

### A Study of Homonym in Kupang-Malay Language Used by the Eighth-Semester Students of English Study Program of Nusa Cendana University in the Academic Year of 2024

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
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Received : October, 24 <sup>th</sup> 2024	This research investigates the use of homonyms in the Kupang-Malay language, focusing on three main questions: (1) What homonyms used by eight-semester students of the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University in the academic year 2024? (2) What word classes does each and every homonym used by the students belong to? (3) Why do students use homonyms in their conversations? The subjects of this study were five eight-semester students from the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and recordings, and analyzed through transcription, selection, and description. The findings reveal that: (1) Fifteen homonyms are commonly used by the students in Kupang-Malay, each with distinct denotative and connotative meanings. These homonyms are complete homonyms, sharing the same pronunciation and spelling in both spoken and written forms. (2) Some homonyms belong to the same word class in both denotative and connotative meanings, while others shift word class between meanings. (3) Students frequently use homonyms in informal conversations, particularly with friends and family, and they help avoid misunderstandings by relying on context. Additionally, homonyms play a role in expressing emotions such as humor, sarcasm, and frustration in communication.
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### 1. Introduction

Language is a form of communication tool that people use to communicate or express their ideas and opinions to others, both orally and in writing. According to Walija (1996:4), Language is the most complete and effective communication for conveying ideas, messages, intentions, feelings, and opinions to other people. In communicating, each nation has different cultures and characters that affect daily language activities (Bustomi, 2019). These different cultures and characters sometimes cause misunderstandings in understanding or catching the meaning of the language used by people in different places and cultures because

the meaning of the words sometimes changes according to that cultures or place where the language is spoken.

According to Chaer (1994:310-313), the change in meaning of a word may be caused by factors such as the developments in science and technology, social and culture, and word usage, the change in perception, and association. These changes in the meaning of the words make it ambiguous sometimes, that's why it is really important to understand the specific meaning of words in another place because the success of the communication process is affected by the meaning of words.

In communicating, it's common to come across words with the same writing but various meanings. Some words have the same writing then have different meanings. Partanto and Barry (1994:231) define homonyms as words that have the same spelling or pronunciation but have different meanings. Two words are homonyms if they are pronounced or spelled the same way but have different meanings.

In this research, the researcher intends to discuss homonyms in Kupang- Malay language because the researcher found this phenomenon in the university environment especially in eighth-semester students of the English Study Program of Nusa Cendana University. In eighth-semester students, events of homonymy often occur in their communication; they always use homonyms as their option in describing or shortening some meaning of a long sentence, or to make it cool by shortening the sentence to become one word of homonyms.

Kupang Malay is also known as Kupang Language, intricately weaves itself into the linguistic fabric of residents in various regions, including Kupang city, Kupang regency, South Central Timor regency, North Central Timor regency, Belu regency, Malaka regency, and their surroundings. While its vocabulary largely mirrors Indonesian, serving as a shared means of communication, Kupang Malay stands as a spoken language without standardized orthography or writing conventions.

This research conducted with a research problem “What are the homonyms words of Kupang- Malay language used by the eight-semester students of the English Study Program of Nusa Cendana University in the academic year of 2024?, What word classes of each and every homonyms used by the students belong to?, The last one is what is the reasons the students use the homonyms of Kupang-Malay language in their conversation?”. The objective of the research was to find out homonyms in the Kupang-Malay language used by the eight-semester students of the English Study Program of Nusa Cendana University in the

academic year of 2024, to the word classes of the homomny used by the students belong to, and to identify the reason on why the students use the homonym of Kupang-Malay language in their conversation. This research used the theory of complete homonym by (Lyons 1982:72 and Allan 1986:150).

## 2. Research Method

The research design used was the descriptive qualitative method, a type of research where the data were in the form of spoken words, descriptions, or sentences, rather than numbers or formulas. It was employed to identify the homonyms used by the eight-semester students of the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University in the academic year of 2024.

The data were collected by doing interview and observation with five eight-semester students of English Study Program of Nusa Cendana University in the academic year of 2024. It used audio recording to record the conversation with the students.

