



Homonyms and Homographs in the Gorontalo Language

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language, namely words that share the same form but have different meanings, which have the potential to cause ambiguity in communication if they are not understood based on their context. The study used a qualitative descriptive method with a semantic approach. The data, consisting of homonymous/homographic words and sentences, were obtained from a Gorontalo-language dictionary and from three native-speaker informants in Polohungo Village, Dulupi Sub-district, Boalemo Regency. Data collection was carried out through a literature study and reading, note-taking, and interview techniques, and the data were then analyzed through the stages of identification, classification, interpretation, description, and conclusion-drawing. The results of the study found 80 homonymous words in the Gorontalo language, covering verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Most of these are lexical homonyms, namely words whose form and pronunciation are the same but whose meaning differs without any change in word class. A small number of the remainder are grammatical homonyms, namely words whose meaning differs as a result of a change in word class in different sentences. In addition, four homographic words were found, all of which belong to the noun category, consisting of three lexical homographs (*bali*, *leto*, *tilo*) and one grammatical homograph (*lombu*). The difference in meaning in both homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language can only be understood correctly through the context of the surrounding sentence.

Keywords: homonym, homograph, Gorontalo language

Homonims and Homograp dalam Bahasa Gorontalo

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena homonim dan homograf dalam bahasa Gorontalo, yaitu kata-kata yang memiliki bentuk yang sama tetapi memiliki makna yang berbeda, yang berpotensi menimbulkan ambiguitas dalam komunikasi jika tidak dipahami berdasarkan konteksnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan semantik. Data, yang terdiri dari kata dan kalimat homonim/homografik, diperoleh dari kamus bahasa Gorontalo dan dari tiga informan penutur asli di Desa Polohungo, Kecamatan Dulupi, Kabupaten Boalemo. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi literatur dan membaca, pencatatan, dan teknik wawancara, dan data tersebut kemudian dianalisis melalui tahapan identifikasi, klasifikasi, interpretasi, deskripsi, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menemukan 80 kata homonim dalam bahasa Gorontalo, meliputi kata kerja, kata benda, dan kata sifat. Sebagian besar merupakan homonim leksikal, yaitu kata-kata yang bentuk dan pengucapannya sama tetapi maknanya berbeda tanpa perubahan kelas kata. Sebagian kecil dari sisanya adalah homonim gramatikal, yaitu kata-kata yang maknanya berbeda akibat perubahan kelas kata dalam kalimat yang berbeda. Selain itu, ditemukan empat kata homografik, yang semuanya termasuk dalam kategori kata benda, terdiri dari tiga homograf leksikal (*bali*, *leto*, *tilo*) dan satu homograf gramatikal (*lombu*). Perbedaan makna baik pada homonim maupun homograf dalam bahasa Gorontalo hanya dapat dipahami dengan benar melalui konteks kalimat di sekitarnya.

Kata kunci: homonim, homograf, bahasa Gorontalo

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INTRODUCTION

Many words can take on a different meaning when used in different sentences. For this reason, it is important for us to pay attention to the context of a conversation so that the intended meaning can be understood correctly. This is in line with the view of Yoviana (2021), which holds that this is caused by the role of language as a medium of communication used in various everyday activities. In addition, language carries a range of meanings depending on the perspective used.

According to Devitt, M. & Hanley as cited in Suarta (2022), language is a message conveyed in the form of an expression, used as a communication tool in particular situations across various activities, in this case to express something in segmental form, whether spoken or written. This linguistic ability is realized through rhetorical skill, whether in writing or speaking. Rhetoric here refers to the ability to use language effectively and efficiently through *ethos* (character or good intention), *pathos* (engaging the listener's or reader's emotions), and *logos* (logical evidence), thereby influencing the reader or listener through the message conveyed in written or spoken media. According to Chaer (2014), the word "language" in Indonesian has more than one meaning or sense, which often causes confusion.

