

Korean Language in Bandung City Public Space: A Landscape Linguistic Study

Adhea Tsabitah Sulistiyo¹ | Yanty Wirza¹ | Budi Hermawan¹

¹Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Corespondence should be addresed to: Adhea Tsabitah Sulistiyo; adhea.tsabitah@upi.edu

Abstract. This study aims to examine the existence of Korean language in public spaces in Bandung City through a Linguistic Landscape approach. Korean language is increasingly found in various public sectors, particularly in the culinary, beauty, non-formal education, and banking sectors. Data was collected through photographic documentation of signage in eight districts, which was then analyzed based on spatial distribution, language combination forms (monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual), and their socio-cultural functions. The findings reveal that Korean is not only used as a communication tool but also as a symbol of identity and cultural capital in public spaces. The patterns of combining Korean with Indonesian and English reflect marketing strategies, modernity, and symbolic values influenced by globalization and Korean popular culture. These findings confirm that the public spaces of Bandung serve as an arena for interaction between local and global values, reflecting the sociolinguistic dynamics of contemporary urban society.

Keywords: Bandung city; korean language; landscape linguistics; multilingual

Introduction

The phenomenon of using foreign languages in public spaces in Indonesia has increased significantly in recent years. Foreign languages are now commonly found in business names, advertisement banners, road signs, and warning boards. Not only English, but also Japanese, Arabic, and, more prominently, Korean are increasingly used. This rise cannot be separated from the influence of Korean cultural globalization, especially through the spread of K-pop, Korean dramas, and other entertainment industries. This situation shows how popular culture can drive language shifts in public spaces (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

Bandung is one of the cities that shows a clear increase in the use of the Korean language in public spaces. As the third-largest metropolitan city in Indonesia and a center of cultural tourism, Bandung has a dynamic and cosmopolitan social character (Astuti & Regitha, 2023). Data from the Bandung City Department of Culture and Tourism shows that by mid-2023, more than two million tourists had visited the city. This wave of visitors has helped accelerate the transformation of public spaces to become more multilingual and influenced by global trends. The presence of Korean language in restaurants, cafes, and businesses is evidence that the linguistic landscape in the city is undergoing significant changes (Rabbani & Putri, 2024).

Legally, the Indonesian government has emphasized the use of the Indonesian language as the main language in public spaces. This regulation is stated in Law Number 24 of 2009 and reinforced by Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2019 concerning the use of the Indonesian language. At the local level, West Java Provincial Regulation Number 14 of 2014 and Bandung City Regulation Number 9 of 2012 also support the preservation of regional languages such as Sundanese. However, in reality, many signs or public information boards use only foreign languages without any translation into Indonesian or local languages. This practice raises concerns about the sustainability of both national and local languages amid the dominance of foreign

languages (Prayudhi et al., 2024).

This phenomenon is closely related to language contestation, which refers to the competition between languages to gain dominance in public spaces. According to (Mulyawan et al., 2022), this contestation not only reflects linguistic dynamics but also carries ideologies and power relations. Foreign languages are often associated with modernity and high economic value, while local languages tend to be seen as less prestigious. As a result, communities or business owners often prefer to use foreign languages to attract attention create a sense of superiority. Unfortunately, this trend has the potential to shift local language identity and weaken the role of the Indonesian language in public spaces.

To examine this phenomenon, the Linguistic Landscape (LL) approach is used as the main theoretical framework. The term LL was first introduced by (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and later developed by (Robbins, 2018), as an interdisciplinary study that observes written texts in public spaces. Through this approach, researchers can examine the types of languages used, their purposes, and the ideological meanings contained in visual texts. Several previous studies, such as those by (Abdullah & Wulung, 2023) at Lembang and (Nambu & Ono, 2024) at Tokyo, have proven the relevance of this approach in studying language dynamics in public spaces. However, research on the use of the Korean language in public spaces in Bandung City is still very limited.

This research was conducted to fill the gap in studies on the use of the Korean language in public spaces in Bandung City. The study has two main objectives. First, to identify which areas or public places in Bandung use the Korean language. Second, to examine the form and patterns of Korean language use in public writings—whether it appears as a single language (monolingual), two languages (bilingual), or more than two languages (multilingual). Through this research, it is expected to gain a clearer picture of the role of the Korean language in the lives of urban communities, especially in the context of language use in public spaces.

