

Original Article

The Role of the Indonesian Language in Law Enforcement in Indonesia: A Juridical and Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract:

The Indonesian language holds a strategic position in the Indonesian legal system as the state language and official language in the formation and enforcement of law. The use of inappropriate language in legislation and judicial practice has the potential to create multiple interpretations, legal uncertainty, and obstacles to access to justice for the public. This research aims to analyze the role of the Indonesian language in law enforcement in Indonesia and identify linguistic problems that affect the effectiveness of legal implementation. This research uses normative legal research methods with statutory and conceptual approaches, through library research on regulations, legal language guidelines, and relevant legal literature. The research results show that the Indonesian language not only functions as a legal communication tool, but also as an instrument determining the meaning of norms and legal certainty. However, inconsistencies in terminology and unclear formulations of legal language are still found in practice. Hence, strengthening the use of the Indonesian language is needed through standardization of legal terms, improvement of language competence of law enforcement officials, and preparation of clear and communicative legal products in order to realize just and effective law enforcement.

Keywords: language, law enforcement, legal system.

Submitted	: 19 February 2026
Revised	: 22 February 2026
Acceptance	: 28 February 2026
Publish Online	: 28 February 2026

Introduction

The Indonesian language has a constitutional position as the state language as affirmed in Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This position is strengthened through Law Number 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and State Symbols which requires the use of Indonesian in official state documents, agreements, and formal government and law enforcement communications. Normatively, this regulation shows that language is not only positioned as a means of administrative communication, but also as a legal instrument that guarantees the

certainty of norms and the protection of citizens' rights.

The use of the Indonesian language in the legal context is not merely a linguistic matter, but concerns aspects of human rights, justice, and the rule of law ([Massier, 2017](#)). This article aims to critically review how the role of the Indonesian language in law enforcement in Indonesia, as well as the normative and practical challenges faced. Article 25 of the Language Law affirms that Indonesian must be used in official state documents and legal products, including legislation, decisions of state officials, and court documents. This reflects that language has a normative position in the national legal framework. As stated by [Soepomo \(1954\)](#), law must be present in a language that can be understood by all citizens so that justice distortion does not occur.

The Indonesian language also functions as the language of instruction at all levels of the judiciary ([Puspawati, 2025](#)). The Supreme Court as the highest judicial institution stipulates that all administrative processes and trials are conducted in Indonesian, as contained in Supreme Court Regulation (PERMA) Number 3 of 2017 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Cases of Women Facing the Law, one of whose principles is the use of language that is easy to understand.

In law enforcement practice, language has a strategic role in shaping legal meaning, conveying norms, and constructing juridical arguments. Court decisions, investigation reports, authentic deeds, and legislative products all depend on the accuracy of legal language use. [Shanty \(2016\)](#) research shows that the use of unsystematic and ambiguous legal language has the potential to create multiple interpretations of norms and weaken legal certainty. This condition shows that language quality is directly proportional to the quality of law enforcement itself.

However, empirical reality shows that there are still various problems in the use of Indonesian in the legal realm, such as inconsistency of legal terminology, the influence of unstandardized foreign terms, and low legal language literacy among officials and society. [Subyantoro \(2019\)](#) asserts that weak linguistic awareness in legal practice can impact on misinterpretation of evidence, witness testimony, to the construction of juridical arguments in trials. This shows that language issues are not merely technical issues, but touch on substantial aspects of law enforcement.

Investigation of a legal case is more focused on the results of investigations on certain aspects ([Pratama & Runturambi, 2025](#)). The presence of forensic linguistics can be one very meaningful supporting aspect. The presence of linguistic experts, especially forensic linguistics, will greatly assist in providing proof of a case in court ([Dwipayana Putra & Purwani, 2025](#)). Forensic linguistics also deals with the problem of identifying speakers based on dialect, speaking style, or accent, even sometimes analyzing the suspect's handwriting to get their profile, matching the accused's voice recordings with a number of suspects, analyzing a person's voice print characteristics, ensuring that the existing voice recordings are authentic and not fabricated, as well as filtering and sorting various noise that is also recorded to determine the background where the recording was made ([Wijana, 2010](#)). All forensic linguistic expert analyses become material for consideration in court. Forensic linguistic experts are often asked for opinions as expert witnesses. At the investigation stage, forensic linguistics plays a role in helping to develop interview and interrogation strategies.

From a normative juridical perspective, the obligation to use Indonesian has been clearly regulated, including in the context of contracts, notarial deeds, and official legal documents. However, research by [Keristion & Sesung \(2025\)](#) shows that the implementation of these obligations still faces obstacles, both from the aspect of

normative compliance and legal practitioners' understanding of standard legal language standards. This condition shows a gap between legal norms and their implementation practices.

