Review

Multimode and Multirole of Languages in Public Spaces

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ABSTRACT

Public spaces are the sphere where people meet each other for many purposes, activities, and interests. Public spaces are decorated with languages with various designs and motives to guide and give information to people in public spaces. Language is displayed in public spaces as the name and labels of shops, restaurants, offices, buildings, streets, advertisements, and short notice. This writing discusses the designs and roles of languages as the text in public spaces. The result of the study shows that languages realized in the text in public spaces have a variety of designs and roles. The study of the text in public spheres should be done by applying integrated approaches and theories.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is important in human life. Language is not only functioned as a communication tool but also used to run all activities of human beings. Besides, language is also the marker of the socio-cultural identity of its speakers. Language can be in the form of spoken and written forms. Written and spoken languages have their respective strengths and weaknesses as a means of communication. In certain contexts, spoken language is more effective as a means of sustaining life, but in the other contexts, written language is needed

Written language is widely used in public spaces. Depending on the media where the language is displayed, written language can also be called printed language. The term printed language can be defined as the language which is printed everywhere around us such as on the wall, doors, banners, or billboards. Public spaces especially in the cities are full of written or printed languages with various designs and motives. The written or printed languages are treated as a text- the term to be used throughout this writing. Text is defined as language in use (Schiffrin, 1994). It can be written or spoken (Halliday, 1980).

Public places are all spheres that can be accessed by people for many different or the same purposes. Public spaces include public roads, schools, worship places, hospitals, hotels, markets, buses, trains, planes, etc. The design and use of the languages in public places depend on the purpose of communication. The structure of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are adjusted to the available space and the message to be conveyed.

Language in public spaces is artistically made so that it looks beautiful. It is done to attract the attention of the public. The creative design of languages can be found in the banner, stickers, T-Shirt, food and drink packaging, nameplate, and other strategic places as in one of the following example.

Fig. 1. Nameplate of Warung Steak and Shake
Source: Warung Steak and Shake in Padang.
(Dok. Oktavianus, 2022).

The design and layout of letters, combination of linguistic and non-linguistic signs as well as coloring make the steak and shake shop above look beautiful. The creative use of languages in public spaces develops rapidly because of the increasing need for human communication in various models. Language is used as the media of competition. It also becomes a commodity. People do not only sell goods and services but also languages. Even, the selling of goods and services depends on the styles of languages the sellers choose. At present time, we notice in public places attractive and interesting names are used as the names and labels of food. The following example is the use of language in public spaces.

Fig. 2. About Mie Gacoan Kuta Bali
Source: Mie Gacoan Kuta Bali. (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

Fig. 3. Display of Status at Mie Gacoan
Source: Mie Gacoan Kuta Bali. (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

The language displayed on one of the walls of *Mie Gacoan* restaurant is designed in such an interesting way as to attract the attention of the public. The first text contains four groups of linguistic signs namely (1) *Mie Gacoan*; (2) *Kuta*: (3) *Since 2016*; and (4) *Funtastic Food*. The four groups of the signs give information to the public about the food which includes the name, place of the restaurant, and opening year. In the first part, there is one non-linguistic sign namely the image of the *gate*. The second part contains the status of the customer namely *single*, *taken*, and *hungry*. Since the context of the use of language is at the restaurant and it is a kind of advertisement of the food, then the status which is marked is *hungry*. In the other context, the status which is marked can be *single*, *taken*, or *hungry*. It depends on the space where the language is used. Meaning depends on and changes through contexts (Leech, 1981; Yule, 2000).

Language has four main components namely form, function, meaning, values, and ideology (Oktavianus, 2022). The four main components can also be found in the written and printed language used in public spaces. The prominence of languages in public spaces lies in the artistic designs of that language and the way meaning, value, and ideology are delivered.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to discuss the designs and the roles of languages in public spaces. Besides, this article is also aimed at formulating the concepts of language in public spaces as social control, character building, cultural identity, sources of teaching and learning materials, and the object of linguistic research.