Linguistic Landscape

Linguistic landscape is the study of language use in written form that appears in public spaces. Examples can be found on store signs, advertisements, billboards, or road signs. According from(Gorter, 2006) and (Gorter & Cenoz, 2016) the linguistic landscape helps us understand how language is used in daily life and reflects the social conditions of society. The languages that appear in public spaces often show the influence of dominant cultures or the communication strategies of business owners

(Gorter, 2006) also divides the linguistic landscape into two main types: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down refers to official signs from the government, such as street names and public announcements, which usually use the national language. Meanwhile, bottom-up refers to signs created by the community or business owners, such as the names of cafes or restaurants, which are more free to choose the language used. Both types show how language is selected based on social needs and context.

(Landry & Bourhis, 1997) explained that the linguistic landscape has two functions: informational and symbolic. The informational function is related to directions, locations, or place names that can help people navigate. The symbolic function is related to identity and cultural values that a community wants to express. For example, the use of Korean language in a restaurant name may show cultural closeness or follow a current popular trend.

Linguistic landscape studies can also reveal the competition between languages in public spaces. This competition is called language contestation, which refers to a situation where multiple languages are used together to gain a dominant position in society. According to (Adnan, 2018), language contestation can occur due to economic, cultural, and globalization factors. Therefore, studying the linguistic landscape is important to understand how languages are used and maintained in multilingual urban life.

Multilingual, Bilingual, Monolingual

Multilingual outdoor signs are signs that display three or more languages, illustrating rich linguistic

diversity in places such as Jerusalem, where Hebrew, English, and Arabic coexist (Duizenberg, 2020). Meanwhile, multilingualism refers to the use of two or more languages in communication, including in the linguistic landscape of public spaces (Sari et al., 2022). In public spaces, the use of multiple languages, such as Korean and local languages, often appears as a strategy to attract public attention and reflect socio-cultural diversity (Abdullah & Wulung, 2023). In the context of the Korean linguistic landscape, multilingualism is clearly seen in store signs, advertisements, and banners that combine Korean with other languages as a sign of social and economic interaction.

Bilingual outdoor signs are signs that combine two languages, which are often used to serve diverse populations (Sarniwati et al., 2022). Bilingualism is the use of two languages in communication, including in written texts in public spaces (Sari et al., 2022). In the linguistic landscape, bilingualism is often used to reach different language user groups. For example, a store sign that uses both Korean and English can be more attractive and easier to understand for local residents and foreign tourists.

Monolingual outdoor signs are signs that display only one language, which often reflects the dominant language in a certain area, such as English in many urban places (Alomoush, 2019). Monolingualism is the use of only one language in spoken or written communication (Sari et al., 2022). In modern linguistic landscapes, especially in urban areas of Korea, monolingualism is becoming less common due to the influence of globalization and the presence of foreign languages in public spaces, reflecting ongoing social and cultural changes.

Language contestation

Language contestation is the competition between languages to dominate public spaces and gain certain social status (Gorter, 2006; Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). In the linguistic landscape, languages with different ideologies and statuses compete, such as local, national, and foreign languages. Social and political factors influence which language becomes dominant and which becomes marginalized. This contestation reflects the social dynamics and power relations in society through the use of language in public spaces (Mulyawan et al., 2022).

Public space

Public space is an open area that can be accessed by everyone for social activities and communication, as stated by Carmona in (Adnan, 2019; Habermas, 1991) describes public space as a place where individuals from different backgrounds can freely exchange ideas. In a linguistic context, public space becomes an area where various written languages appear, such as on store signs and advertisements. The dominance of foreign languages in public spaces shows the influence of globalization and popular culture in social dynamics (Moeslim et al., 2023).

Methods

This study uses documentation and data analysis methods to examine the use of Korean language in public spaces in Bandung City. Data were collected through documentation in the form of photographs of outdoor signs containing Korean language in various sectors such as public areas, culinary, and tourism. These photos were then classified based on their sector, linguistic form (monolingual, bilingual, multilingual), as well as the function and type of language used.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which includes the stages of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, photo data were sorted and categorized into relevant groups to make analysis easier. Next, the data were presented in tables and descriptive texts to identify patterns in the use of Korean language in public spaces. Conclusions were drawn based on the results of the classification and analysis, describing the distribution, forms, and functions of Korean language usage across different sectors in Bandung's public spaces.