Meanwhile, the sociolinguistic approach views legal language as a social practice influenced by power relations, institutional culture, and the social background of society. Legal language that is too technocratic and elitist has the potential to create distance between legal institutions and society, thus hindering access to justice ([Dali et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, the integration of juridical and sociolinguistic approaches becomes important to comprehensively understand the role of the Indonesian language in the national law enforcement system.

Based on these conditions, this research becomes relevant to examine the role of the Indonesian language in law enforcement in Indonesia from juridical and sociolinguistic perspectives. This study is expected to be able to provide theoretical contributions to the development of language law as well as practical recommendations for improving the quality of legal communication for the realization of a law enforcement system that is just, transparent, and guarantees legal certainty.

Methods

This research is normative legal research with a qualitative approach. Normative legal research is used because this study focuses on written legal norms, principles, and legal doctrines related to the use of Indonesian in the legal system and law enforcement in Indonesia. This research views law as normative rules that are analyzed through library materials, not through empirical data collection in the field ([Sukanto & Mamuji, 2001](#)).

The research approaches used include statutory and conceptual approaches. The statutory approach is carried out by examining legislation and official guidelines that regulate the use of Indonesian in the field of law and justice. The conceptual approach is used to understand the concepts of legal language and legal interpretation through the views of legal experts, especially the theory of constitutional interpretation that places language as the main element in understanding and interpreting legal norms ([Hermawan, 2020](#)).

Sources of legal materials in this research consist of primary legal materials and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include official legal language guidelines used in court decisions. Secondary legal materials in the form of books and scientific works that discuss legal science, legal language, and the use of Indonesian in legislation, which are used to strengthen normative analysis of research problems ([Mahmud, 2016; Matanggui, 2022](#)).

Collection of legal materials was carried out through library research by systematically examining and studying relevant regulations, guidelines, and literature. The legal materials that have been collected are then analyzed qualitatively by interpreting legal norms and legal language used in legal documents, as well as assessing the accuracy of terms and clarity of meaning to ensure legal certainty. This analysis places language as an important instrument in the formation and application of law.

Results

The Role of Language in Guaranteeing Access to Justice

The use of good and correct Indonesian in legal practice has a direct impact on legal accessibility for the public ([Alwi et al., 1993](#)). Laws that are not understood by

ordinary people will lose their legitimacy and effectiveness. Therefore, clarity of legal language becomes a fundamental element in creating substantive justice. In the context of criminal justice, for example, if the defendant does not understand the language used in the legal process, this violates the principle of fair trial as guaranteed by Article 14 paragraph (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which has been ratified by Indonesia through Law Number 12 of 2005 ([Asshiddiqie, 2014](#)). In the field of law, the role of the Indonesian language is often neglected, even though language is the main instrument in drafting, interpreting, and applying law.

1. Indonesian Language as Strengthening National Legal Identity

Language is one of the fundamental elements in the formation of a nation's national identity ([Panitia Pengembangan Bahasa Indonesia, 2004](#)). In Indonesia, the Indonesian language not only functions as a unifying language of various ethnic groups, but becomes the legitimate legal language in legislation. The 1945 Constitution Article 36 explicitly establishes Indonesian as the official language of the state. In the legal context, this determination has important meaning that all legislation and legal decisions in Indonesia must be drafted and enacted in Indonesian.

The use of Indonesian in national law is not just fulfilling constitutional obligations, but a means to affirm the identity of the Indonesian nation. By using Indonesian, law in Indonesia becomes closer to society, making it easier for society to understand and comply with applicable law ([Surowidjojo, 2003](#)). In addition, the use of the national language in law is also a manifestation of the nation's legal independence, without having to depend on foreign legal systems that use languages other than Indonesian. In the context of globalization, many countries face a dilemma in using foreign languages in their legal systems, especially in dealing with international cases. Indonesia is not immune from the influence of this legal globalization. However, by maintaining the use of Indonesian in all aspects of law, Indonesia can maintain its national legal sovereignty amid the increasingly eroding flow of globalization across state borders.

2. Legal Certainty Through Clear and Precise Language

One of the main objectives of law is to provide legal certainty. To achieve this goal, legal language must be clear, precise, and not create multiple interpretations ([Churchill, 2002](#); [Widodo, 2020](#)). The Indonesian language has great potential to become an effective legal instrument, as long as it is used with correct and consistent rules. In many cases, unclear language in legislation causes legal uncertainty, which ultimately harms society.