There were several techniques in analyzing the data. The first one is transcript the audio recording of interview and observation into written text. Second, selected the specific data that was relevant to the research objectives about homonyms. Third, analyze the examining the selected words to determine if there were any changes in their word classes compared to their standard usage. Forth, describing the homonyms produced by the students on campus and provided any observed changes in the word class of homonyms produced by the students and the reason of the students use the homonym.

## 3. Research Findings and Discussion

### Research Findings

The result of the study showed that there are fourteen homonyms identified with their denotative and connotative meaning, word class of every homonym and reason why the students used these homonyms.

Table 1 Homonym identified.

No	Homonym	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning
1	Tolakan	Rejection	Food that people used to eat while drinking alcohol
2	Galap	Dark	No idea, skin colour
3	Lidi	Stick	Skinny

4	Bawa	Bring	Lie
5	Tacu	Wok	To explain something negative being prepared as a consequence of something wrong has been done
6	Karing	Dry	No money, Neutral face
7	Ular	Snake	Liar, Cheater
8	Asam	Sour	Unhappy face, smell
9	Lipa	Fold	Hit
10	Korek	Lighter	Disturb, Make a problem
11	Kuah kosong	Empty soup	Word to say when you have tried your best but the result is Nothing
12	Jual obat	Sell drugs	Lie
13	Sesak	Tight or crowded	Angry
14	Balok	Beam	To describes someone who is very stubborn by nature

Tabel 2 Word class of every homonym used

No	Homonym	Word Class of Denotative Meaning	Denotative Meaning	Word Class of Connotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
1	Tolakan	Noun	Rejection	Noun	Food that people used to eat after drinking alcohol
2	Galap	Adjective	Dark	Adjective	No idea, Skin color
3	Lidi	Noun	Stick	Adjective	Skinny
4	Bawa	Verb	Bring	Verb	Lie
5	Tacu	Noun	Wok	Adjective	To explain that something negative being prepared as a consequence for something wrong has been done.
6	Karing	Adjective	Dry	Adjective	No money, Neutral face
7	Ular	Noun	Snake	Adjective, Noun	Liar, Cheater
8	Asam	Noun	Sour	Adjective	Unhappy face, Smell
9	Lipa	Verb	Fold	Adjective	Hit
10	Korek	Noun	Lighter	Verb	Disturb, Make a problem
11	Kuah kosong	Adjective,	Empty soup	Verb	Word to say when you have try your best but the result is nothing.
12	Jual obat	Verb	Sell drugs	Verb	Disturb, Lie
13	Sesak	Adejective	Tight or Crowded	Adjective	Angry
14	Balok	Noun	Beam	Adjective	Stubborn

## Discussion

### Homonym identified

Based on the finding, many of connotative meanings are related to behaviors, emotions, or personality, for example, the denotative meaning of homonyms "bawa" shifting from "bring" to connotative meaning "lie", or the word "balok" shifting from a "beam" to describing someone stubborn nature.

Similarly, "ular" which literally means "snake," connotatively refers to a deceitful person. These examples reveal how connotative meanings are often linked to character traits or behaviors, demonstrating a pattern where homonyms are repurposed to express judgments about people.

The word "sesak" which literally means "tight" or "crowded" has a connotative meaning of being 'angry' or 'full of anger.' Similarly, "asam" means "sour" in its denotative sense, takes on the meaning of someone having an "unhappy face" or expressing dissatisfaction. This shows that the students used the homonyms to express their feelings and moods in every day.

The connotative meanings of the homonyms also reflect local culture, humor, and social dynamics. Some homonyms, like "tacu" which is "wok" a tool for cooking or prepare food (denotative), is used connotatively by the student to describe a bad consequence has been prepared for something wrong has done by someone, or "jual obat" which is "selling drugs" (denotative), "jual obat" is used connotatively by the students to describes someone's action of lying by share or selling fake news. Those connotative meanings of the homonyms sound humorous in everyday conversation.