Result and Discussion

Spatial and Sectoral Distribution of Korean Language Use in Public Spaces of Bandung City

The eight districts that served as the research locations are Sukajadi, Sukasari, Cidadap, Coblong, Sumur Bandung, Bandung Wetan, Andir, and Cicendo. The findings show that the highest number of data points was found in Sukajadi District, with nine instances, followed by Coblong District with seven instances. The following table summarizes the percentage distribution of Korean language use in public spaces across different districts in Bandung City.

Table 1. Percentage of Spatial Distribution Data

No	District	Number of Data	Precentage
1	Sukajadi	10	23.8%
2	Sukasari	6	14.2%
3	Cidadap	6	14.2%
4	Coblong	7	16.6%
5	Sumur Bandung	4	9.5%
6	Bandung Wetan	5	11.9%
7	Andir	2	4.7%
8	Cicendo	2	4.7%
Total		42	99.6%

In addition to the spatial distribution, this study also categorizes the findings based on sectoral distribution, which includes six main sectors: culinary, beauty, education, banking, sports, and commercial. The following table summarizes the percentage distribution of Korean language use by sector in public spaces of Bandung City.

Table 2. Sectoral Distribution Percentage

No	Sector	Data	Precentage
1	Culinary	32	76.1%
2	Beauty	1	2.3%
3	Education	2	4.7%
4	Banking	3	7.1%
5	Sports	1	2.3%
6	Commercial	3	7.1%
Total		42	99.6%

Findings based on documentation show that the use of the Korean language in public spaces in Bandung City is distributed across several main sectors, particularly in the economic sector, including culinary, beauty, sports, and commercial businesses. Most instances were found in Sukajadi and Sukasari districts, where many business signboards use Korean as a marketing strategy to attract consumers, especially younger generations familiar with Korean culture. In addition to the economic sector, Korean is also present in the education and banking sectors, although in smaller numbers.

The use of Korean in the economic sector reflects the influence of Korean popular culture trends, such as food, skincare, and Taekwondo. In the education sector, Korean appears in language course institutions that use Korean-language signage as part of their identity. In the banking sector, Korean is used on the signboards of Korean banks operating in Bandung, serving both the Korean community and local customers. The presence of Korean in public spaces in Bandung is spread across regions and sectors, including education and banking. Two Korean banks, KEB Hana Bank and Bank Woori Saudara, retain their language identity in visual

communication to strengthen their branding and expand services. These findings support the argument that the dominance of foreign languages in public spaces reflects a shift in linguistic preference influenced by globalization and popular culture (Moeslim et al., 2023).

Bandung, with its young population and strong tourism appeal, has become a place where multilingual linguistic landscapes continue to grow. Korean is not only used as a means of communication, but also functions as symbolic capital that adds value to businesses and enhances the city's image (Moeslim et al., 2023). The spread of the Korean language reflects the socio-cultural complexity of urban communities, where global and local values are combined simultaneously (Moeslim et al., 2023).

Language Combination Patterns on Korean Signs in Bandung's Public Spaces

The use of Korean on signs in public spaces in Bandung City shows various patterns of language combinations, reflecting social and cultural strategies in delivering messages. In Korean not only used on its own (monolingual), but is often combined with Indonesian and English.

Table 3. Patterns of Language Combination

No	Combination Patterns	Language	Number of Data	Percentage
1	Monolingual	Korean Only	5	11.9%
	Bilingual	Indonesian-Korean	1	2.3%
2		English-Korean	30	71.4%
3	Multilingual	English-Korean-Indonesian	6	14.2%
Total			42	99.8%

The monolingual pattern was found on signs such as **내 친구** (ne chingu) in Coblong and OHARANG (아랑) in Sumur Bandung. The use of Hangeul alone indicates cultural exclusivity and the authenticity of Korean identity, even though it may be difficult for some audiences to understand (Sari et al., 2022). This pattern functions as a symbol of status and cultural affiliation, in line with Shohamy's (2018) view that language in public spaces is also an expression of ideology.



Figure 1. Examples of Monolingual Korean Language Signs

The most common bilingual pattern consists of a combination of Korean and Indonesian, such as Beken Mirae 미래 (BBQ) in Cicendo. This combination serves to bridge local culture with Korean culture, where Indonesian delivers meaning to the local community while Korean provides a distinct visual identity (Sari et al., 2022). In addition, the combination of Korean and English is commonly found in the culinary, beauty, education, and banking sectors, such as in Spicywon Korean Streetfood and Oppa Corndog. In this context, English plays a role in building a modern and international image, which aligns with the trends of globalization (Abdullah & Wulung, 2023).