2. THE STUDY OF LANGUAGES IN PUBLIC SPACES

Many researchers have investigated written and printed language in public spaces. In general, the research on text in public places has been conducted under the approach of the linguistic landscape. The linguistic landscape itself is defined as the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (Landry and Bourhis 1997).

Gorter (2006) stated that language is all around us in textual form as it is displayed on shops windows, commercial signs, posters official notices, traffic signs, etc. Linguistic landscape can also be regarded as the description and analysis of the language situation in a certain country (Sciriha & Vassalo, 2001; Kreslins, 2003; and Oktavianus, 2019, 2021, and 2022).

Referring to the definition of linguistic landscape proposed by Landry and Bourhis, when observed, the public places especially in cities in Indonesia are full of languages in their written form. They present beautiful scenery in the public spaces. In this regard, Backhaus (2007:1) stated that a city is a place of language contact. Gorter (2006) stated that the number of linguistic tokens is high in shopping areas in cities which are then called linguistic city spaces. In addition, in business centers, the number of linguistic tokens is increasing. The landscape of various texts is getting more complex.

The display of text in public spaces is complex. In one area or a city, there are hundreds of texts scattered along the streets, attached to shops, building, banners, cars, office spaces, and other spots. Two models of study can be conducted on all these texts. First, all the texts can be the object of the study at the same time to formulate the linguistic landscape of the area of the city. In other words, the purpose of the study is to know the language situation in one area or city. Second, the study of language in public spaces can be done with one text with all its variations. Amer (2014) did research on the shop signs in Aqaba City, Jordan. Oktavianus, Khairil Anwar, and Ike Revita (2019) researched the linguistic landscape of Rumah Makan Minang. Dabbour (2017) studied Tahrir Square protest signs and Egyptian national identity. Only certain text is studied.

Multimodal Text in Public Spaces

Text in public spaces are usually multimodal text. Multimodality text integrates more than one mode to design a text (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). The term *multimode* is used here. The signs used to design the text consists of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs. The linguistic sign can come from one, two, or more different languages. Nonlinguistic signs are the image, color, size, and model of the letters, background, as well as layout. The combinations of these two groups of signs to design the text to be displayed in public places are regarded as multiple means of making and delivering meaning.

3. LANGUAGE SITUATION AND TEXT DESIGN IN PUBLIC SPACES

Languages in Indonesia can be grouped into Indonesian language, local languages, and foreign languages. Indonesian language, which can also be called Bahasa Indonesia, is the official state language as stipulated in Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution. The functions of the Indonesian

language are stated in Article 25, paragraphs 2 and 3 of Law Number 24 of 2009 concerning the flag, language, state institution, and the national anthem.

Paragraph 2 Article 25 stated that the Indonesian language function as a national identity, national pride, a means of unifying various tribes in Indonesia, and a means of communication among regions and regional cultures in Indonesia. Paragraph 3, Article 25 stated that the Indonesian language functions as the official state language, language of instruction in the process of teaching and learning, a means of communication at the national level, national culture development, transaction and commercial documentation, a means of developing and utilizing science, technology, art and the language of mass media.

Badan Bahasa of The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology from 1991 to 2019 has mapped and identified 718 local languages in Indonesia. Law Number 24 of 2009 also stated the roles and functions of local and foreign languages in Indonesia. Local languages are languages used for generations by Indonesian citizens in the Republic of Indonesia. Meanwhile, a foreign language is a language other than the local and Indonesian languages. The foreign language in Indonesia is dominated by English. The fact that English is a compulsory subject at schools and universities makes English the dominant foreign language in Indonesia (Oktavianus, 2020). Besides, the mastery of English at a certain level of competency as the requirement for continuing education, getting scholarships, and applying for jobs are other factors that cause English to have a strategic role. The massive and long-standing internationalization of English has made English a very important foreign language in Indonesia. English is used in cities, villages, and even in remote areas.

