

English Presence in Our Landscape: A Global Community at Play

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ABSTRACT

English today is everywhere in our landscape. It appears in every commercial item. People seem to have a strong belief that language has an extra magical power to sell; it contains a powerful mantra to persuade consumers to choose their products. With its extensive use, English marks a kind of global community. This study makes an online survey through *Street View* in Google Maps to collect data on the use of English in the landscapes, particularly in the area of Simpang Lima, Semarang. This employs a perspective of language ecology questioning the ideology behind the rampant English, dominating our place. Based on the data collected, it proves that English appears the most. English is found on the billboards of automotive, mobile phones, cosmetic products, cigarettes, electronics, online shops, internet-based transportation services, housing complexes/real estate, and cellular providers. English items are equal to Indonesian. In Indonesian ads, English many times is featured to be a tagline. Meanwhile, English ads give no space for Indonesian items. Here, English surely does not symbolize the language of the community. We do believe that Semarang is dominantly occupied by Indonesian people. However, it is proved that English has shown its domination in the space, with no real users in the field. It is there for its commercial's effects and association, based on the shared assumption of its prestige, modernity, beauty and power.

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban space is "several urban areas and their related multicentric municipalities forming a whole in a single stretch" (Oct 13, 2016 www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c1074). The space like this is always tied unto property, history, and power. It always associates to an entity, individual, institution, or business. Urban space makes a high-valued commodity, determining the people who can take. Only those with power can claim such a space. In Semarang, the space like this is can be seen in Simpang Lima area. The area makes a single stretch around Semarang Townsquare, a place of commercial districts combining the shopping centers and the public area. To display a billboard in the area, a business should pay at least 340 million/year in 2012 (infosputareklame.blogspot.com). Thus, the space implies a power to which controls and also does control the people (Blommaert: 2013). The power controls the public's needs and dictates which brands to satisfy them. For Rowland (2012:503), linguistic landscape is believed to be "an ideologically loaded space shaped by both local and global forces and displaying a full range of communicative modalities. It exists in an authentic, dynamic and public mega-text. It serves real-world purposes; it is constantly changing; and it is accessible to all". It reflects a certain ideology of forces, mediated through many kinds of

media like verbal symbols, picture, colors, fonts, position, location and others. The study is to reveal the usual urban scene, from a linguistic perspective, seeing the normality from a critical point of view. This kind of study is also mentioned a metrolingualism, whose objective is to reveal the correlation dynamics of 'language use and space in urban area' (Pennycook & Otsuji: 2014).

2. METHODOLOGY

The data source of this study is Google map® of satellite imaging, especially the street view mode. From the data taken in October 24, 2018, the pictures in the menu were recorded in June 2018. The data include all the displays clearly seen in the pictures around the Simpang Lima areas. The displays are ads billboard, commercial shop signs, and public signs (see Landry & Bourhis: 1997). The data were then categorized into the source, the codes, and the visibility level from the perspective of ecolinguistics (Hult: 2012), emphasizing the relation between the language and the environment and promoting the live and vitality of the languages. This can be included into an "ecology movement" which concerned with and describes "the potential losses" of language, and makes efforts to prevent them as well (Hornberger, 2002, p. 33).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, the description of findings can be divided into three points: the power play, the bottom up, and the top down. The displays in the landscape imply the power of the actor(s) / the human agency behind. They can be broadly categorized into the corporate (bottom up) and the public/government (top down).

A Power Play

The spots in the area are full of displays; mostly are advertisement billboards. They are the most important displays, seen from the way they are presented. They are big, tall, colorful, well-designed, and are placed in the point of visibility. Besides them, there are some additional governmental signs functioning to notify the public about the space rule. The signs like this are not very visible; they are simple design, low, and bicolor. They only consist of small writing in white on green board. They can only be seen for a close view (about 10 m). And they don't make a wonderful view. Thus, the differences between the bottom up and the top down signs are very obvious, reflecting the gap of (economic) powers between the two (Landry & Bourhis: 1993).



Pic 1. Displays of BU and TD

Looking closely at the picture, we can feel an obvious gap, implying a power play between the government (top down) items, describing a local government regulation mentioning the rate and the warning for the public not to park in the pedestrian and the private (bottom-up) items. The top down display is only a white writing on a blue board, standing very low reaching only a limited visibility. Meanwhile, the bottom up is printed in red background, presented in a very tall display, dominated mostly by pictures, with the brand and the pictures of the product. The product is an international brand, holding a very big market share in this country. That is why it has a big capital to be invested in marketing the drinks especially in the fasting month at which the recording was done. The presence of an international product reflects that the area is a part of global community sharing to use a similar product like others in the world. This is proven in one of the corners in the square in which the displays are all international brands, emphasizing more on the global natures of the spot.