According to Tarigan as cited in Suarta (2022), there are two definitions of language. First, language is a systematic system, and perhaps also a generative system. Second, language is a set of arbitrary symbols or signs. Language is called systematic because it has neatly arranged rules, such as grammar, which allow humans to form an unlimited number of sentences (i.e., it is generative in nature). According to Alika as cited in Salamah et al. (2023), language holds a position as one of the products of culture that plays an important role as the identity of a community or ethnic group. On the other hand, language is also a form of arbitrary sign or symbol, meaning that the relationship between a word and its meaning is not natural but is based on the agreement of the community of language users.

According to Yoviana (2021), language plays an important role in social interaction. Through language, communication and the expression of feelings can take place. This is caused by the role of language as a medium of communication used in various everyday activities. According to Djou (2023), language and culture are an interesting subject to discuss. Language is a cultural product of a nation. Indeed, through language one can come to know the culture of other people. Language can serve as a vessel and reflection of the culture of the community that owns it, and from language one can gauge how advanced the culture of a nation is. In addition, language carries a range of meanings depending on the perspective used. Djou (2016) holds a similar view, namely that language plays a crucial role in human life as a means of self-expression, communication, thought, and interaction with one's surroundings. The existence of language facilitates the formation of communities and serves as the primary means of sustaining the continuity of a society's culture. Besides functioning as a communication tool, language has a very broad range of functions in human life. Language functions as a tool for social integration and adaptation, a tool of social control, a means of passing on culture, and a medium of education. Through language, cultural values, norms, and knowledge can be passed down from generation to generation.

Language enables the formation of social relationships within a society, because every conversation, instruction, piece of advice, and social interaction requires language in order to be understood. In the linguistic context, Indonesia recognizes several categories of language, namely Indonesian, foreign languages, and regional languages. Indonesian, as the unifying language, is understood as the language used in communicative activities involving many figures or communities originating from various regions of Indonesia. That is why Indonesian has the function and standing of a unifying language. The factor giving rise to Indonesian as the national



language was put forward by Slamet Mulyana (Suarta 2022).

Besides Indonesian as the unifying language and regional languages as markers of local identity, there is also another type of language used in certain contexts by the Indonesian people, namely foreign languages. A foreign language can be defined as a language that is not used by the majority of the population of a given country. For example, Indonesian is the mother tongue in Indonesia, but English and other languages that are not Indonesian are considered foreign languages in Indonesia (Nisa 2022). In addition to the existence of foreign languages, which function as a means of communication between nations, Indonesian society is also familiar with a language that has developed naturally within the local social and cultural environment, which is known as a regional language.

A regional language is a language that has developed and is used by communities in particular regions of Indonesia as a tool for daily communication. This language is passed down from generation to generation, so that it remains alive within the social environment of the local community. Besides functioning as a communication tool, a regional language also plays an important role as a marker of cultural identity and local wisdom of a region. The existence of regional languages reflects the diversity of Indonesia's rich culture and forms part of a cultural heritage that needs to be safeguarded and preserved. Therefore, the use and preservation of regional languages is very important so that they do not become extinct amid the changing times and the influence of other languages.

The existence of regional languages in Indonesia is regulated under Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and National Emblem, and the National Anthem. Under that law, regional languages are recognized as part of the national cultural heritage that must be protected and developed. The state gives special attention to the preservation of regional languages so that they do

not become extinct as times change. This recognition demonstrates how great the strategic value of regional languages is in shaping the diversity of Indonesian culture. In using language, we are taught to always be polite and courteous when expressing an opinion; politeness is a code of conduct established and agreed upon collectively by a particular society, so that politeness simultaneously becomes a prerequisite agreed upon by social conduct (Malabar 2015).

Regional languages have various important functions in the life of local communities. A regional language functions as an internal communication tool within the family and closest social environment, as a symbol of cultural identity, and as a medium for conveying tradition, oral literature, and local wisdom. In addition, a regional language also serves to strengthen group solidarity and acts as a medium of informal education that helps shape the character and cultural understanding of the younger generation. Thus, a regional language is not only a means of communication but also carries high historical and cultural value.