The use of effective sentences, standard grammar, and vocabulary that conforms to KBBI are important elements in drafting good legal texts. Laws that are drafted with complicated or ambiguous language will only confuse society and law enforcement officials. The role of language experts and legislators is very important to ensure that every regulation drafted is easy to understand and does not cause interpretation debates later. For example, Article 28 of the 1945 Constitution explains human rights briefly but clearly, so that people can understand their rights as citizens well. However, not all laws are drafted with the same language accuracy. Some regulations sometimes have convoluted sentences that are difficult to understand, both by ordinary people and by law enforcement officials themselves. This uncertainty in legal interpretation can lead to injustice and uncertainty in the application of law.

3. Challenges in Using Indonesian in Law

The application of Indonesian in the field of law is not without challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the wealth of vocabulary and terms in Indonesian which is sometimes still inadequate to accommodate the complexity of modern legal terms, especially those originating from international legal systems ([Hadikusuma, 2012](#)). Many legal terms that come from foreign languages, such as “*due process*”, “*habeas corpus*”, and “*presumption of innocence*”, which are often difficult to translate directly into Indonesian without losing their original meaning ([Tim Pengembang Pedoman Bahasa Indonesia, 2016](#)). In addition, another challenge is the ability of law enforcement officials and government apparatus to use good and correct Indonesian in accordance with applicable rules. In practice, many legislative texts still use language that does not comply with the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling (EYD) or does not refer to KBBI, which can cause misunderstanding and different interpretations ([Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2023](#)). Therefore, training for law enforcement officials in the use of standard and scientific Indonesian is very important to improve the quality of law in Indonesia.

4. Legal Language and Education

Legal education in Indonesia plays an important role in advancing the use of good Indonesian in law. Law faculties throughout Indonesia need to pay more serious attention to the Indonesian language abilities of their students, especially in writing and interpreting legal texts ([Matanggui, 2022](#)). The ability to write in standard and clear language is a very essential skill for a law graduate, because they will later be directly involved in the drafting, interpretation, and application of law in society. Improving the quality of language education in legal studies will have a direct impact on the quality of legislation produced. This will ensure that the Indonesian language used in law remains relevant and can accommodate the latest developments in the field of law without losing its identity as the national language.

The Indonesian language has a very important role in the field of law, both as a tool to strengthen national identity and as an instrument to guarantee legal certainty. However, challenges in the application of Indonesian in the field of law, especially regarding the clarity and accuracy of language use, must be immediately addressed. One step that can be taken is to increase awareness and ability of law enforcement officials in using standard Indonesian in accordance with the rules. In addition, legal education must also give greater attention to language teaching as an integral part of legal studies. Thus, the use of good Indonesian in law will not only strengthen national legal sovereignty, but ensure that applicable law can be understood and applied fairly by all levels of society.

The role of language is very much needed in order to awaken and foster human awareness in creating and enforcing law. Language is seen as a practical and effective tool in playing an important role in the creation and implementation of law in a society. With the help of language, humans can and are able to understand and enforce and maintain law in society. The development of various legal cases, both in the criminal and civil realms, is deemed necessary to receive contributions or the presence of language experts as expert personnel in uncovering various legal cases. Linguistics related to the forensic field is a new field of science and is included in applied linguistics. The early development of forensic linguistics was marked by awareness of the importance of language elements in an investigation at the police. Forensic linguistics applies linguistic theories in a linguistic event involved in the legal process, both in the form of legal products, interaction in the judicial process, and in interpersonal interactions that result

in certain legal impacts. There are three main areas that are the focus of forensic linguistic studies, namely: (1) language as a legal product; (2) language in the judicial process; and (3) language as evidence. The role of language in the legal world has become very vital. This can be seen from the increasing number of language experts involved in handling a case.

Challenges in Using Indonesian in the Legal System

Indonesian in the legal system faces main challenges: the complexity of technical and formal legal language, weak standardization of legal terms, language gaps in multilingual areas, and uneven language competence of legal apparatus. This condition creates multiple interpretations, limits public access to law, and reduces legal certainty.

1. Complexity of Legal Language

Legal language in Indonesia tends to be rigid, formal, and often uses long sentences and foreign terms. This creates barriers for society in understanding the content of laws and court decisions. Legal language that is too technocratic actually distances society from law ([Nurhilmiyah, 2022](#)). Legal language problems often cause problems in regulatory formation and law enforcement practices ([Badudu, 2012](#); [Chaer, 2011](#)). Therefore, there needs to be a special institution that is intensive to build and develop Indonesian legal language. The legal world, especially in the realm of public law, is inseparable from the vital role of language. Legal policy, from the process of forming regulations to the effectiveness of implementation levels, is influenced by language, both the language used by its creators and policy implementers ([Qodratillah, 2019](#)). With language, policy objectives, policy direction, and legal politics of a government can be known and understood.

