesian language holds for the visitors at M Bloc Space. The use of Indonesian fosters a sense of familiarity and national pride, while the use of English projects an image of modernity that is highly valued by the target audience. The "mixed appeal" of vernacular languages is a fascinating finding. While some visitors may feel a sense of local pride and connection to these languages, others may not find them as appealing in this particular context, possibly associating them with a more traditional or less cosmopolitan identity. Conversely, the findings about foreign language (43%) strongly suggest that the foreign language used in the public signs does not resonate positively with a substantial portion of the M Bloc Space visitors and, for a considerable minority, actively evokes negative feelings.

Finally, the behavioral component of attitude offers practical observations. It emphasizes the connection between individual's feeling and understanding towards a language and how they act in response to it. In the context of public signage, the language used directly influences whether visitors can easily navigate the space, adhere to safety regulations, and interact with the intended information, thereby shaping their actions within M Bloc Space. The high effectiveness of Indonesian (90%) and English (87%) signs underscores the practical success of utilizing the Indonesian and English in guiding visitor behavior within the M Bloc Space environment. Visitors are more likely to follow directions, read information, and engage with signs they understand and find appealing. Conversely, the effectiveness of vernacular (50%) and other foreign languages (7%) show that the vernacular and foreign language used in the public signs are perceived as highly ineffective in facilitating navigation and comprehension for the vast majority of visitors, likely creating a barrier to their ability to interact effectively with the M Bloc Space environment.

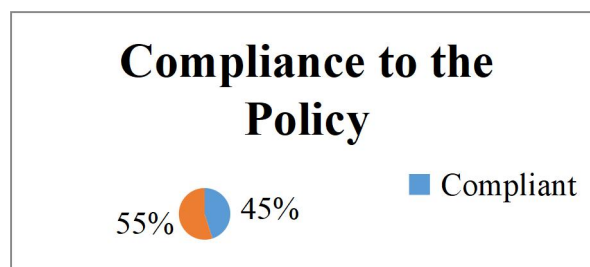


Figure 3. Compliance to the policy

The most critical and challenging finding, however, is the substantial discrepancy between M Bloc Space's linguistic practices and national policy compliance, specifically Law number 24 of 2009 and Presidential Decree number 63 of 2019. The information reveals a notable division, with *45% of the signage surveyed are in compliance with the existing language policies, while a significant 55% does not* as shown in figure 3. This means that a majority of the public signs at M Bloc Space are currently non-compliant to the regulations concerning language use in the public area. The higher percentage of non-compliant suggests a substantial gap between the current practices at M Bloc

Space and the legal requirements, highlighting an area that requires considerable focus to ensure full adherence to national language policies.



Figure 4. *Buka-Open*

The 45% of compliant signage mainly consists of monolingual Indonesian displays that directly fulfill the policy for Indonesian language use in public spaces (70%). A smaller, portion of compliant signs in 30% of the signage are *bilingual (Indonesian with another language)*, where Indonesian is clearly dominant, such as signs displaying “Buka-Open” with “Buka” clearly emphasized in figure 4.



Figure 5. *Pull-Tarik*

The majority of the non-compliant signage is largely driven by the use of monolingual foreign languages, which account for 70% of non-compliant signs. which entirely omit Indonesian as required by the law. Furthermore, non-compliance also stems from *bilingual signs combining two foreign languages without Indonesian* (14%), such as Japanese-English, and instances where *Indonesian is present but not given appropriate prominence or order* in bilingual signs (16%), contradicting the spirit of the legislation. As shown in figure 5, where the word “pull” is more prominent than ‘tarik.’ Lastly, the chart on *non-compliant* signage also includes instances of non-compliant used of *foreign names for place names*.

This analysis reveals that despite explicit legal frameworks mandating Indonesian as the primary language in public spaces, M Bloc Space exhibits several areas of non-compliance. Beyond the formal naming convention, the prevalence of purely foreign language signs and certain bilingual combinations that exclude or diminish the role of Indonesian signify a departure from the legislative intent. While some efforts to incorporate Indonesian alongside other languages are evident, these policy gaps underscore the ongoing challenge of enforcing national language regulations in multi-lingual commercial hubs, potentially impacting effective communication and national identity in public signage.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and analysis, using Cenoz’ (2013) theory of monolingual, bilingual and multilingual, Baker’s (1995) model of language attitudes, Law of Republic Indonesia number 24 of the year 2009 and presidential decree number 63 of the year 2019, this study answers the

research questions. These findings collectively offer a detailed perspective on the sociolinguistic dynamics present within this prominent creative hub in Jakarta.

The analysis of M Bloc Space's public signage reveals a varied and strategic use of language. A significant 72% of all signs are monolingual, in which Indonesian and English each account for 33% of signs appearing as the sole language, emphasizing their prominent roles. A smaller 6% of monolingual signs are in Japanese. The remaining 28% of signage is bilingual, showing an effort to enhance accessibility for a broader range of visitors. The most frequent bilingual combination is Indonesian-English (19%), followed by efforts to integrate vernacular language such as Javanese-Indonesian (2%), and other diverse pairings like Japanese-English (5%), Javanese-English (1%), and Korean-English (1%). Overall, this distribution highlights a primary communicative focus on Indonesian and English, with other languages playing a less central function.

Understanding these linguistic forms is crucial for assessing how they resonate with visitors' attitude. Survey results on comprehension, appeal, and effectiveness reveal distinct perceptions across different languages. Indonesian signs consistently showed very high comprehension (97%), indicating positive cognitive understanding and ease of processing. English signs also garnered good comprehension, with 74%, though some found it a minor hurdle. In contrast, vernacular (23%) and other foreign languages (0%) presented comprehension barriers which leads to negative cognitive attitude. Affectively, Indonesian (77%) and English (83%) evoked strong positive emotional responses, contributing to a welcoming atmosphere. However, the vernacular language had a more mixed appeal, and other foreign languages were least appealing, often eliciting negative reactions. Behaviorally, Indonesian (90% effective) and English (87% effective) were perceived as highly effective in guiding visitor's behavior. Conversely, vernacular (27% ineffective) and foreign languages (86% ineffective) proved considerably less effective in navigating visitor's action within M Bloc Space.

Despite the varying linguistic landscape and visitor attitudes, compliance with Indonesian language policies remains a critical aspect of M Bloc Space's public signage. The analysis revealed a significant gap: only 45% of the signs surveyed complied with existing language policies, while 55% were non-compliant. This demonstrates that a majority of public signs at M Bloc Space currently non-compliance to the regulations, highlighting a substantial need for attention to ensure full adherence to national language policies. Compliant signage was predominantly monolingual Indonesian (70%) or bilingual with Indonesian prominence (30%). Conversely, non-compliant signs largely consisted of monolingual foreign languages (70%), bilingual foreign language combinations lacking Indonesian (14%), or bilingual signs where Indonesian lacked appropriate prominence (16%).

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