One regional language with a long history is the Gorontalo language. The Gorontalo language is a language originating from the Gorontalo ethnic community, who inhabit the Gorontalo Province region and its surroundings. This language has been used since the era of the ancient Gorontalo kingdoms and developed as the primary tool of communication in social life and governance at that time. Although it is not precisely recorded who first used the Gorontalo language, its use has been passed down from generation to generation by the indigenous Gorontalo people and has become a strong identity marker for that ethnic group. To this day, the Gorontalo language is still maintained and used in various contexts of daily life, including traditional ceremonies, family conversations, and traditional oral literature.

In its development, the Gorontalo language has linguistic elements such as phonology, morphology, and syntax. The element of phonology covers the sound system that forms words, while

morphology governs word formation through affixation or changes in form. The element of syntax in the Gorontalo language governs the sentence structure used in communication. These three elements form a distinctive linguistic system and constitute an important part of understanding and studying the Gorontalo language in greater depth.

The uniqueness of the Gorontalo language can be seen in its word structure, sound system, and its use of distinctive terms not found in other regional languages. Its strong accent, rich vocabulary, and the influence of Gorontalo's cultural history give this language distinguishing characteristics compared with other regional languages in Indonesia. In addition, the Gorontalo language also carries philosophical and cultural values reflected in proverbs, traditional expressions, and oral literature passed down by the ancestors. This uniqueness is what makes the Gorontalo language an important part of Indonesia's rich culture, which must be safeguarded and preserved.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive method. According to Pratiwi et al. (2024:14), Razak (2017:176), qualitative research focuses on an in-depth understanding and interpretation of a social phenomenon. A qualitative descriptive method with a semantic approach, because it seeks to describe in depth the forms of homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language as they actually are, without applying any treatment or manipulation whatsoever to the object of study. A semantic approach was chosen because the study's main focus lies in the analysis of word meaning in the Gorontalo language, in particular the meanings that arise from similarity of form, difference of meaning, and difference of pronunciation occurring in various contexts of community communication.

This study was conducted from October 2025 to February 2026, in Polohungo Village, Dulupi

Sub-district, Boalemo Regency. This location was chosen because it is one of the areas where the Gorontalo language is still actively used in daily life, making it easier for the researcher to obtain data relating to the use of homonyms and homographs and their meaning relations in the context of local community communication.

The data in this study consist of words and sentences containing homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language. The data sources are divided into two: a primary data source in the form of a Gorontalo-language dictionary containing vocabulary along with meanings and example sentences of usage, and a secondary data source in the form of three native-speaker informants of the Gorontalo language, namely Ahmad Tilahunga (61 years old), who works as a customary elder (pemangku adat); Risman Polinto (53 years old), who works as a mosque imam; and Ahmad Ibrahim (86 years old), a member of the local community. The informants were selected based on certain criteria, namely being able to communicate well in the Gorontalo language, understanding the vocabulary and word meanings in the Gorontalo language, and having experience using the Gorontalo language in daily life.

Data collection was carried out through four techniques. First, a literature study, namely examining the Gorontalo-language dictionary as the main reference to obtain systematic and valid data. Second, a reading technique, namely intensively reading word entries, meaning explanations, and example sentences in the dictionary, with a focus on words that share the same form but differ in meaning. Third, a note-taking technique, namely systematically recording word forms, meanings, and example sentences to facilitate the grouping of data. Fourth, an interview technique, namely conducting direct question-and-answer sessions with the informants in order to obtain additional information about word meaning, pronunciation, and word usage in the context of daily life.



The data analysis was carried out qualitatively through several systematic stages. The first stage is identification, namely tracing and determining words that potentially contain homonyms and homographs. The second stage is classification, namely grouping the data into the categories of homonym and homograph based on their linguistic characteristics. The third stage is interpretation, namely interpreting the meaning of each word based on the context in which it appears in the data source. The fourth stage is description, namely presenting each item of data in detail, together with an explanation of its meaning and examples of its use in a sentence. The fifth stage is conclusion-drawing, namely formulating the final findings regarding the characteristics, usage patterns, and meaning relations that emerge from the homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language.