Legal language has undergone massive transformation, especially since part of the legal world still uses Dutch language which is still in effect as a guideline. For example, the influence of Dutch is quite strong with legal language in the legislative process and law enforcement in Indonesia. Such as the Limited Liability Company Law, the Capital Market Law, the Investment Law.

According to [Surowidjojo \(2003\)](#), the influence of foreign language concepts also affects business, such as in contract law, the influence of foreign languages is still very strong, because translating from foreign languages to Indonesian. Likewise in the legislative process that produces written legal products in the form of regulations and law enforcement, it is important to use the right language. There are differences between general linguistics and forensic linguistics. Forensic linguistics is a branch of general linguistics. From data that can be traced or through forensic processes, forensic linguistics can be used to identify offenses, such as hate speech, defamation.

2. Lack of Standardization of Legal Terms

Many legal terms in Indonesian still use borrowings from Dutch or English, for example *rechtstaat*, *omission*, *force majeure*, or *actus reus*. This confuses non-expert people and shows the weakness of Indonesian legal terminology. According to [Moeliono \(2009\)](#), interpretations made by judges can indeed deviate from the meaning of words and sentences according to language in order to fulfill the community's sense of justice. However, such deviations must still meet linguistic logic as one of the bases of argumentation to convince justice seekers. Several concepts and theories of linguistics to explain the relationship between renewal of understanding of Indonesian legal language with guarantees of legal certainty. The constitution as the highest law in the national legal hierarchy can be explained from linguistic aspects, including: foreign legal

terminology in constitutional interpretation and constitutional interpretation as discourse analysis.

There are two main schools of approach to constitutional interpretation as the highest law. Both schools of interpretation have produced a number of further theories in constitutional interpretation. Each school is called originalism and non-originalism. As the name suggests, the originalism school interprets the constitution by affirming its original meaning. The constitutional text is understood with its original understanding as understood by its drafters. The meaning of the text is assumed to be fixed and unchanging. This school does not recognize variations in understanding that may occur among constitutional text interpreters. Originalism adherents strongly emphasize certainty of meaning.

Only the understanding or comprehension of constitutional text drafters is considered legally binding. The non-originalism school interprets in the opposite way. Non-originalism considers constitutional meaning to be dynamic. Its method acknowledges that the meaning of constitutional text is not singular ([Hermawan, 2020](#)). The original meaning according to the drafters' understanding is only one meaning that can be used. The focus of this school is the developing aspirations of society in interpreting the constitution. The meaning from these aspirations is considered to continue to grow as a more advanced generalization of the original meaning ([Sudaryat, 2008](#)). This school believes that aspirational meaning continues to develop following the principles in the original meaning. Therefore, aspirational meaning cannot possibly develop to the point of allowing what is clearly prohibited by the original meaning.

Improving that understanding aims to uphold justice while ensuring legal certainty can be realized even better. Researchers connect the perspective of constitutional interpretation theory with theories in linguistics and then describe the problems that occur regarding legal certainty. In addition, the aim is to utilize a better linguistic paradigm to guarantee legal certainty in constitutional interpretation. The linguistic theories described are register from sociolinguistic studies, semantics, and discourse theory. Indonesian legal language is part of general Indonesian language which includes the legal field in Indonesian society and the maintenance of law and the administration of justice by institutions recognized by law. These institutions are official judicial institutions, also bodies or officials who according to custom and religion are entrusted with the administration of customary law and religious law.

Legal terms resulting from translation from Dutch used are not yet uniform. Based on notes disclosed by [Surowidjojo \(2003\)](#), many lists of legal terms resulting from translation have emerged in various written works. However, there is no common standard used for various translated legal terms. Further study is still needed regarding the accuracy of translation and its use to be made a standard term. In searching, exploring, collecting, and forming Indonesian legal terms, the following basis should be used:

- a. materials from regional languages covering the entire area of Indonesian Law;
- b. words and terms from foreign languages which according to history and usage have gained a strong position in Indonesian society;
- c. newly formed words and terms which according to both content and pronunciation can be accepted and understood by the general public.

In the field of administration, uniformity of form or uniformity is very useful to facilitate the completion of correspondence and facilitate the solution of problems faced.

A great advantage in the cultural history of our nation that as one of the results of the revolution, the Indonesian nation has been able to establish one unifying language and official language, namely Indonesian.

The existence of Indonesian legal language as a variety of Indonesian used in the field of law, but the distinctive characteristics of Indonesian legal language must still meet the requirements and rules of Indonesian. The characteristics of this legal language lie in its terms, composition, and style. The use of legal language must be fixed, clear, monosemantic, and must meet aesthetic requirements. However, the legal language used is still imperfect, especially in word semantics, form, and sentence composition.

