



Regional Regulation as a Language Ideological Instrument: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Regional Language Policy in Mimika Regency

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Abstract

This article presents a critical review of *Mimika Regency Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2024* concerning the Development, Guidance, and Protection of Regional Language and Literature. The study aims to uncover the representation of language ideology, practices of power, and the role of this policy in shaping linguistic identity and its socio-cultural implications. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday), the research analyzes policy documents and government publications through stages of social interpretation and ideological explanation. Findings reveal that the regulation represents layered linguistic ideologies between linguistic nationalism and local cultural preservation. Indonesian is positioned as a symbol of unity and modernity, while regional languages are subordinated yet symbolic cultural entities. The analysis highlights top-down power practices and the symbolic dominance of the state, while also showing constructive roles in strengthening Mimika's linguistic identity. The policy reflects a dialectic between protection and control, preservation and dominance in Indonesia's linguistic ideological order.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; language ideology; regional language policy

1 Introduction

Regional languages in Indonesia constitute an essential component of national identity and cultural heritage [1]. They serve as ethnic markers and vehicles for transmitting local values across generations. However, globalization, urbanization, and increasing mobility have intensified the dominance of Indonesian and foreign languages, particularly among younger generations [2]. These developments raise critical concerns regarding the sustainability of regional languages and underscore the need for effective language policies capable of safeguarding Indonesia's linguistic diversity.

Research on regional language regulations in Indonesia has demonstrated considerable progress in the areas of language revitalization, legal frameworks, cultural preservation, and digitalization [3–8]. International scholarship further emphasizes that language policy is rarely neutral; rather, it reflects ideological values, political interests, and power relations embedded within institutional discourse [9–11]. Within the Indonesian decentralization system, regional governments possess legal authority to formulate policies for protecting and promoting regional languages [12], [13]. Consequently, regional regulations should be understood not merely as administrative instruments but also as texts that construct particular representations of language, identity, and authority.

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Mimika Regency provides a particularly relevant context because of its exceptional ethnic and linguistic diversity as well as its complex socio-political dynamics [24], [25]. Previous studies indicate that regional regulations frequently position Indonesian as the language of development and governance, while regional languages are primarily represented as symbols of cultural heritage [14–16]. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), such representations contribute to the reproduction of linguistic hierarchies and unequal power relations [17], [18]. Accordingly, this study adopts an interdisciplinary framework by integrating Systemic Functional Linguistics [19], [20], Language Ideology Theory [21], Language Planning and Policy [22], and Political Discourse Analysis [23] to examine regional regulation as both an administrative instrument and an ideological text.

Although previous studies have examined regional language policies from the perspectives of law, language revitalization, policy implementation, and cultural preservation, relatively few have investigated regional regulations as discursive practices that construct language ideologies. Existing studies predominantly evaluate policy effectiveness, whereas the ideological dimensions embedded in linguistic choices within regulatory texts remain underexplored. Consequently, the discursive mechanisms through which legal texts construct linguistic identity, authority, and social meaning continue to receive limited scholarly attention. This gap constitutes the central focus of the present study.

In contrast to previous studies, this research positions Mimika Regency Regulation No. 5 of 2024 as a discursive text through which language ideology is constructed. The study offers three principal scholarly contributions. First, it expands language ideology research by conceptualizing regional regulations as discursive practices that shape the social meaning of language. Second, it demonstrates how linguistic choices within legal texts represent the interrelationship between language, identity, and power. Third, it integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, Language Ideology Theory, and Language Planning and Policy into a unified analytical framework for explaining how language policy functions simultaneously as an administrative instrument and an ideological mechanism within multilingual societies.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze how Mimika Regency Regulation No. 5 of 2024 constructs language ideology through discursive choices embedded in its regulatory text. Specifically, it seeks to explain the relationship between language policy, linguistic identity, and power relations from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings are expected to contribute academically by enriching scholarship on language ideology, language policy, and critical discourse analysis; practically by informing policymakers in designing more effective regional language policies; and socially by strengthening public awareness of regional languages as an integral component of Indonesia's cultural identity and linguistic diversity.

