Language on Bemo in Kupang: A Landscape Linguistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses signs in the form of writing in public spaces, especially found on bemo (public transportation) in Kupang city through a linguistic landscape approach. The topics discussed are the language used, the form of the language, the dominance of the language, and the perception of the people. Data were obtained from photographs with digital cameras and interviews with informants and then analyzed qualitatively. As a result, the language used on the bemo is multilingual and dominated by English in the form of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and acronyms. English dominates in each lingual unit except in the form of acronyms. Regarding the use of language in public spaces, especially the written language found on bemo, people feel happy if they find their language visible in public spaces. Therefore, the respondent expected and suggested that it is important to maintain their language. However, they are aware that their mother tongue cannot help in terms of the economy, therefore, government intervention through local language policies is needed for the language survival.

1. Introduction

Displayed, especially in urban areas (Bachaus, 2007). These signs can be read on billboards, banners, announcements, signboards, road signs, etc., all of which adorn the face of a city (Karim, et.al, 2022). These signs are made in various fonts and in various languages according to the wishes of the owner or the creator of the sign. The existence of language in public spaces has attracted the attention of linguists to research these signs through the linguistic landscape approach initiated by (Landry and Bourhis, in (Nawawi, 2022). Ben Rafael, in Benu, at,al, 2022) also explains that the linguistic landscape approach not only functions as a tool to calculate linguistic composition in the public space but, most importantly, as a tool to examine various factors such as power relation, population, legislation, and the symbolic function (Yulismayanti, et.al, 2022). One of the sights that attracts attention in the public space of Kupang is the *bemo*, which is a public passenger transportation mode in the form of a four-wheeled microbus. One of the characteristics are the writings that adorn the body and windows of the bemo, both outside and inside.

Figure 1. Sample of the bemos operating in Kupang

The signs on *bemo* have attracted the attention of (Beeh, 2017) and (Tenate, et.al., 2020). Beeh analyzed the writings contained in the *bemo* in terms of speech acts. As a result, there are three types and six functions of speech

acts on *bemo*. Meanwhile, Tenate, et al discussed it from critical discourse point of view. According to them, these texts refer to people's social behavior, both positive and negative because they have power relations and ideologies, namely liberalism, feminism, religion, and capitalism. According to them, the writing on the body of the *bemo* was made by the owner or driver with the aims of being decoration, attracting the attention of passengers, and often being humorous.

Whatever the motives of the *bemo* owner and driver in producing these texts, it cannot be denied that the language and content of the writings used have become public consumption for al people as well as other people who happen to be in in Kupang city. People process visual information in different ways therefore, the language contained in bemo writing will affect their perception of the status of the language they see and may even result in attitudes towards his own language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Sari, et al,2019).

It should be noted that the people of the city of Kupang are not only multi-ethnic, but also multi-lingual and multi-cultural. Kupang Malay plays a role as a lingua franca in daily communication between family members of the community. (Jacob & Grimez, 2006) reported that Kupang Malay was already used as a first language or mother tongue and some used it as a second language, or inter-tribal language where their first language was Rote, Sabu, Alor, Sumba, Javanese, Bugis, Uab Meto, Tetun, Helong and so on.

This paper is the result of research that aims to review the language used, the form or lingual unit of these writings, and the dominant language used and the perception of the people of Kupang on the use of language on *bemo*. This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the maintenance and revitalization of local languages in East Nusa Tenggara.

2. Method

This is a qualitative research to describe linguistic phenomena, linguistic diversity, and the multilingualism on *bemo* in Kupang city. In qualitative research, the emphasis is on participative observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Naniana, et.al, 2022). The types of data in this study are all primary data in which obtained from primary sources. The source of this research data were taken from the written language on the *bemo.* The location for data collection is Kupang city on 7-10 July 2022 for the writings on the bodies of *bemo*.

Data were obtained using a digital camera based on the following criteria: 1) all written language on *bemo*; 2) writing is large enough and easy to read from the outside; 3) some of the same data will only be counted once. The following signs will not be counted: 1) photographs consisting of only numbers, names of people or places, object names, and trademarks; 2) very small writing on the back of a window or door which is difficult to read from the outside; 3) writing that is partially erased, damaged, or torn.