Efforts to standardize legal terms include inventory of existing legal terms and expressions as well as those being collected, standardization/standardization, and creation of new legal terms. The way is by forming an institution that continuously handles it under the direction of the National Law Development Agency together with the National Language Institute (now called the Language Development and Guidance Agency) based on a certain work pattern, there needs to be an effort to disseminate legal language through various publications of works on legal language. Several things related to legal language:

- a. The use of Indonesian in all fields, especially the field of law and legislation, needs to be immediately addressed seriously, gradually, and in an integrated manner because law that is understood by every member of society will better guarantee the implementation of national development in a stable, smooth, and orderly manner;
- b. All government apparatus, especially those directly involved in the planning, drafting, enactment, and implementation of law, must have adequate Indonesian language skills and abilities, so that the law/legislation produced and that must be implemented is easy to understand and does not create different interpretations.

Several things to be reviewed and tested by legal practitioners are:

- a. The development of constitutional interpretation methods can borrow many various discourse analysis theories with consistency on cohesion and coherence. The agreement of constitutional law experts that the linguistic meaning of each constitutional norm is fixed and the original meaning of the constitution limits practice in the judiciary.
- b. Legal language studies need to be further developed in legal studies in Indonesia, especially for the purposes of text legal interpretation methods in general. An interdisciplinary approach with linguistics deserves to be a priority for the Indonesian legal system which adopts many Western legal concepts and theories both from the civil law system and the common law system.

3. Language Gaps in Multilingual Areas

Indonesia is known as a country that has extraordinary language wealth, a linguistic mosaic unmatched in the Southeast Asian region. [Nasrullah et al. \(2024\)](#) in the Policy Report data of the Language Development and Guidance Agency 2024 states that there are 718 regional languages identified and still used in various corners of the archipelago. This figure makes Indonesia one of the countries with the most languages in the world.

In several regions in Indonesia, especially in the eastern part and customary areas, there are still people who are not fluent in Indonesian, which has implications for access to justice. Law Number 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and State Symbols as well as the National Anthem affirms that Indonesian is the official language of the state

which must be used in official documents, contracts, and legal communications. Although this Law does not explicitly allow the use of regional languages as companions in the legal process, the spirit of preserving regional languages and access to public communication is affirmed in Government Regulation Number 57 of 2014, which contains provisions on the development and protection of regional languages as part of citizens' rights to understand information and public services. This provision shows that the legal communication process, including the drafting of regulations and trials, should use Indonesian, while the use of regional languages can be facilitated to ensure equal understanding for multilingual communities. Its implementation in judicial practice, such as language assistance or translation of witnesses and defendants who are not fluent, still requires implementing regulations and technical guidelines so that the right to legal access can be fulfilled fairly.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, multilingual communities show contextual language use patterns. Studies in communities in Banjarmasin show that local languages dominate use in the family and community domain, while Indonesian is more widely used in formal domains, such as schools and government ([Jumadi et al., 2024](#)). This phenomenon reflects diglossia, where local languages are strong in daily interactions but less dominant in formal domains. Research in Jayapura shows that local languages are still maintained in family conversations, but among teenagers, Indonesian is more chosen for practical, social, and educational reasons. Although the younger generation shows pride in their heritage language, the use of Indonesian is more dominant, especially in the context of school, media, and broad communication. This shows a language shift that is influenced by the need for social adaptation.

This condition also impacts the fulfillment of the right to language justice. Without language facilitators or interpreters in court, individuals who are not fluent in Indonesian potentially do not understand the legal process that is their right, which is contrary to the principle of equality before the law. Language interaction strategies that emerge in multilingual communities include linguistic convergence, where youth adjust language choices according to social context, as well as hybridization or translanguaging, which is a combination of local language and Indonesian to communicate effectively ([Pertiwi et al., 2025](#)). This practice, although not much studied in the legal context, enriches the understanding of cross-language legal concepts and supports the preservation of local languages. Thus, the preservation of local languages while using Indonesian can go hand in hand through the integration of local languages in multilingual education and language assistance in public services, so that the younger generation can maintain cultural identity while fully participating in a multicultural society.

4. Language Competence of Legal Apparatus

Juridically, the use of Indonesian by legal apparatus has a clear constitutional, legal, and government regulation basis. Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution affirms that "The State Language is Indonesian", which makes Indonesian the official language of all state documents and official communications, including in the drafting of legislation, court decisions, indictments, Investigation Reports, and other legal documents. This provision affirms that all legal apparatus is obliged to use good, correct, and communicative Indonesian in carrying out their duties, so that legal documents can be widely understood by society.