2 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine how language ideology is constructed through regional legal discourse. The primary data source consisted of Regional Regulation of Mimika Regency Number 5 of 2024 concerning the Development, Guidance, and Protection of

Regional Languages. The regulation was selected because it provides a comprehensive legal framework governing regional language policy and represents a contemporary policy instrument for language planning at the local government level.

The analysis was grounded in the perspective that legal texts are not merely normative documents but also discursive practices that reflect ideological positions, power relations, and social values. Accordingly, the regulation was examined not only for its legal content but also for the linguistic choices through which language policy and language ideology are represented.

Data were collected through document analysis. The regulation was read repeatedly to identify clauses, lexical choices, modality, actor representation, and other discursive elements relevant to language ideology. Supporting literature on language policy, language ideology, and critical discourse analysis was also reviewed to strengthen the interpretation.

The analytical process followed three stages. First, the legal text was described by identifying linguistic features relevant to the study. Second, these linguistic features were interpreted using the theoretical perspectives of Language Ideology, Language Planning and Policy, and Critical Discourse Analysis. Third, the findings were explained by relating them to broader socio-cultural and political contexts in order to reveal how the regulation constructs language ideology and represents power relations in regional language governance.

To enhance analytical credibility, interpretations were continuously compared with previous studies and theoretical frameworks. This triangulation of legal text and scholarly literature ensured that the analysis remained theoretically grounded and contextually appropriate.

3 Findings

This language regulation demonstrates how language is positioned not merely as a means of communication but also as an instrument of ideology, power, and identity. The following analysis highlights five key dimensions that reveal the relationship between language policy, practices of governance, and socio-cultural implications.

3.1 Representation of Language Ideology

The regulation articulates integrative nationalism and protective culturalism [26–29]. Indonesian is emphasized as the language of unity, while regional languages are subordinated as cultural heritage [30], [31].

3.2 Practices of Power and Domination

Language is framed as a domain of state intervention. Articles mandate government-led development, monitoring, and evaluation, reflecting hierarchical governance and symbolic control [17], [18].

3.3 Role in Linguistic Identity

The regulation strengthens local identity through education (regional languages as school subjects) and literature development, while harmonizing local identity with national identity [14–16].

3.4 Socio-Cultural Implications

The policy enhances cultural awareness but simultaneously bureaucratizes language preservation, transforming living practices into administrative objects [9], [10].

3.5 Relation between Language Policy and Ideology

The regulation reflects hegemonic and integrative ideologies, positioning the state as both protector and regulator of linguistic diversity [26–31].

4 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Mimika's regulation positions Indonesian as the language of unity while relegating regional languages to the domain of cultural heritage. This hierarchical framing resonates with Fairclough's argument that language policies often reproduce existing power structures [5]. At the same time, the symbolic recognition of local languages reflects Anderson's notion of imagined communities, where language serves as a marker of collective identity [10]. The dual role of the regulation—as both protective and hegemonic—illustrates van Dijk's view that ideology operates through discourse by legitimizing state authority [9]. Similar patterns have been observed in other Indonesian regions, where local languages are preserved administratively but marginalized in everyday practice [12–16]. Thus, Mimika's case underscores the dialectic between preservation and domination, aligning with Halliday's systemic functional perspective that language simultaneously constructs meaning and enacts social relations [4].

5 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Mimika Regency's Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2024 embodies both protective and hegemonic dimensions of language policy. While the regulation acknowledges the cultural significance of regional languages, it simultaneously reinforces the dominance of Indonesian as the language of administration and unity [1,2]. Such duality reflects broader patterns identified in sociolinguistic research, where language policies serve as instruments of ideology and power [3,5]. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis, the study highlights how discourse legitimizes authority and shapes linguistic identity [8,9]. These findings align with Halliday's systemic functional perspective that language not only conveys meaning but also enacts social relations [4]. Ultimately, the regulation illustrates the tension between preservation and marginalization, underscoring the need for policies that balance cultural sustainability with equitable linguistic practices [12–16].

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Buha Aritonang served as the lead author and was primarily responsible for conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. Abd. Rasyid contributed to literature review, theoretical framework refinement, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final version of the paper.

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