RESULT

This chapter presents the results of the study and the discussion of the forms of homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language, organized according to the research questions, namely what forms homonyms take and what forms homographs take in the Gorontalo language. Data were collected through the techniques of literature study, reading, note-taking, and interviewing, and were then analyzed through the stages of identification, classification, interpretation, description, and meaning analysis in order to reveal the formal characteristics and meaning relations of homonyms and homographs in the use of the Gorontalo language.

1. Homonyms in the Gorontalo Language

Homonyms are words that are the same in both pronunciation and written form, but which actually carry very different meanings. A total of 80 homonymous words were found in the Gorontalo language, consisting of verbs, nouns, and adjectives. This data was obtained from a Gorontalo-language dictionary and supported by information obtained from the informants..

1.1 Homonymous Verbs in the Gorontalo Language

A verb is a type of word used to express an action, process, or state carried out by the subject in a sentence. Homonymy at the level of verbs in the Gorontalo language is marked by the similarity of a verb form used in two different contexts with unrelated meanings. From the analysis, a number of verbs were found that fall into both the lexical-homonym and grammatical-homonym categories. One example of a lexical homonym in the verb category is the word *mongabuto*. This word has two different meanings: to call out to or stop someone who is passing by, and to take a shortcut. In the sentence “De wau ta *mongabuto* asali moberenti oto”, meaning “I will be the one to stop or call out so the car will halt,” the word *mongabuto* is used in the context of the physical act of stopping or calling out to something in motion. In the sentence “Dulolo ito ma *mongabuto* asali ngointa me:dungga,” meaning “Come, let’s take a shortcut so we arrive quickly,” the word *mongabuto* is used in the context of taking a shortcut on a journey. The word *mongabuto* is categorized as a lexical homonym because in both sentences the word still occupies the same function as a verb, so that the difference that occurs is not caused by a shift in grammatical function but purely by a difference in lexical meaning.

Another example is the word *a:ntuluwolo*, which carries the meanings “destroyed/demolished” and “torn.” In the sentence “Bo a:ntuluwolo pee:nta hudungu botiya mowali rata,” meaning “Just demolish this building once and it will be flat,” the word *a:ntuluwolo* is used in the context of the act of demolishing a building until it is level with the ground. Meanwhile, in the sentence “Mayi karatasi botiye a a:ntuluwolo,” meaning “Come, this paper is going to be torn,” the same word is used in the context of the act of tearing a sheet of paper. Like *mongabuto*, the word *a:ntuluwolo* is likewise classified as a lexical homonym because there is no change of word class in either of its two uses.

Unlike the two examples above, the word *ahuwa* shows a shift in grammatical function and is therefore classified as a grammatical homonym. The word *ahuwa* has two meanings: “used up/finished” and “able to be won over/taken.” In the sentence “*Poodaha ahuwa lu siladiya:umao*,” meaning “Watch out, don’t let what I’ve prepared run out,” the word *ahuwa* functions as an adjective describing the state of something. However, in the sentence “*Bilo-bilohe olau yio bo ahuwa le Dula*,” meaning “From what I can see, you could be won over by Dulah,” the word *ahuwa* functions as a passive verb expressing a possible action. This change of word class from adjective to passive verb is the main characteristic that makes *ahuwa* a grammatical homonym.

Besides the three words above, several other homonymous verbs were also found in the Gorontalo language, among them: *atangolo*, meaning “removed/detached from its stem” and “turned/diverted”; *atatolo*, meaning “pulled out” and “removed”; *ayibuwolo*, meaning “criticized” and “deceived”; *mobala*, meaning “to build a fence” and “to catch fish”; and *ele:hiya*, meaning “avoid” and “waste/squander.” Most of these verbs are classified as lexical homonyms, since their verb word class does not change in either of their two uses.

1.2 Homonymous Nouns in the Gorontalo Language

A noun is a type of word used to denote the name of a person, place, object, or anything regarded as a thing, whether tangible or intangible. Homonymy at the noun level was found in the greatest number compared with the other categories, and all instances are classified as lexical homonyms, since the noun word class does not change in either of their two uses.