### Word Class of Homonym Used

The word class of the homonyms used to belong to in its denotative and connotative meaning already listed on findings, the researcher describes each homonym in their denotative and connotative meaning, they are as follows:

#### 1. *Tacu*

The homonym "tacu" in its denotative meaning, refers to a wok, functioning as a noun. For example, in the sentence "*Dia memasak dengan tacu*" (He/She is cooking with a wok), "tacu" is used to describe a kitchen utensil commonly used for cooking. Here, "tacu" serves as the object of the sentence, referring to the tool itself.

In its connotative meaning, "tacu" is used metaphorically to refer to an impending negative consequence. In this sense, "tacu" functions as a noun in expressions like "*Lu kalo*

*terlambat terus, lu tacu*" (If you are always late, something bad will happen). In this context, "tacu" conveys a warning of something bad happening as a result of one's actions, showing a shift in meaning to reflect a negative outcome or consequence.

In both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym "tacu" refers to wok as a tool for preparing something shifts to symbolize a situation in which negative consequences are being prepared or are about to occur.

## 2. *Tolakan*

The homonym "tolakan" in its denotative meaning refers to the concept of rejection, as in "*Tolakan terhadap ide itu sangat kuat*" (The rejection of that idea is very strong). In this context, "*Tolakan*" denotes a strong aversion or pushback against something, functioning as a noun that encapsulates the idea of refusal or resistance. It highlights a strong opposition to something, acting as the subject of the sentence. The word class in this context is clearly a noun since it refers to a tangible or abstract thing (rejection), rather than describing a quality, which would be the role of an adjective.

In its connotative meaning, homonyms "tolakan" refers to a specific food item, and it functions as a noun. In the example "*Beta mau makan tolakan habis minum sopi*" (I want to eat the rejection after drinking alcohol), "tolakan" is used in a completely different context. Here, it refers to a type of food consumed, often by individuals who drink alcohol. The object in this case is the food itself, and it acts as a tangible item meant to be eaten after drinking alcohol, likely as a way to lessen the effects of alcohol.

The homonym "tolakan" in both denotation and connotation meaning refers to rejection, you disagree with an idea you will reject it, and after drinking alkohol there must be food as a helper to reject the alcohol down to the stomach.

## 3. *Galap*

The homonym "galap" in its denotative meaning, consistently functions as an adjective in Kupang-Malay, with both meanings related to describing a state or condition. In its primary sense, "galap" refers to darkness, as seen in the sentence "*Malam ini sangat galap*" (Tonight is very dark). Here, "galap" is used to describe the absence of light, functioning as an adjective that characterizes the environment.

The word "galap" in connotative meaning also retains its adjective form when it shifts to a more abstract meaning, explaining a state of having no idea or being clueless. For instance, in the sentence "*Beta galap kalo tentang urus ini masalah*" (I have no idea how to solve this problem), "Galap" describes a lack of knowledge or understanding. Despite the change in

meaning, "Galap" remains an adjective, consistently describing the state of a subject, whether it pertains to physical darkness or a metaphorical lack of insight. "Galap" also has another connotative meaning, it refers to someone's skin colour. In Kupang, if the students want say someone's body skin, they will say "*Dia pu kulit tall galap*" (His skin is very dark), means that person skin colour is black.

The homonym "Galap" in both denotative and connotative meaning refers to the absence of something, you can't see something in the room because there is no light, and you can't solve the problem because there is no idea or understanding. The second of connotative meaning "Galap" refers to dark colour (black colour) which mean it can be refers skin colour.

#### 4. *Lidi*

The homonym "Lidi" in its denotative meaning in Kupang-Malay is primarily a noun, used to describe a physical object, specifically a stick or a slender, stiff piece of material. In its most common usage, as in the sentence "*Lidi itu digunakan untuk membuat sapu*" (That stick is used to make a broom), "Lidi" functions as a noun representing a tangible item, an integral part of traditional tools or crafts.

In connotative meaning, "Lidi" describes someone as skinny or slender, it retains its noun form. For example, "*Dia pu badan kecil ke lidi*" (His body is skinny like a stick). The use of "Lidi" in this context is to describe a person's physical appearance, yet it remains a noun. In this context, "Lidi" is still perceived as a noun, drawing on its original meaning to create a vivid image in the listener's mind.