The interview method was also used to obtain information from eight sources. This interview aims to find out the opinions of the residents of Kupang about the writings they see on the *bemo* in Kupang. The interview method used is face-to-face and recorded interactions. The interview technique is in the form of semi-structured and semi-directed questions that have been prepared in advance by the researcher but provide space for discussion or conversation that may develop. Interviewees are also given the opportunity to ask questions or provide arguments. In addition to the recorded interviews, certain important topics related to the interviewees' observations were also recorded. The interview started with the interviewees' linguistic knowledge about the language mastered and continued with a discussion about the bemo and their writings, how important it is for the language to be maintained, and the feelings of interviewees when seeing the local language displayed in the public space. Interviewees were selected purposefully according to the following criteria, 1) Kupang city residents who have lived in Kupang for at least one year; 2) over 17 years old; 3) a native speaker of one of the local languages in East Nusa Tenggara, other than English or Indonesian..

3. Result and Discussion

This research discusses language, forms of language, and people's perceptions of the use of language in the writings contained in the bemo body. This section will present the findings that are presented both qualitatively and quantitatively.

3.1 Language and it forms

The data collected were 136 photos where each photo consisted of one or more writings. Photos that consist of two or more texts can be counted as one text that is the same or different according to their meaning as follows in the following pictures:

Figure 2. Sample the use of writing on bemo in Kupang

In Figure 2, there are three writings: "*super sibuk*", "*ruang*", and "*rindu*", but they are read as two texts: "*super sibuk*" and "*ruang rindu*". The writings of "*ruang*" and "*rindu*" are considered as one phrase because they are related semantically and syntactically. While in Figure 3 there are two writings, "*Macan*" and "*Mama Cantik*", which are considered as one data because "Macan" is a portmanteau for "Mama Cantik".

Based on the understanding above, the amount of data collected is 208 pieces of data. Furthermore, the data is divided based on the language used, and the form of the lingual unit. Based on the data collected, it was found that there are ten languages used by drivers, driver assistant or bemo owners in Kupang, namely Indonesian, English, Bahasa Indonesia,Uab Meto (Dawan), Kupang Malay, Betawi, Rote language, Latin, Hebrew and mixed languages, which are combinations, for example, "*my trip, maitua yang ator*", which is a combination of English and Kupang Malay. The category of other languages, namely language or writing, is not one of these languages because it can be considered slang, such as *X-treme* and *X-clusive*. More details can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Language used on bemo in Kupang city

NO	NAMA BAHASA	JUMLAH	PRESENTASI
1	Inggris	97	47,6
2	Indonesia	74	30,8
3	Kupang Malay	12	5,8
4	Uab Meto (Dawan)	6	2,9
5	Rote	1	0,5
6	Sabu	1	
6	Hebrew	3	1,4
7	Latin	1	0,5
8	Dialek Betawi	2	0,9
9	Others	10	6,7
10	Mixed	8	2,9
TOTAL		**311**	**100**

Based on the data in the table above, it can be clearly observed that English still dominates the use of language in public spaces in the city of Kupang. The languages used consist of various lingual units, namely words, phrases, clauses or sentences, portmanteaus, and acronyms. The data presented below show quantitative data from the lingual unit used.

Table 2. Language Form Found On Bemo In Kupang City

NO	LANGUAGE FORM	TOTAL	PRESENTAGE
1	Words	80	38,5
2	Phrases	41	19,7
3	Sentences	39	18,7
4	Acronyms	48	23,1
TOTAL		**208**	**100**

a. Words

Words that are counted as words in this data consist of basic words, affixes, repeat words and compound words. Likewise, the languages used are English, for example,"*speed*", "*haters*", "*Greenday*"; Indonesian, for example,"*abadi*", "*ganteng*", "*pengatur*"; Kupang Malay, for example, "*basayang*" (love each other), Dawan (Uab Meto) for example,"*tetus*" (blessing) and "*oehonis*" (water of life); Hebrew, for example, "*shalom*" (peace), and other languages, namely categories of languages that appear with different writing styles, such as *p47en* which can be read as"*patients*", or *X-clusive* which can be read as "*exclusive*". In terms of number of uses, English ranks first followed by Indonesian then other languages. The surprising finding is that there are local languages, including the Dawan language which the speakers call Uab Meto. This language appears six times with different writings and meanings. More details about the number of languages can be seen in the following table.