One representative example is the word *biihu*, which has the meanings “lip” and “edge/border.” In the sentence “*Te Adi ilopaiya lo botu to biihu*,” meaning “Adi was hit by a stone on the lip,” the word *biihu* refers to a part of the human anatomy. Meanwhile, in the sentence “*Openu ma to biihu*

dalalo debo yilihitiyo,” meaning “Even though it was already at the edge of the road, it still got run over,” the same word refers to the side or outer boundary of a road. Both uses present *biihu* equally as a noun, so the difference that occurs is entirely lexical in nature.

Another interesting example is the word *botuliyo*, which has two very contrasting meanings: “its seed” and “bullet.” In the sentence “*Botuliyo u pomulo:lo*,” meaning “It is the seed that is planted,” the word *botuliyo* refers to the core part of a plant that serves as a source of new life. Conversely, in the sentence “*Yio di:la luwalayi bolo otuhata lo botuliyo*,” meaning “Don’t go out, in case you get hit by a bullet,” the same word refers to a metal projectile associated with threat and danger. The very wide semantic contrast between these two meanings in fact reinforces the evidence that they are independent lexical entries with no semantic connection whatsoever between them.

In addition, the following words were also found: *bulotu*, meaning “boat” and “sound/noise”; *buubua*, meaning “a place of fighting/brawling” and “market”; *bola*, meaning “vehicle wheel” and “thread/yarn”; and *hulalo*, meaning “moon/month” and “menstruation.” All of these nouns demonstrate the richness of the Gorontalo lexicon, which contains many words with identical form but carrying very different meanings. This is in line with the view of Verhaar as cited in Pateda (2001), which explains that homonymy is an expression that shares the same form as another expression but has a different meaning.

1.3 Homonymous Adjectives in the Gorontalo Language

An adjective is a type of word used to describe or explain the nature, condition, or quality of an object, person, or thing. Homonymy at the adjective level was found in a smaller number compared with the two previous categories, but it still reflects the distinctive diversity of meaning in the Gorontalo language.



An example of a lexical homonym in the adjective category is the word *hulodu*, which has two meanings: “stupid” and “thick.” In the sentence “Te Onal ma sambe hulodu,” meaning “Onal is far too stupid,” the word *hulodu* functions as an adjective describing a person’s very low level of intelligence. Meanwhile, in the sentence “De dupi hulodu pomake teya,” meaning “A thick plank is what will be used here,” the word *hulodu* functions as an adjective describing the physical condition of a plank. Because the word class does not change in either of its two uses, the word *hulodu* is classified as a lexical homonym.

An example of a grammatical homonym in the adjective category is the word *debo*, which has two meanings: “still/remain” and “also.” In the sentence “Wutatiyo bunggili dabo tiyo debo tilolimomayi le Kuna lo’u mopyohu,” meaning “His sibling is stingy, but he was still received well by Kuna,” the word *debo* functions as an adverb affirming the continuation of a state. However, in the sentence “Tiyo mola lonika oli Dela debo manu rungi,” meaning “He is marrying Dela, also a person from the sky,” the word *debo* functions as a conjunction expressing additional information. This change of word class from adverb to conjunction is what makes the word *debo* a grammatical homonym in the Gorontalo language.

2. Homographs in the Gorontalo Language

Homography is a term referring to words with the same spelling but different pronunciation and meaning. Unlike homonyms, which share similarity in both sound and writing, homographs share only a similarity in written form, while their sound and meaning may differ depending on the context of use. Based on the results of the study, four homographic words were found in the Gorontalo language, namely *bali*, *letu*, *lombu*, and *tilo*, all of which fall into the noun category.

2.1 Homographic Nouns in the Gorontalo Language

The word *bali* is an example of a lexical homograph with two meanings: “ball” and a form of address for a man who is already married or already old. In the sentence “Potalimayi bali tiyo,” meaning “Buy him/her a ball,” the word *bali* refers to a concrete object, a ball, that is being requested for purchase. Meanwhile, in the sentence “Ma bele li bali utiya?” meaning “Has this bali’s house been finished?” the word *bali* refers to a person as the owner or occupant of a house. Because the word class does not change in either of its two uses, the word *bali* is classified as a lexical homograph.