Figure 3. Example of Bilingual Pattern: Indonesian-Korean



Figure 4. Example of Bilingual Pattern: Korean–English

The multilingual pattern involving three languages (Korean, English, and Indonesian), as seen in billboard signs like Bae 배 Yuzu New! Santai Bae 동네최고의소주! and Bank Woori Saudara, reflects an inclusive communication strategy aimed at reaching a diverse range of consumers. The use of these three languages enhances readability, aesthetic appeal, and symbolic meaning at the same time. This combination illustrates how multilingual signage can function as both a marketing tool and a representation of the city's social diversity.



Figure 6. Examples of Korean–English-Indonesian Pattern Data

The phenomenon of language combination variation also reflects language contestation in public spaces, where Korean, although not part of the local linguistic system, has gained symbolic status due to the influence of Korean popular culture (K-wave) as a form of symbolic economic power in Bandung. Indonesian remains present to ensure readability, while English adds a dimension of globalization (Gorter, 2006; Gorter & Cenoz, 2016) Thus, the forms and patterns of language combinations on Korean-language signs in Bandung reflect dynamic and complex sociolinguistic practices, as well as language ideologies present in modern urban societies that simultaneously integrate local and global values (Pennycook, 2017).

Discussion

Based on the findings, the use of the Linguistic Landscape (LL) approach successfully provides a comprehensive overview of how the Korean language appears in public spaces in Bandung City. This approach allows researchers not only to observe the presence of language in visual forms but also to interpret the social, economic, and ideological meanings attached to its use. The first objective of this study, which was to identify the areas where Korean is used, was answered through spatial distribution analysis showing that eight districts in Bandung are exposed to Korean language use, with the highest dominance in Sukajadi and Coblong. These two areas are known as centers of economic and entertainment activities, indicating that Korean is positioned in strategic spaces close to public consumption, especially among the youth.

Furthermore, the use of Korean is also found across various sectors, with a striking dominance in the culinary sector. From 42 data points collected, 76.1% come from this sector, while the rest are spread across beauty, education, banking, sports, and commercial sectors. These findings indicate that Korean is not only used as a means of communication but also as an effective branding and marketing strategy. Food products and services that use Korean tend to target consumers exposed to Korean culture or who associate the language with current trends and premium quality. This strengthens the argument that language in public spaces is not neutral but serves as an economic and cultural symbol.

Regarding the forms and patterns of language use, this study found variations in language combinations on visual signs containing Korean. The majority of data showed a multilingual pattern, which is a combination of Korean with English and/or Indonesian, covering 71.4% of the total data. Meanwhile, monolingual (Korean only) and bilingual (Indonesian–Korean) patterns were found in smaller amounts. These combinations reflect communication strategies that consider aesthetics, readability, and market segmentation. In this case, Korean functions to attract attention and provide a distinctive Korean.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion above, the conclusion of this study is that the use of the Korean language in public spaces in Bandung City is unevenly distributed. Out of a total of 42 data points spread across eight districts, the district with the highest number of Korean language signs in public spaces is Sukajadi, with ten data points or 23.8%. The second is Coblong district, where seven data points were found with a percentage of 16.6%. This is followed by Sukasari and Cidadap districts, each with six data points, representing 14.2% respectively. Bandung Wetan district had five data points, which is 11.9%. The last two districts, Andir and Cicendo, each had two data points, accounting for 4.7%. Therefore, the total percentage of the 42 data points is 99.6%.

This study also categorized the data based on sector distribution, covering six main sectors: culinary, beauty, education, banking, sports, and commercial. The dominant sector is culinary, with 32 data points representing 76.1%. Next, banking and commercial sectors each have three data points, accounting for 7.1% each. The education sector has two data points with 4.7%. The last two sectors, beauty and sports, have one data point each, making up 2.3%. Thus, the total percentage of the 42 data points is 99.6%. This distribution reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of the target consumers, where Korean language functions as a symbol of lifestyle and cultural capital to build a modern identity and image.