Corporate Signs (Bottom Up)



Pic 2. International brands in a spot

Among the displays dominating the corner, 70% is a product from other countries, US, Malaysia and China (2). This implies the presence of global items in the urban community, who is a part of global community, by becoming global consumers. The global is also seen from the language used there, English by 7 displays among the six. The English billboards solely rely on English to communicate the message. From their proportion, all the ads put its priority on pictures rather than on texts. The persuasion is played through the stars featured there.

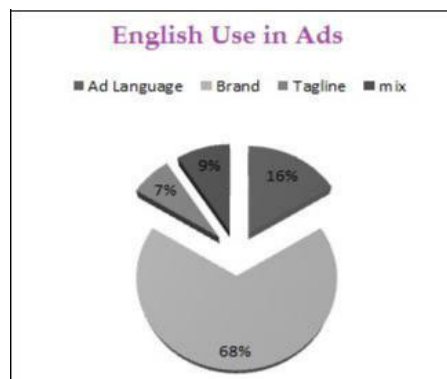
Table 1.

Composition of the billboards

	Produ ct		Auth or	Displays	
				Picture	Text
	McDon ald's		US	Product logo	English Brand, Indonesia
	Nina Anion		Natio nal	Product	Indonesia Brand, English
	Luwak Koffie	W hite	Natio nal	Product, a star	Ind Brand, English
	Oppo		Chin a	Product, a star	Brand, English
	Vivo		Chin a	Product, a star	Brand, English
	Giant		Mala ysia	Product, logo	English Brand, Indonesia
	XXI		US	Logo	
	Starbu cks		US	Logo	English brand
	Robins on		Natio nal	Logo	English brand
0	Pizza Hut		US	Logo	English brand

It can be said that the English presence is dominant; it is shown in all commercial ads, at least in the names of the product. The names of the product are always the biggest texts there. *McDonald's*, a foreign brand, uses Indonesian in the display, functioning to direct the market about its availability and its phone to order, the same case is also found in *Giant* supermarket, which chooses to use Indonesian in its persuasion. The adoption of Indonesian in ads is due to the fact that the target market is Indonesian and the sign has a strong informative function. It informs that it “*buka*” (‘opens’) and the phone for “*pesan antar*” (‘delivery order’). This kind of information is more accessible for the Indonesian public in general. This reason is also the same for the *Giant*, with its target markets are Indonesian housewives. Meanwhile, *Nina Anion*, a domestic product, prefers to use English as its communication medium, mentioning the product superiorities: *new*, *extra long*, *ultrathin*, and *ultra comfortable*. The other ads fully use English for the mobile products and to modernity the youth association.

Chart 1. English in Ads



Other English items are seen in every spot of the landscape. In general, the use of English in the ads found in the area can be divided into four categories: ad language, brand, tagline, and a language mix. The first type refers to those using English as monolingual; they only have English as the verbal media to communicate. The brand

English means the product taking English words or English-like words as the trademarks. The third is clear, the commercial using English as the tagline or the selling point; meanwhile the language ad is Indonesian. A language mix includes the presence of English word (s) in an Indonesian ad. In this case, the English just plays a nuance in the billboards. In the last two adoptions, English has complementary function; it is regarded to be better there (See Huebner: 2009). We can see this evidence from the tagline which feels “prestigious” in English, for examples: “Exceed your vision” (Epson), “The New Choice of MPV” (Wuling), and “Living your lips” (a cosmetic product). This is also the case the English mix in which it is difficult to be presented in Indonesia for a certain prestige

reason, like “merchandize”(Coca Cola), “Home Tech, Online Store” (Mandiri), and “Ramadhan Room Package” (Hom Hotel).

Seen from the chart, English is primarily used as the brand, 68%. The English brand in the landscape is represented by International (44%) and national (56%) products. The language adoption in brand shows a very high value the product owners have on it. They believe that with the name, the product will be chosen by the target market. It is easily memorized, trusted and interesting for them, and the name is one of the determining factors. From the number, the belief in English word for the brand is also proved among our brand owners, factories, companies, real estates and many more. They are sure that English is a valuable marketing language.