Table3. Language used in a word form

NO	LANGUAGES	TOTAL	PRESENTAGE
1	English	42	56,7
2	Indonesian	15	20,3
3	Dawan (Uab Meto)	6	8.1
4	Melayu Kupang	1	1,4
5	Others	10	13,5
TOTAL		74	100

b. Phrases

Lingual units of phrases such as *nona amarasi, janda berdaster, one girl*, etc., also adorn the bodies and windows of bemo in Kupang. As in the word category, phrases are also dominated by English.

Table 4. Language used in a phrase form

NO	LANGUAGES	TOTAL	PRESENTAGE
1	Indonesian	13	31,7
2	English	23	56,1
3	Kupang Malay	4	9,8
4	Rote	1	2,4
TOTAL		41	100

c. Clauses and sentences

The research data shows that there are 39 clauses or sentences. The languages used are English, Indonesian, Kupang Malay, Indonesian Betawi dialect such as *nggak ada loe, nggak asyik* and expressions in Latin *as ora et labora* which means "pray and work".

There are also mixed language in this category, such as *my trip maitua yang ator* which means my trip is under control (arranged by) of my partner (wife/girlfriend). It is a code mixing of English and Kupang Malay or *loe gue end* which is a combination of the Betawi dialect and English which means you and I are (already) over.

Table 5. Language used in a clause and sentence form

NO	Language	TOTAL	PRESENTAGE
1	Indonesian	9	23,1
2	English	22	56,4
3	Bahasa Kupang	2	5,1
4	Betawi	2	5,1
5	Latin	1	2,6
6	Mixed	3	7,7
TOTAL		39	100

Figures 4 and 5 below show the use of sentences on *bemo* in Kupang. The English and Indonesian languages used tend to be more formal and standard. In this category, English still dominates.
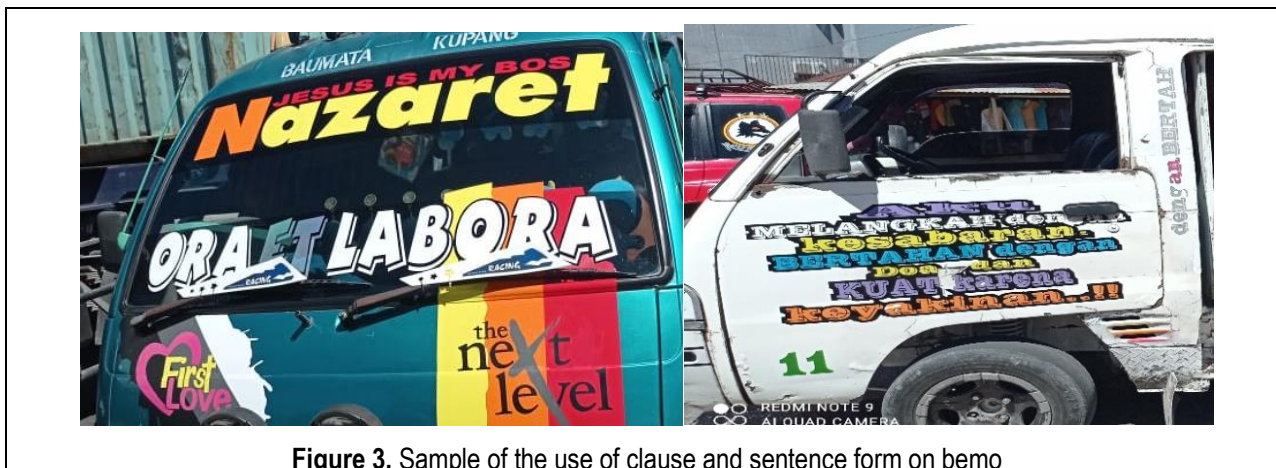
Figure 3. Sample of the use of clause and sentence form on bemo

d.   Akronim

Acronyms are one of the categories that grab people's attention and are often used as humorous material and can also be used as criticism or satire against one party. The form of this acronym is formed from a word or phrase that already exists and has its own separate from the actual meaning.

The formation of this acronym does not follow a certain pattern, but adjusts to the sentence or meaning and purpose to be made. For example, jagung bose, a traditional Timorese food, is corn that has been shelled out through the process of being ground and then cooked.The full sentence, ***JA**ngan **G**a**NG**gu **B**otong **O**rang **S**o**E*** (Don't mess with people from Soe) is shortened to *Jagung Bose*.