Furthermore, Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and State Symbols as well as the National Anthem expands the obligation to use Indonesian with

technical provisions. Article 39 of this Law states that “Indonesian must be used in legislation, official documents, official forums, and official government communications”. In other words, all legal documents produced by law enforcement officials both at the central and regional levels must use Indonesian in accordance with the rules, not borrowing foreign terms arbitrarily, and arranged systematically to be clear and not cause multiple interpretations. This Law also affirms the importance of consistency of legal terms and standardization of terminology, so that all legal products have uniform and professional language standards.

In addition, Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2019 concerning the Use of Indonesian provides more detailed operational guidelines regarding language practices in state institutions, including legal apparatus. This Presidential Regulation affirms that Indonesian must be used in the drafting of legislation, official documents, correspondence, reports, and every form of official communication related to public services. Presidential Regulation 63/2019 also emphasizes that official documents must use communicative, clear, and easily understood language, so that legal apparatus not only comply with legal formalities, but also ensure that legal messages can be properly received by society. In the context of legal bureaucratic reform based on public services, this provision becomes the basis for developing language competence of legal apparatus through training, terminology guides, and language supervision.

However, factual conditions show that there are still many legal apparatus, especially at the regional level, who face obstacles in drafting legal documents that are easy to understand. [Asista & Suntura \(2024\)](#) found that legal documents often experience inaccurate diction, complex sentence structures, and the use of foreign terms without appropriate equivalents, thus creating multiple interpretations and potential norm distortion. In addition, [Cantika et al. \(2024\)](#) show that the language ability of state civil apparatus, including legal apparatus, is still limited, thus impacting the clarity of decisions and indictments as well as the effectiveness of legal communication to the public. In a sociolinguistic perspective, legal language is a special register that demands professional competence to ensure that norm meanings are conveyed accurately, logically, and precisely ([Mas'ud et al., 2025](#)).

Implications of low language competence include the emergence of ambiguity in decisions or indictments, semantically ineffective Investigation Reports, misinterpretation of legal norms, and violation of the rights of suspects or defendants. In addition, the use of inappropriate legal language can decrease public trust in legal apparatus and the integrity of the legal system itself. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed through intensive legal language training and coaching, preparation of official terminology guidelines, and assistance from the Language Development and Guidance Agency so that the language competence of legal apparatus improves. This strategy will not only improve the quality of legal documents, but also strengthen legal legitimacy, ensure substantive justice, and support legal bureaucratic reform based on public services.

Strategic Efforts to Strengthen Indonesian in Law

Strengthening the use of Indonesian in the legal system becomes an urgent need to guarantee legal certainty, transparency, and accessibility for society. Juridically, this is supported by Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution, Law Number 24 of 2009, and Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2019 which requires the use of Indonesian in legislation, official documents, and legal communications. Legal language strengthening

strategies include standardization of terms, improvement of language competence of legal apparatus, and preparation of systematic terminology guidelines. This approach not only strengthens the legitimacy of legal products, but also ensures that society can understand legal norms clearly, so that the principles of justice and legal certainty can be realized effectively.

1. Improvement of Legal Language Competence

Improvement of legal language competence has a strong juridical basis in the Indonesian legal system. Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and State Symbols as well as the National Anthem affirms that Indonesian must be used in all official state documents, including legislation, government decisions, and regulations. In addition, Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 expands this obligation, including the use of standard language in public administration, official agreements, and legal documents, with the aim of guaranteeing legal certainty and clarity of norm meaning. Juridically, the use of inconsistent or ambiguous legal terms can cause legal uncertainty, conflicts between laws, and misinterpretation in the application of norms, for example differences in the term defamation in the ITE Law and the Criminal Code. Therefore, the integration of legal language literacy in legal education and continuous training for law enforcement becomes a necessity to ensure that every legal product is harmonious, consistent, and can be understood precisely in accordance with the provisions of legislation. Academic studies also emphasize that mastery of distinctive legal registers and standard legal term standards will strengthen legal certainty and reduce the risk of norm interpretation conflicts in society ([Hadinata, 2023](#)).

Sociolinguistic studies show that law students with minimal legal language competence tend to misinterpret legal terms and norms, which can impact on understanding contracts or interpretation of laws ([Kania & Tarsidi, 2022](#)). [Kania et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasizes that legal language has its own register with distinctive phrase patterns, terms, and syntactic structures, a legacy from the civil law and Dutch systems, so mastery of legal language requires a multidisciplinary approach between law and linguistics. Legal language competence improvement strategies include integration of legal language literacy as a compulsory course, continuous training for law enforcement, standardization of legal terms and sentence structures, and collaboration between law and linguistics faculties to compile standard legal term glossaries. Thus, improvement of legal language competence not only strengthens students' academic abilities, but also guarantees consistency, legal certainty, and accessibility of law for society.