In both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym "Lidi" refers to a size. A stick is very small and thin in size, it is also used to describe the physical appearance of someone who has a very small body.

#### 5. *Bawa*

In denotative meaning, the word homonyms "bawa" is a verb that signifies the physical action of bringing or transporting an object. For example, in the sentence "*Dia akan bawa buku ke sekolah*" (He will bring the book to school), bawa refers to the act of carrying something from one location to another, which is straightforward and literal in its use.

In connotative meaning, "bawa" becomes a word to describe that someone has been lying, for example, "*Dia su bawa ketong*" (He's lying to us). "Bawa" refers to the act of "bringing" or introducing false information into a conversation. Here, it doesn't mean physically carrying something but instead refers to carrying or spreading a lie. The verb still

functions similarly by implying the movement or transfer of information, in this case, untruths.

In both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym “*bawa*” has the meaning of bringing or transporting an object to another place, while “*bawa*” describes someone who lies or brings false information.

#### 6. *Karing*

The homonym “*karing*” in its denotative meaning, describes a state of there’s no water or dry. It functions as an adjective, for example, “*Air di sungai ini sudah karing*” (The water in this river has dried up). “*Karing*” clearly describes the state of the river, indicating that it has no water or lack of water.

In connotative meaning, the homonym “*karing*” is also used to describe a state of there’s no money. It functions as an adjective, for example, “*Beta ada karing karena beta belum terima beta pu gaji*” (I’m broke because I haven’t received my salary). Here, “*karing*” is described as a lack of money or having no money, when someone has a question about whether he has money or not, that person could answer to describe his lack of money with the word “*karing*”. “*Karing*” has another connotative meaning which is refers to someone’s face condition, students will say, “*Dia pu muka talalu karing ini hari*” (his/her face is so dry today (neutral face, lacks enthusiasm, listless)). Still functions as an adjective, describes someone’s condition or a state of lacks of enthusiasm.

In both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym “*karing*” still functions as an adjective and describes a concept of lack, lack of water, and also lack of money. For the second connotative meaning of homonym “*karing*” described the lack of enthusiasm of someone.

#### 7. *Ular*

In its denotative meaning, the homonym “*ular*” describes a type of reptile and functions as a noun, for example, “*saya digit ular*” (I was bitten by a Snake). Here, “*ular*” in this context refers to the animal known for its slithering movement and potentially dangerous nature.

In connotative meaning, the word “*ular*” describes someone who is a liar, and functions as a noun, for example, “*Dia tuh ular je jang percaya dia*” (He’s a snake so don’t believe him). Here, “*Ular*” functions as an adjective to explain someone’s nature who is a liar. People often use the word “*Ular*” to someone when the person is known as a liar. “*Ular*” has another figurative meaning which is a cheater, refers to someone’s nature in context of

relationship of 2 person, they will say, “*Dia tal baular dengan parampuan*” (He is a cheater towards girls.). Still a noun in its word class, refers to someone’s who is sexually unfaithful.

In both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym “*Ular*” describes a specific type of reptile and also a liar. Besides known as a type of reptile, “*Snake*” is also known as a liar because of the nature of the “*snake*” from the Garden of Eden where the “*snake*” deceives humans, that is why “*Ular*” is a nickname for people who lie. The second connotative meaning of homonym “*Ular*” described someone that has the power to manipulate others which lead to become a cheater in a relationship.

#### 8. *Asam*

The homonym “*Asam*” in its denotative meaning, refers to the taste of something sour or acidic, which is typically an adjective describing food or flavors. For example, “*Buah ini sangat asam*” (This fruit is very sour), where “*asam*” describes the sharp, tangy taste commonly associated with foods like citrus fruits or tamarind.

In connotative meaning, “*asam*” is used to describe someone’s facial expression, particularly when they look displeased or unhappy. This is often used as a colloquial expression, as in “*Dia pu muka pung asam le ini hari*” (His face is really sour today), which means the person looks irritated, grumpy, or unhappy. In this context, “*asam*” refers to the person’s mood as reflected through their facial expression, functioning as an adjective. “*Asam*” has the second connotative meaning, refers to someone’s body smell. In Kupang-Malay, the students often use this word in context of describing someone’s body smell. For example, “*Lu pi mandi do te lu bau asam*” (you have to take a bath because you smell so sour or so bad).