Figure 4. Sample of the use of acronyms on bemo

The pattern of formation is to take certain syllables and letters to make a recognizable word. Another example is *pemalu*, where the first two syllables of each of the words in *PEmain MAsa lalU* become the word *PEMALU*. Making this acronym shows the creativity of the writer or language user.

Table 5. Language used in acronym form

NO	LANGAUGES	TOTAL	PRESENTAGE
1	Indonesian	39	81,3
2	English	4	8,3
3	Mixed	5	10,4
TOTAL		**48**	**100**

The amount of data collected for this category is 48 pieces. The language that dominates this category is Indonesian. The mixed acronym form categories in the data are words or letters which are abbreviations of the names of certain groups or teams, for example *KARAT "Kangen Racing Team"* and *BRT "Bintang Racing Team.* Or an English word have been adopted into Indonesian, such as *PROMOTER "PROFESSIONAL, MODERN and RELIABLE"*. There are no local languages in this category.

3.2 Community's perception

One of the objectives of this research is to know the perception of the public as bemo users, as bemo owners, and also as Kupang community members who always witness the overcrowding of writing on bemo bodies. Interviews were used to find out the opinions of the people of Kupang about the writings on the bemo, not to find the meaning of the writings. Theinterviewees still speak fluently in their mother tongues, but it is said that currently there is almost no room for them to speak in that language. They suggest that there is a need for government intervention so that mother tongues can be taught in schools. It is related to personal pride as they feel that their mother tongue cannot help them in their work or increase their income. In this context, language is seen from the economic side, namely language is said to be valuable if it brings economic benefits.

Nevertheless, there is still a sense of pride in being a Rote, Wewewa (Sumba), Sabu, and Atoin Meto (Timor) person, and others. One of the informants is proud to be from Ende even though he doesn't speak Lio Ende himself but speaks Kupang Malay as his mother tongue. This means that the informant only knows his identity as an Ende person because of his lineage. All informants acknowledged language as a marker of identity but doubted that this identity would survive due to the changing times. The next question that was asked of the informants was about their feelings when they saw or read their local language in public spaces, for example the ones displayed on the bemo. All interviewees expressed they are happy and proud as speakers of the language because they are considered to exist. But they returned to the government to regulate lanugauge. The discussion was then directed to the writings that were read on the bemo in the city of Kupang. Against this, all the interviewees considered the writings as decorations and the identity of the bemo to be easily remembered.

Regarding the language used, all informants did not question it because it was the right of the vehicle owner as long as he did not insult or curse others. Regarding the dominant use of English, the informant also said that it is okay because it is the right of the vehicle owner and in accordance with current developments, namely everyone must be able to speak English. One of the informants explained that the English writing on the bemo can be used as a source of learning English as well as strengthening faith, as some of the writings have religious nuances such as "Jesus is my boss", "ora et labora", "shalom", etc.

The following is a summary based on interviews with eight interviewees:

a.   There is pride and a strong desire to maintain the local language.

b.   People should be aware of the resilience of local languages.

c.   Mother tongues cannot help with work and or to increase income.

d.   People feel happy when their language is in public space.
e.   People do not mind the absence of their language in the public space where they are.
f.   There is no problem with the dominance of English in the public space of Kupang, including the writings on the bemo.
g.   Completely submit to government policies.

The things stated by these interviewees can be used as a reference to analyze the perceptions and ideologies of the community in relation to language as the identity of a nation. In this analysis, there are two topics discussed: the dominance of language and people's perceptions related to the presence of their language in the public sphere. The data shows that there are ten languages are legible from the writings on the bodies and windows of *bemo* in Kupang which are dominated by English followed by Indonesian.

The local languages of East Nusa Tenggara, which are read in very small numbers are Dawan language (Uab Meto) with six, Rote with only one instance, and Kupang Malay with 12. Dawan language or Uab Meto is the mother tongue of the Atoin Meto tribe on the island of Timor, while Rote is the mother tongue of the Rote tribe. Kupang Malay is a creole language which, over time, generations born and raised in the city of Kupang made their mother tongue and no longer use their ancestral languages (Jacob & Grimez, 2006).