2. Preparation of Indonesian Legal Term Glossary

Preparation of a legal term glossary in Indonesian is a strategic step to ensure consistency in the use of legal terms in the realm of legislation and judicial practice. Juridically, the use of standard and precise Indonesian in legal documents is mandated by Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and State Symbols, and is affirmed through Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 concerning the Use of Indonesian which emphasizes the obligation to use Indonesian in official documents, including legal terms, with correct and consistent equivalents. In addition, Government Regulation No. 57 of 2014 concerning the Development, Guidance, and Protection of Language and Literature provides a basis for the Language Agency to standardize vocabulary, including legal terms, so that the glossary developed not only becomes a linguistic reference, but also has juridical legitimacy.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, legal terms are part of specialized terminology

that is often difficult to understand by the general public and legal practitioners if not standard, thus can create different interpretations that have the potential to cause legal conflicts. Recent research shows that inconsistency in the use of legal terms, including due to translation from Dutch or foreign languages, impacts different interpretations in judicial practice ([Zaman & Nugraha, 2024](#)). Legal glossaries can function as a linguistic bridge between legal jargon and public understanding, increase public access to legal information and support the principle of justice. In addition, glossaries also enable harmonization of terms in all legal documents, contracts, and court decisions, and support transparency of legal communication between the parties involved ([Jumadi, 2016](#)).

A glossary that is juridically valid, linguistically precise, and easily accessible to the public, which can then be published through online media and integrated with the Legal Documentation and Information Network (JDIH). Thus, legal glossaries not only become communication aids in the professional realm, but also become educational tools for the wider public to understand legal terms in a standard and consistent manner.

Preparation of a legal term glossary in Indonesian is very important. Several main reasons are:

- a. **Guaranteeing Certainty of Legal Meaning:** Legal terms must have a single and standard meaning. Without a glossary, one term can be interpreted differently by law enforcement officials, academics, legal practitioners, and the general public. Glossaries function to prevent multiple interpretations that have the potential to cause legal disputes.
- b. **Supporting the Principle of Legal Certainty:** In law the principle of *lex cetera* (norm formulation must be clear) applies. Glossaries help ensure that words and terms in legislation are used consistently and there is no shift in meaning between regulations.
- c. **Standardizing Legal Language:** Indonesian legal language is still influenced by Dutch (for example *delik, vonis, eksekusi*) and English (for example judicial review, due process of law). Glossaries can determine appropriate borrowed terms and provide standard Indonesian equivalents.
- d. **Increasing Access to Justice:** Ordinary people often have difficulty understanding legal terms. Glossaries help increase legal literacy and realize the principle of access to justice.
- e. **Supporting Legal Education and Research:** For students and legal research, glossaries become academic references and help consistency in writing legal scientific works.

3. Simplification of Language in Public Legal Products

Simplification of language in public legal products is a strategic step to increase public legal literacy through the preparation of brief and popular versions of legal products (legal simplification), as practiced in plain legal language practiced in developed countries. Related to language in legal products, language structure analysis examines the use of diction, sentence structure, and legal terms to ensure conformity with linguistic rules, so as not to create ambiguity of meaning that can impact on the misuse of legal language in court proceedings ([Pakaya, 2017](#)). In addition, language structure analysis in the study of legal products can produce recommendations for simplifying complex sentences so that they are easier to understand by the wider public without reducing the accuracy of juridical meaning or the normative strength of these legal products. Simplification of language in public law aims to formulate legislation and state legal documents with clear, straightforward, effective, and easily understood

Indonesian, without reducing their normative force. The basis and urgency of legal language simplification are closely related to:

- a. The principle of openness and the principle of clarity of formulation in the formation of legislation.
- b. The right of society to understand the law that regulates them.
- c. The function of Indonesian as the state language and official legal language.

The juridical basis for simplification of public legal language is closely related to the principle of openness and the principle of clarity of formulation regulated in Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislation, which emphasizes that every regulation must have a clear formulation so as not to create multiple interpretations and can be accessed by the public. In addition, the right of society to understand the law that regulates them becomes an important normative basis in language simplification, in line with the function of Indonesian as the state language and official legal language. Public legal products, including laws, government regulations, regional regulations, public official decisions, and circulars, are not only intended for legal experts, but also for the wider public as direct beneficiaries of these regulations.