The roles and functions of Indonesian, local and foreign languages are also regulated by The Badan Bahasa, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology through the tagline, *Utamakan Bahasa Indonesia*; *Lestarikan Bahasa Daerah*; dan *Kuasai Bahasa Asing*. This tagline implies for Indonesian act locally, unite nationally, and think globally.

The language displayed in public spaces can be monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Monolingual is the use of one language in one space. In the Indonesian context, the language can

be Indonesian, local, or foreign language only. Bilingual is the use of two different languages in one space. The languages can be a combination between Indonesia and the local language, Indonesian and English, or English and the local language. Multilingual is the use of three or more languages in one space. The combination can be Indonesian, local, and foreign languages. The following examples are the use of languages in public spaces.

Fig. 4. Advertisement for coffee
Source: Coffee shop at the Airport Jakarta. (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

The above text is language displayed in the coffee shop, *Janji Jiwa* at Terminal 3 Soekarno Hatta International Airport in Jakarta. The main message is delivered in the Indonesian language with the design of the text by choosing the word ended by [u] as in *kananmu, kirimu*, and *sejatimu*. However, the combination between Indonesia and English is placed in the lower right and left corners of the text namely *Jiwa tea* and *Jiwa toast*.

As English becomes the dominant language in public places, the use of language in public places is mostly dominated by English. The following example is the use of English in a coffee shop in Kuta Street in Denpasar.

Fig. 5. Language displayed at the coffee shop
Source: Coffee Shop Kuta Bali. (Dok.Oktavianus, 2022)

The text above is taken from one of the coffee shops next to *The Stick and Shake Shop* in Kuta Street Denpasar Bali. The use of English is to build a wide customer network that not only covers local customers but also the foreigners who visit Bali and stay around Kuta. For the owners and customers, the use of English in the coffee shop is aimed at indicating social prestige and identity. This style of language is also addressed to a certain group of customers namely the youth.

Instructions, warnings, and short notices in public places are also made by combining three different languages in one space. The language usually used is Indonesian, local languages, and English. The use of local languages depends on regions where the instructions, warnings, and short notices are displayed. In Minangkabau, West Sumatera, the languages used in the public spaces can be a combination of Indonesian, Minangkabau, and the English language. In Bali, the language used in public places can be a combination of Indonesia, Balinese and English language as in the following example.

Fig. 6. Area Wajib Masker
Source: Ibis Hotel Kuta Bali. (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

The above text is displayed in one of the hotels in Kuta Denpasar, Bali. In the text, three languages are used in sequence namely Balinese, Indonesian and English. Based on the order of the placement of the three languages, it can be identified that the Balinese show a structure of thinking in maintaining local culture through the use of the Balinese language. Balinese state their national identity and pride through Indonesia as well as being part of the world community through English.

The obligation to use the Balinese language is stated through the Bali Governor's Regulation No. 80 of 2018 regarding the Protection and Use of Balinese Language, Script, and Literature. Paragraph 1, Article 6, Chapter IV of the Bali Governor's Regulation states that the Balinese

script must be placed above Latin letters in writing the name of the place of worship for Hindus; customary institutions; building inauguration inscription; building; government and private institutions; streets; tourism facilities and other public facilities. The placement of three languages in sequence in the above text has followed the Balinese Governor's Regulation related to the use of Balinese script. Thus, wherever we go around public places in Bali, we will see and find two or three languages in sequence. If there are two languages in sequence, the order is Balinese and Indonesian language. If there are three languages in sequence, the order is Balinese, Indonesian, and English as in the above text.

The following example is a billboard on one of the main streets in Padang. The signs used are a combination of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs.