Globalization is one of the reasons for the spread of the English language, which is a process usually defined in economics related to markets, production and consumption. The use of English aims to increase sales, thus the presence of English is motivated by economic reasons. The use of English also raises issues of identity and power, and therefore, is consequent on the balance between language differences in multilingual situations. In India, for example,

English is used as a sign of the upper class society. At the same time, the use of English is associated with values of international orientation, modernity, success, luxury or pleasure.

Based on this data, it can be concluded that the existence of local languages is starting to weaken, so it needs to be strengthened, both economically and politically. Without the intervention of these two aspects, the diversity of languages in the beautiful East Nusa Tenggara will gradually disappear. This data cannot be used as an absolute measure but as an indication of the loss of pride in the local language. Cenoz&Gorter (2006) remind that some languages have developed and spread very quickly while others need more care, attention, and protection. For this reason, planning and attention must be followed by concrete actions, including, but not limited to the following:

1. Learning another language can add and enrich the human experience. Learning local languages as local content in schools in NTT, especially the city of Kupang, is not happening. In other words, intervention through education will be very helpful. In addition, pride in introducing mother tongues in public spaces, such as words that appear through the writings on the bemo, is very helpful and enriches the experience of learning another language. Every culture has its local wisdom which is reflected in various language expressions. If this is displayed in the public space, it will not only become a medium of language learning but also education and lead to language defense (Benu, 2019).

2. Protection of local languages can be done through legislation and education. This will be very helpful, especially for languages which are nearly extinct. To date, none of the language policies of the government have been about the use of Kupang Malay or the local languages of NTT. However, one of the edicts of the governor of NTT (No. 56, 2018) requires government workers and public schools to use English every Wednesday. This regulation is expected to improve English language competence for civil servants, private employees, and all components of society, and also prepare employees to be able to communicate in office activities and daily life throughout the NTT, thus supporting the tourism sector in NTT. The presence of this regulation clearly shows the ideology and direction of the government's language policy towards regional languages in NTT.

Another effort to promote language in public spaces was also carried out by the East Nusa Tenggara language office through the Indonesian language friendly *bemo* transportation competition (RAISA). This activity has been carried out since 2016 with the aim of socializing the use of correct Indonesian in public spaces in accordance with the motto of the NTT language office, namely mandatory Indonesian, definite regional languages, and necessary foreign languages. However, until 2021 when this research was conducted, this competition did not have a significant effect as shown by the research report of Tenate, et al., (2020). Government intervention through language policy is very much needed even though it may indirectly cause discrimination, but the important thing is that it is allowed to spread as long as it doesn't kill other languages.

Research on the written languages found in the *bemo* agency in Kupang cannot represent the linguistic landscape in NTT, especially Kupang city, but it serves as an initial illustration for representing the ideology of the people. It can be called ideology because the linguistic landscape in a place not only has an informative and communicative function but also plays an important role as a marker / marker of identity (Negro, 2009).

The ideology referred to here departs from the general understanding that all languages have the same position, both in terms of meaning and in academic research. Thus, it is not appropriate to say that language X is better than language Y, or language A is more beautiful than language B, or language C is richer in vocabulary than language D, and so on. Johnson & Milani (2010) explain that this distinction does not occur randomly but as a result of social, political, cultural and economic processes. All of these processes can be observed clearly in the public sphere.

Based on data from interviews with informants, it can be clearly seen that people's views on the use of language in public spaces, especially bemo in Kupang, show that the local language has no economic advantage. Although in the context of identity, all admit that there must be efforts to preserve their languages because it is a sign of their existence. They accept, however, that there is a language or other power that is much stronger than their language.

4. Conclusion

Based on data exposure and analysis, it is concluded that English still dominates the public space, especially in terms of *bemo* in Kupang. The multilingual community of East Nusa Tenggara is not yet visible in the public space, especially in the *bemo* public transportation mode in Kupang. There is still pride and a desire to maintain the local language as an identity. Society views the existence of language from the side of the economy, therefore the presence and dominance of foreign languages is considered something normal that must be accepted. Government policies are needed to regulate the use of language in public spaces or at least maintain the existence of local languages. This

research cannot yet be used as an absolute measure to measure the multilingualism of the people of East Nusa Tenggara, especially in Kupang, but is an initial understanding for further in-depth research.

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