The use of Korean appears in various linguistic patterns, ranging from monolingualism, bilingualism, to multilingualism. The most dominant language combination pattern is bilingualism with English–Korean, found in 30 data points or 71.4%. Next is the multilingual pattern combining English, Korean, and Indonesian, found in six data points with a percentage of 14.2%. The monolingual Korean pattern was also found in five data points, accounting for 11.9%. Lastly, the Indonesian–Korean bilingual pattern was found in one data point with a percentage of 2.3%. The total percentage of all 42 data points is 99.8%. These findings show social dynamics and marketing strategies that adapt to global trends and local audience needs. The choice of language on business signs and public signage reflects ideologies, identities, and symbolic power relations that occur in contemporary urban spaces.

References

Abdullah, C. U., & Wulung, S. (2023). Lanskap Linguistik Daya Tarik Wisata : Aspek Multilingualisme di Kawasan Pariwisata Nasional Lembang dan Tangkubanparahu. *Khasanah Ilmu: Jurnal Pariwisata Dan Budaya*, 14, 43–49. <https://doi.org/10.31294/khi.v14i1.14350>

Adnan, F. (2019). Penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia Pada Media Ruang Publik Di Kota Pekanbaru. *Suar Betang*, 13(2), 131–144. <https://doi.org/10.26499/surbet.v13i2.76>

Astuti, P. A., & Regitha, S. N. A. (2023). Analisis Lanskap Linguistik Pada Nama Restoran China “HaiDiLao HotPot.” *Wen Chuang: Journal of Foreign Language Studies, Linguistics, Education, Literatures, Cultures, and Sinology*, 3(2), 457. <https://doi.org/10.26858/wenchuang.v3i2.57125>

Duizenberg, M. R. (2020). Linguistics landscape: A cross culture perspective. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v4n1.17>

Gorter, D. (2006). Introduction: The Study of Linguistic landscape: A new approach to multilingualism. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3(1), 81–89. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668382>

Gorter, D., & Cenoz, J. (2016). Language Awareness and Multilingualism. *Language Awareness and Multilingualism*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02325-0>

Jelita Rabbani, & Faleri Dharma Putri. (2024). Use of Foreign Language as Greeting in Restaurants, Especially Chung Gi Wa Restaurant

Bandung. *Momentum Matrix: International Journal of Communication, Tourism, and Social Economic Trends*, 1(3), 34–43.
<https://doi.org/10.62951/momat.v1i3.21>

Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1997). Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1), 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Sage publications.

Moeslim, H., Firdaus, H. A., Arlanda, R., Dewi, D., & Amrullah, A. (2023). Penerapan Bahasa Indonesia Pada Ruang Publik : Gion Market, Marvell City Mall, Dan Grand City Mall. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 9(15), 170–174.
<https://medium.com/@arifwicaksanaa/pengertian-use-case-a7e576e1b6bf>

Mulyawan, I. W., Paramarta, I. M. S., & Suparwa, I. N. (2022). Language contestation at Batukau Temple, Bali (a linguistic landscape study). *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2090651>

Nambu, S., & Ono, M. (2024). Linguistic landscape of Shin-Ōkubo, Tokyo: a comparative study of Koreatown and Islamic Street. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2024.2344181>

Pennycook, A. (2017). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* (C. N. Candlin, Ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315225593>

Prayudhi, R., Triyanto, T., & Muhamad Hasan Basri, D. (2024). Kedudukan Bahasa Indonesia Dan Implementasinya Pada Penulisan Papan Petunjuk Di Ruang Publik. *Jurnal Salaka: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya Indonesia*, 6(1), 18–28.
<https://doi.org/10.33751/jsalaka.v6i1.9583>

Robbins, D. D. (2018). The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming. *Names*, 66(2), 119–122.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00277738.2017.1415528>

Salameh Alomoush, O. I. (2019). English in the linguistic landscape of a northern Jordanian city. *English Today*, 35(3), 35–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078418000391>

Sari, M. A., Ekawati, M., & Wijayanti, A. (2022). *Variasi Lanskap linguistik Museum di Magelang. Volume 5 no. 2*.

Sarniati, N., Hanafi, N., & Nuriadi, N. (2022). The pattern and representation of linguistic landscape in multilingual context in Selong. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 8(4), 138–144. <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijllc.v8n4.2111>

Wahyuni, J., Wardhana, D. eka, & Rahayu, N. (2022). 19258-Article Text-66172-76308-10-20230404. *Jurnal Ilmiah Korpus*, Vol. 6 No.3.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33369/jik.v6i3.19258>