In both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym “*asam*” shared the idea of an unpleasant or harsh sensation. Just as something sour (asam) causes a sharp, puckering reaction in your mouth, a “sour face” (*muka asam*) evokes a similarly unpleasant, unhappy, or disapproving expression. Both meanings function as an adjective. The second of connotative meaning referred to the smell of someone’s body which the homonym “*asam*” described the unpleasant smell.

#### 9. *Lipa*

The denotative meaning of homonyms “*lipa*” refers to the action of folding and functions as a verb. For example, “*Silakan lipat kertasnya menjadi dua*” (Please fold the paper in half). “*Lipat*”

refers to bending or doubling over. The most common meaning is to bend something over onto itself so that one part of it covers another.

The connotative meaning of “*lipa*” is hit, and functions as a verb, for example, “*Mari ketong lipa dia*” (Come on, fold him). Here, “*Lipa*” has a different meaning which is hit, when someone says “*Lipa dia*”, it means hit him, signifies a threat of physical action. In this context “*Lipa*” still functions as a verb.

Both denotative and connotative meanings of homonyms “*lipa*” could be seen in the physical manipulation involved in both actions — whether it is folding something neatly or implying that someone will be "folded" through hitting. However, despite the difference, the word retains its function as a verb in both cases, describing an action.

#### 10. *Korek*

In its denotative meaning, the homonym “*korek*” refers to a lighter, a small tool used to produce a flame for lighting cigarettes, candles, or fires and it functions as a noun. For example, in the sentence “*Saya butuh korek untuk menyalaikan lilin*” (I need a lighter to light the candle), “*korek*” clearly functions as a noun representing the object used to ignite a fire.

The connotative meaning of “*korek*” refers to disturbing or provoking someone “*Dia tukang bakorek*” (He is so disturbing). Here, “*korek*” functions as a verb, describing an act of disturbing, to irritate someone. Korek also has another connotative meaning, refers to looking for a problem. If someone is so disturb or love to try to looking for a problem, students will say, “*lu talalu suka cari korek dengan beta ee*” (you love to make a problem with me). It functions as verb, describes an action or activities of making a problem.

Both denotative and connotative meanings, the homonym “*Korek*” is just as a lighter can spark a flame, and the verb “*korek*” can metaphorically ignite an emotional response by bringing up or disturbing a matter. Despite the differences in usage, both meanings retain their relevance in everyday conversations, but the word class shifts from noun to verb based on the context. The second meaning still functions as verb describe someone who loves to make problem with others.

#### 11. *Kua Kosong*

The denotative meaning of the homonym “*kuah kosong*” is an empty soup, which means there are no vegetables, potatoes, carrots, or meat. Functions as an adjective, for example, “*kamu terlambat maka kuah kosong*” (You are always late, the soup is empty).

The connotative meaning of “*kuah kosong*” is no result, and functions as an adjective, for example, “*Beta su muku di ini tes ma dia pu hasil kuah kosong*” (I fight for the test, but

it's just an empty soup). “*Kuah kosong*” describes someone who has tried his best for something but the result is nothing.

In both connotative and denotative meanings, the homonym “*kuah kosong*” refers to the same meaning and word class, used to describe of no result from both meanings, it is empty and nothing.

#### 12. *Jual Obat*

The denotative meaning of the homonym “*Jual obat*” is selling drugs, functions as a verb, for example, “*Dia sedang menjual obat*” (He's selling drugs). “*Jual obat*” clearly explain someone who is selling medicinal products, refers to commerce.

The connotative meaning of “*kuah kosong*” describes someone who is lying by sharing fake news or stories, functions as verb, for example, “*Jang percaya dia te dia ada jual obat*” (Do not trust him, he's selling drugs). “*Jual obat*” in this context refers to an act of lying, when someone speaks a news or something and it is just a fake or not a fact, we can call him selling drugs or “*Jual obat*”.