The adoption as the brand is similar to the tagline function, a selling point of an ad. Furthermore, the ads employing solely English as its persuasive means show a complete trust on it. It is believed to represent the marketing language, which can be easily understood. Brand is similar to proper name in Edelman (2009); He says that the proper name may not reflect any speaker in the area. In our case, most of the names in the landscape do not represent the identity of the area, Javanese identity or at least Indonesian one. Instead, English names here are intended to create an ‘international image’ (Wang: 2013) just like his finding in Beijing landscape. There is another possible purpose for that; it is to ‘strengthen international communication’ which is not reflected from the content. It is merely used for marketing purposes.

Seen from the actor (Rodriguez: 2009) or the agency behind (Malinowski: 2009), most of the ads (91%) with English are produced by corporates and franchises which are beyond local level. Many are international brands. Thus they are corporate texts. With the international products, the authorship of the marketing campaign must be global in which the ads are designed by the central office abroad and they are used in all places where they sell their items. The local actor then may only need to translate a part or even just make a little adjustment like changing the star with the local artists (Oppo & Vivo). Even they remain to use English. The substantial number of English ads in the area is a message of its “centrality” in our society. It indicates that English has a high status or prestige (See Lado: 2011).

Governmental Signs (Top down)

The common characteristics of the governmental signs are small, plain, only writing, no picture, no color, and very low. Most of them can only be seen from a very close distance. It has a directive function telling the public to use the facilities according to the rule. They are not interesting for public view. The only interesting sign from the government is the name of the area, “Simpang Lima”, printed in four dimensions using solid acrylic making it a good spot for taking pictures. The letters are very big, around 30 meter in length and 2.5 meters height. This is the only bright sign from the top down. Among the low stand of the governmental signs, there are some signs which are quite high; they are traffic signs, showing the direction. They are very visible, though their colors are still dull--white writings on green background.



Pic.3 Governmental Signs

Seen from the language, all the governmental signs use Bahasa Indonesia. This is a part of the rule in the country to use the language for traffic, as it states in Article 38, UU No.24 2009, as saying: *"Bahasa Indonesia wajib digunakan dalam rambu umum, penunjuk jalan, fasilitas umum, spanduk, dan alat informasi lain yang merupakan pelayanan umum."* The law also allows the people to use local or foreign language to add in the signs. The data in the area show all the governmental signs are written monolingual. They do not use English or Javanese.



Pic 4. Javanese Sign

In fact, the local language, Javanese, is the one concealed in the landscape, in spite of the fact that the language has the biggest community in the city. The only ad makes use of Javanese is from ACC Telomoyo, offering used cars; it applies Javanese of *Krama* (H variety) mixed with Indonesian language. The Javanese is made salient and clear, printed in the biggest letters. The Indonesian is the brand designed in different color and background. It is also taken as the tagline, *"Terlengkap & Berkualitas"* (Complete and Qualified). The Javanese presence shows the identity of Semarang city as the capital of Central Java province. The minimum use of the Javanese should be the concern of the government.

This means the value of the language is not so strong in the public awareness—at least among the product owners and others involved in designing the ads. Its less appearance in the landscape implies a lower value (see Landry & Bourhis, 1997:26). In another term, the sparse appearance of the Javanese in the landscape proves its marginality and also its low prestige (Lado: 2011). Perhaps, the governmental signs should include the Javanese as the model for the public.

Based on its presentation, there is a governmental sign which is designed like the product/service commercials. The billboard is made in a considerable size, colorful, and is completed with pictures. The text is all in Bahasa Indonesia, with an emphasis put in a promo event, “*Gebyar Hadiah Samsat*” in an outstanding size and a white color with a brown background, framed with a golden ribbon. This text takes almost the half-face of the whole surface. Then it is followed by the prized they will give for the tax-payers, from car, motorbikes, and other prizes. We can see that though it is a governmental sign, it contains a persuasion for the public to pay their taxes earlier. In another word, it functions to make the readers willing to spend their money, even a big money, as their obligation as citizen in Indonesia. Another colorful ad but simpler is a banner from the local attorney welcoming an international event held in Indonesia, Asian Games 2018. It is made simple and cheap, because it does not function to draw money from the viewers; it only means to cheer up the public over the event and to be a reminder.



Pic 5. Beautiful Top-Down Ad

5. CONCLUSION

The landscape in commercial district in Semarang, a capital of Central Java, is a typical landscape of Indonesian cities. It has been revealed that the landscape is dominated mostly by corporate promos, employing English as the prominent language—at least it is evidence from the brand (names) and the tagline. They take the biggest size and the highest and most visible displays. Surely, some other corporate ads still use Bahasa Indonesia, but they include some English words as the complementary. Javanese is proved to be the one in a marginal position; it only appears in a single multilingual ad, with

Indonesian. It is not even used in any public signs by the local authority. This means the landscape as the environment does not support its vitality.

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