The objectives of public legal language simplification are to increase legal accessibility for the public, reduce multiple interpretations and misinterpretations, encourage voluntary legal compliance, and strengthen legitimacy and public trust in the state. Language simplification principles include clarity, language economy, logical structure, term consistency, and accessibility for lay readers. Empirical research shows that plain language intervention in the preparation of legal products is proven to increase public understanding of legal materials, such as in the Job Creation Law, where language simplification makes it easier for people to understand complex provisions ([Hadinata, 2023](#)). Thus, simplification of public legal language is not only a technical requirement for document preparation, but also part of a sociolinguistic and juridical strategy to ensure that law can be understood, applied, and enforced consistently. The integration of juridical and sociolinguistic studies in regulatory drafting will produce legal products that are not only normatively valid but also effective in increasing compliance and public legal literacy.

Fulfillment of Language Rights in Legal Processes

Regional governments and judicial institutions have an obligation to provide legal interpreters in multilingual areas as part of efforts to guarantee equality before the law (equality before the law). This obligation is in line with the principle of the right to a fair trial as guaranteed in Article 28D paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution and the concept of fair trial in international human rights law. Without adequate language support, parties who do not master the official court language potentially experience structural barriers in accessing justice, which ultimately can weaken the protection of citizens' constitutional rights ([Nurhilmiyah, 2022](#)).

Language plays a very important role in understanding law because it functions as the main medium to convey, articulate, and formulate complex legal concepts. Language becomes a means of communication that enables society to understand the rules, norms, procedures, and legal principles that apply. Through language, society can know their legal rights and obligations and participate actively in the legal process. Research [Nurhadi et al. \(2024\)](#) shows that the effectiveness of conveying legal norms is highly dependent on the clarity and accessibility of language used by law enforcement officials.

The use of appropriate and effective language in the legal context also plays an important role in guaranteeing legal certainty. Clear, specific, and well-defined legal language in legislation and judicial documents can minimize ambiguity and prevent misinterpretation. Unclear legal language often creates multiple interpretations that have the potential to trigger legal conflicts and prolong the case resolution process ([Attruk et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, the use of firm and systematic language becomes an important prerequisite in creating a stable and just legal system.

In addition, the sustainability aspect of the legal system is also influenced by the suitability of legal language with the social and cultural context of society. Indonesia as a multilingual country faces major challenges in ensuring that national legal language can be understood by all levels of society. If legal language is too technical and far from the social reality of society, then the effectiveness of law implementation will decrease. The accessibility of legal language contributes significantly to the level of public compliance with legal norms ([Mehrotra, 2024](#)).

In judicial practice, the use of appropriate language is also closely related to the effectiveness of fair and efficient law enforcement. Clear legal communication enables parties to provide testimony accurately, reduce the risk of interpretation errors, and speed up the trial process. Research on translation practices in Indonesian courts found that the absence of professional legal interpreter standards is still a serious obstacle that impacts the quality of the evidentiary process and the protection of the rights of defendants and witnesses ([Nugroho & Johanes, 2024](#)).

Language also plays an important role in realizing transparency and accountability of the legal system. Legal language that is easy to understand enables society to access legal information, monitor the course of the judicial process, and understand the legal consequences of every action. This strengthens the legitimacy of judicial institutions and increases public trust in the legal system ([Purnomo, 2024](#)).

In the era of globalization and the development of information technology, the role of language in law is increasingly strategic, especially in the context of cross-country and cross-cultural communication. International dispute resolution, transnational legal cooperation, and global trade activities demand accurate and adaptive legal communication capabilities. Language functions as a bridge between different legal systems and becomes a key factor in building effective legal cooperation.

Overall, language is the main foundation in legal communication, interpretation, and implementation. The use of clear, inclusive, and contextual language not only strengthens legal certainty, but also guarantees access to justice for all citizens. Therefore, policies for providing legal interpreters by regional governments and judicial institutions must be viewed as part of a national strategy in realizing a democratic, inclusive, and socially just legal system.

Conclusion

The Indonesian language has a fundamental role in the Indonesian legal system as an instrument for forming norms, a means of legal interpretation, and a medium of juridical communication in law enforcement. Clarity, accuracy, and consistency in the use of legal language in legislation and court decisions directly affect legal certainty and the protection of people's rights. However, legal practice still shows linguistic problems, such as the use of non-uniform terms and norm formulations that have the potential for multiple interpretations, thus creating uncertainty in the application of law. Therefore,

strengthening the use of Indonesian in the legal realm needs to be done systematically through standardization of terminology, improvement of language competence of legal apparatus, and preparation of clear and communicative legal products, so that law can be understood, applied, and enforced fairly and effectively.

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