Both denotative and connotative meaning of homonyms “*Jual obat*” refers to the idea that just as one sells a product to gain something, someone “sells lies or fake news” to deceive or manipulate others for personal gain. Despite the shift in meaning, the phrase remains the same but takes on a drastically different interpretation based on context.

#### 13. *Sesak*

The denotative meaning of the homonyms “*sesak*” is being full or crowded, and functions as an adjective, for example, “*Ruangan ini sangat penuh sesak dengan orang-orang*” (This room is very crowded with people). “*Sesak*” describes a crowded situation, a room is very crowded with people, and it is full.

The connotation meaning of “*sesak*” is angry, and functions as an adjective, for example, “*Dia su sesak parah karna lu sonde mau buat ke dia pu mau*” (He's very angry because you don't do what he wants). “*Sesak*” expresses a feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed, particularly with strong negative emotions like anger or frustration.

Both denotative and connotative meanings of the homonym “*Sesak*” refer to being full, one describes a state of a crowded room, and one describes someone very angry, full of anger.

#### 14. *Balok*

The denotative meaning of the homonym “*balok*” is a beam, type of wood, a strong wood, functions as a noun, for example, “*Balok ini sangat besar*” (This beam is very big). “*Balok*”

here is a type of wood that is shaped like a block so it is larger and heavier, this wood also has a larger crosssection compared to ordinary wood planks that are used to build a house and a big building.

The connotative meaning of “*balok*” is the nature of a person who is very stubborn and rebellious and functions as an adjective, for example, “*Ini ana nih nih tal balok batul*” (This child is very stubborn). “*Balok*” in this context describes the nature of the child, when someone has a tough, rebellious, or stubborn nature then he will be called a beam or “*balok*”.

The denotation and connotation meaning of the homonym “*balok*” refers to a specific type of strong wood, and someone who is very stubborn in nature, both is very strong.

### **Reason of Using Homonym**

The students used homonyms just to adapt and be accepted by the community, it becomes easier to talk in informal settings with others because almost all the students used homonyms in their informal conversation. If one of the students does not understand the homonyms used, it creates misunderstanding for him and it becomes confusing to talk in informal conversation because he doesn't know the homonyms.

Homonyms also affect their communication, it shows how homonyms enrich their language and also help them to express their emotion, such as humor, frustration, and sarcasm, and help them to shorten long sentences, they don't have to describe their answer in such a long sentence just by using homonym which represents the meaning. Yet, it can be complicated for the audience who isn't familiar with homonyms, especially in the context and meaning of homonyms, the context is still important due to the effectiveness of using homonyms in communication.

The last reason why students use homonyms in the Kupang-Malay language is that they are more comfortable using homonyms in informal conversations, especially with their friends and family. Homonyms also affect their communication by helping them to easily express their emotional expressions such as humor, frustration, and sarcasm and also helping them to shorten long sentences in describing something in informal conversation. For example, the word “*tacu*” denotatively means “*wok*”, which is “to describe something bad being prepared as a consequence of something wrong has been done by someone”. When the student does something wrong such as doesn't finish the task or homework which is giving the lecture, not coming the class, or being absent from the class all of this determines whether the student can pass the class or not, we can say “*lu tacu*” to describe that something bad being prepared as the consequence of not doing those things above. We don't have to

explain what will happen to the student for not doing those things because the word “tacu” already represents the meaning

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that homonyms in the Kupang- Malay language hold significant importance in everyday communication among students. The fifteen homonyms identified in this research demonstrate a unique interplay between their denotative (literal) and connotative (figurative) meanings. Many of these homonyms exhibit drastic shifts in meaning based on context, which highlights the importance of understanding the conversational environment to avoid misinterpretation.

The research showed that students are proficient in using homonyms, adapting their meanings seamlessly in informal contexts, which helps them express emotions, convey humor, and add creativity to their speech in daily conversation. However, without a clear understanding of the context, these homonyms can lead to confusion, especially for individuals unfamiliar with the language's nuances.

In conclusion, homonyms play a crucial role in enriching the Kupang- Malay language, serving as a dynamic tool for expression. Understanding both their denotative and connotative meanings is essential for effective communication, particularly within specific social and cultural contexts.

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