Fig. 7. Billboard of Pegadaian in Padang
Source: Billboard of Pegadaian. (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

The above billboard contains public signs displayed on one of the main streets in Padang. The billboard uses the Indonesian language. In the top left and right corner, it is written *BUMN Untuk Indonesia; Pegadaian*. The main message is *Uang Bisa Dicari, Kenangan Susah Diganti*. In the bottom left corner, it is written *#GadaiAjaDulu*. In the bottom right corner, there is the image of a ring.

The message conveyed is an offer to the public to pawn their valuable goods such as gold as it is displayed on the billboard. The message delivery structure is the introduction of the pawnshop (*BUMN Untuk Indonesia*), the main message (*Uang Bisa Dicari; Kenangan Susah Diganti*), and (*#GadaiAjaDulu*), and confirmation by displaying a ring image.

The following example is the placement of the landscape of language in front of the exit gate in I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport in Denpasar Bali.

Fig. 8. The Gate of Bali
Source: The Gate of Bali (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

The semiotic sign of *Bali* is designed and displayed in an artistic style and placed between Bali Script and English, *Island of Paradise*. Bali is an international tourist destination in which language contact is very dynamic in this region. The other similar example can be seen in the picture below.

Fig. 9. The Gate of Mall Bali Galeria
Source: Mall Bali Galeria. (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

The above text is the sign of a commercial shop sign in Denpasar Bali. It is all written in English. Under the signs *Mall Bali Galeria*, it is written the words *enjoy, play, eat*, and *shop*. The four words are written and decorated with different colors and wavy letters. The label of the gate of *Mall Bali Galeria* (MBG) is also written in wavy letters. The four words *enjoy, play, eat* and *shop* reflect the situation inside the MBG.

4. MULTI ROLES OF LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SPACES

Social Control

The public spaces are very complex. People from various social statuses and professions come and meet in public spaces. When we are in the

public spaces, we see people in the street walking or waiting for public transportation. In public places, people are busy with their businesses and activities. They come to hypermarkets for shopping. In the wet market, for example, there is an interaction between the seller of various goods and the buyers. People go to the office to work. In the office, they meet their colleagues and other people and do interaction. People go to the bank to make or save money. Even, some people need to go to the restroom. Some others need to go to the mosques at praying time. People are standing at the bus stop or going on public transportation. On the bus, train, and plane, people also meet each other.

In the public spaces as mentioned above, life becomes complex because people from different backgrounds, attitudes, habits, professions, and ethnicity come and meet each other. Disharmony and conflict may occur triggered by many factors. It is also possible that some people are a newcomer to certain public places so they need to get information about everything in the public spaces. The written languages displayed everywhere in public places will function as social controls and regulate people from different backgrounds with different attitudes, habits, professions, and ethnicities. This can create harmony and avoid conflict and miscommunication.

Short notices and warnings in public places such as *No Smoking* in an Air Conditioned Room, *Priority Seat* in an airport waiting room, *Open* and *Close* displayed at the door of café or office, *In* and *Out* at the entrance gate of hotels and government office buildings are some examples of languages displayed in the public places as social control. These short notices and warnings guide people to act and behave properly.

Character Building

People in public places may have different or the same interest, activities, and businesses. The two are possible. Then, as stated in the previous part, people in the public spaces can come from different backgrounds with different attitudes and behavior. Thus, if they are in public places, they have to have a concern for other people. Positive values such as politeness, solidarity, mutual understanding, wiseness, patience, honesty, and other positive values should be part of their behavior toward other people in all their interactions and communication.

However, it seems that positive values are not always part of people's behavior in public places.

Violations of values, norms, and rules may occur in public places. Then, it is also possible to meet people with impolite behavior, dishonesty, and other negative attitudes in public places. In this regard, written languages in public spaces are one of the ways to remind people to behave reasonably.

