

This paper examines one type of Indonesian noun–verb pair with the quasi-suffix *-isasi*.

noun	transitive verb
<i>legalisasi</i> ‘legalisation’	<i>melegalisasi(kan)</i> ‘legalise’
<i>optimalisasi</i> ‘optimalisation’	<i>mengoptimalisasi(kan)</i> ‘optimalise’

The nouns are not derived from the western loan adjectives *legal* and *optimal*, but rather are additional, direct borrowings of western nouns. The verbs are then derived from the *-isasi* nouns. What is significant about these *-isasi* words is that they exist alongside a rival type of noun–verb pair:

noun	transitive verb
<i>pelegalan</i> ‘legalisation’	<i>melegalkan</i> ‘legalise’
<i>pengoptimalan</i> ‘optimalisation’	<i>mengoptimalkan</i> ‘optimalise’

This second type of noun–verb pair is derived from a western adjective (e.g. *legal* or *optimal*) by means of traditional affixation (*peN-an* or *meN-kan*). So, unlike the earlier type of noun–verb pair, their formation does not require borrowing of foreign elements in addition to the adjective.

My aims are to see: (1) how much do people use the *-isasi* forms compared to their rival forms? (2) How does that behaviour accord with the guidance of the central language planning body *Pusat Bahasa* on whether to use *-isasi*?

For the first aim, I use Google Advanced Search tool to give some idea of current relative frequencies of over twenty pairs of *-isasi* versus rival forms. For the second question I examine two major publications of the *Pusat Bahasa*: the guide to usage *Buku Praktis Bahasa Indonesia* (2003) and the high-profile official dictionary *Kamus Besar* (2001, 3rd edn).

(1) The prevalence of *-isasi* forms varies widely from word to word. By and large speakers prefer to make their nouns with *-isasi* and their verbs without it. So, for example they favour *optimalisasi* over its rival noun but tend to eschew the verb *mengoptimalisasi(kan)* for its rival verb. However they do use *-isasi* as well for many verbs, often resulting in extremely long forms (e.g. *menginternasionalisasikan*). For some verbs the range of formal variants is striking, with speakers producing up to six competing forms (e.g. for ‘commercialise’ or ‘contextualise’) by varying along several formal dimensions at once. Speakers often use both an *-isasi* form *and* its rival synonym in close succession, apparently to create stylistic variety.

(2) The *Pusat Bahasa* advises speakers explicitly not to use *-isasi*. It says nouns of the *legalisasi* type should be replaced by forms of the *pelegalan* type, or, when the resulting form sounds too awkward, by use of paraphrase. But it tacitly abandons that position in its official dictionary, *Kamus Besar*. The writers of that dictionary often seem to bow to textual frequency in deciding whether to allow *-isasi* forms. When an *-isasi* form is dominant in practice, they tend to allow it alongside its rival, or even to the exclusion of its rival (e.g. with *komersialisasi*). But at other times they insist on the relatively rare non *-isasi* form (e.g. *pengoptimalan* to say ‘optimalisation’.) They also leaves some strange gaps in paradigms by recognising neither *-isasi* nor its rival as a way to form some useful words (e.g. to say ‘to internalise’ or ‘contextualisation’).

While most *-isasi* words are synonyms of their rival forms, sometimes the two express a different meaning. *Kamus Besar* itself is a major source of insights into those semantic differences. However, only rarely do the writers state unequivocally that the two forms mean different things. More often, they hedge and obfuscate, defining the non-*isasi* form to mean one thing and the *isasi* form to mean another (e.g. *pemodernan* and *modernisasi*) but then, in an apparent loss of nerve, back-peddalling by defining one form with the other.

This case-study illustrates several basic facts about the place of western loanwords in the language more broadly. Many loan forms exist alongside rival 'traditional' synonyms. In such cases speakers often favour the loan forms, even when they are much longer than the more traditional rivals; and often exploit the presence of western/traditional synonym pairs for stylistic purposes. The *Pusat Bahasa* explicitly condemns loans which have a traditional synonym, but in fact accepts some of them at times without explanation. The *Pusat Bahasa* also shows high sensitivity to nuances of meaning, recognising that many western loans with apparently close synonyms do serve valuable semantic functions.