In the public spaces, it is found short notices and warnings such as *Queue/Antri* at the bank, hospitals, and other public places. These short notices were created to remind people to take turns in doing something. The short notices *Anda Sopan, Kami Segan* was put at the barbershop to remind the customer to behave properly. *The Priority Seat* in the waiting room of the AirPort is aimed at reminding people to give priority to old people or the disabled people to sit in the chair marked with *Priority Seat*. Some people were littering in public places. Consequently, the surrounding environment looks dirty. The short notices *Buanglah Sampah di Tempatnya* are displayed in some corners of schools, hospitals, and other public places to remind people to put rubbish in the rubbish bin.

Offering to behave politely in providing services to the public and customers are also found in public spaces. The designs of written languages to remind an employee to serve customers politely can be seen in the following example.

Fig. 10. Reminder to give good service to the customer
Source: Restoran Ayam Remuk Pak Tisno Pekan Baru
(Dok.Oktavianus, 2022)

Offering in the above banner is designed in artistic modes and colorful letters. These are done to remind the employee to provide good services to customers. The size and the color of the letters are designed in such a way to attract the attention of the public and to give a good image of the company to the public.

Cultural Identity

Indonesia is a unitary state in which many tribes inhabit the entire archipelago. Each of the ethnic groups has its language and culture. As also stated by Wierzbicka (2003), different culture speaks a different language. Every tribe in Indonesia can be identified and recognized through their language and culture.

The high mobility of Indonesians to the cities in Indonesia causes the spread of languages and cultures. In Jakarta, for example, the linguistic landscape of one main street shows us the various cultures coming from various ethnic groups in Indonesia. The logo, name, and label in local languages displayed in the shops and restaurants are the marker of the cultures of one ethnic group. Names and labels of *Rumah Makan Minang*, for example, are the marker of Minangkabau cultures (Oktavianus, 2019). The other example of how the language in the public spaces has the role of a cultural marker can be seen in the following examples.

Fig. 11. Nameplate of Coto Makassar
Source: Warung Coto Makassar (Dok. Oktavianus, 2022)

In Indonesia, there is a food named *Soto*. Every ethnic group in Indonesia has this kind of food with a different composition and even taste. In Makassar, it is called *Coto* as it is written in the above nameplate. Thus, everywhere in Indonesia, if there is the word *Coto* refers to the food, people can recognize that it comes from Makassar. Thus, the shift from [s] in the word [soto] to [c] in the word [coto] leads us to the different cultures in Indonesia.

Sources of Teaching and Learning Material

Languages in public spaces grow and develop rapidly. The creativity of language users can create a language with various forms and designs. The languages in the public spaces can be collected and used as teaching materials. By doing this, the students are guided to observe the reality of how language is used and designed in public spaces. The Methods of Project-Based Learning and case studies are suitable for using languages in the public spaces as the learning materials. Then, by observing the use of language in the public spaces, students can observe and analyze directly the linguistic data collected to show the reality of how the language is used.

Big Data for Linguistic Research

Language is all around us in textual form (Gorter, 2006c:1). The languages in the public spaces can be used as an object of inexhaustible linguistic study. The new forms and constructions occur every time because of the increasing needs of the speakers of the language to communicate with each other. The variation of languages in the public spaces can be studied by using the different approaches and theories both linguistically and non linguistically. The study can also be done from the perspective of micro linguistics and macro linguistics.

Besides, the study of language in public places can also be conducted by applying the approaches and theories from other sciences such as sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, economics, law, and even theories of natural sciences. The analysis of languages in public spaces can apply all these approaches and theories because the designs of the languages in public places usually use more than one sign or mode. Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T (2001 and 2006) stated that semiotic systems of human communication consist of various signs and modes that can be analyzed by using the different approaches and theories. Thus, the multimodal approach can be regarded as the appropriate way of investigating languages in public spaces.

5. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this short writing, we can say that public spaces are the largest area for the use of languages with various motives and designs. None of a single text uses a single sign. The use of language in public spaces is very dynamic. The language in public spaces does not only have the roles as the medium of communication but also as social control, character building, cultural identity, teaching and learning materials, and as the object of linguistic research.

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