The word *letu* is likewise a lexical homograph with two meanings: “disgrace/shame” and “handkerchief.” In the sentence “Letu di:la mowali tu:olo,” meaning “Disgrace cannot be hidden,” the word *letu* functions as an abstract noun referring to something of a social and moral nature. Meanwhile, in the sentence “Ami lootapu letu to dalalo,” meaning “We found a handkerchief on the road,” the word *letu* refers to a concrete object, a handkerchief, found on the road. This shift in reference from something abstract to a tangible object that can be held confirms that the two meanings of *letu* stand as independent lexical entries with no semantic bridge connecting them.

The word *tilo* is a lexical homograph with two meanings: “lime/chalk” and “mother.” In the sentence “Bolo hemohima tilo wawu ma mulayiyalo momeseli,” meaning “Just waiting for the lime, and the mesel-making will begin,” the word *tilo* refers to a white building material. Meanwhile, in the sentence “Timogoliyo ma didu o tilo,” meaning “They no longer have a mother,” the word *tilo* refers to a mother figure, carrying high emotional value. The difference in pronunciation of the word *tilo* is marked by vowel length, namely *tīlō* with a long pronunciation for the meaning “mother,” and *tilo* with a short pronunciation for the meaning “lime.” Because its word class does not change in either of its two uses, the word *tilo* is classified as a lexical homograph.

Unlike the three preceding words, the word *lombu* is the only grammatical homograph found in this study. This word has two meanings: “bamboo shoot” and “tomorrow.” In the sentence “*Lombu mowali a:lo lo sapi*,” meaning “Bamboo shoots may be eaten by cows,” the word *lombu* functions as a noun referring to a concrete object, the young part of a bamboo plant. However, in the sentence “*Lombu wau monao ode oayuwa*,” meaning “Tomorrow I am going to the forest,” the word *lombu* functions as an adverb of time explaining when an activity will be carried out. This change of word class from noun to adverb is what makes the word *lombu* a grammatical homograph, distinguishing it from the other three homographs, which are lexical in nature.

This finding of homographs in the Gorontalo language is in line with the explanation of Muslich as cited in Saeful et al. (2024), which states that a homograph has the same spelling but different pronunciation and meaning, and belongs to the category of paradigmatic meaning relations. The existence of homographs in the Gorontalo language demonstrates that this linguistic phenomenon is found not only in major languages such as Indonesian or English, but is also present in regional languages rich in lexical diversity. As with homonyms, the difference in meaning found in homographs in the Gorontalo language can only be correctly understood through the context of the surrounding sentence, so that without adequate contextual understanding, this phenomenon has the potential to cause ambiguity in everyday communication.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the analysis, various forms of homonyms were found in the Gorontalo language, classified into three categories: verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Homonymy occurs when two or more words have the same form, both in writing and pronunciation, but carry different and unrelated meanings. This finding is in line with the view of Chaer (2014) that homonymy consists of two words whose forms happen to be identical

but whose meanings differ because each is, in fact, a separate word.

Homonymy at the verb level is marked by the similarity of a verb form in two different contexts with unrelated meanings. Verbs were found that fall into both the lexical-homonym and grammatical-homonym categories. The word *mongabuto* is an example of a lexical homonym meaning “to call out to/stop someone passing by” and “to take a shortcut,” yet its word class does not change in either of its two uses. In contrast, the word *ahuwa* is classified as a grammatical homonym because it undergoes a shift in word class, from adjective to passive verb, in different sentences. The distinction between lexical and grammatical homonyms lies in whether or not there is a change of word class, as affirmed by Kridalaksana (as cited in Yoviana, 2021).

Homonymy at the noun level was found in the greatest number compared with the other categories, and all instances are classified as lexical homonyms because the noun word class does not change. The word *biihu*, for instance, has the meanings “lip” (a body part) and “edge/border” (the boundary of a place). Likewise, the word *botuliyo* means “its seed” and “bullet” — two semantically very contrasting meanings, yet both function as nouns. The wide semantic contrast between the two meanings in fact reinforces the evidence that each is an independent lexical entry. This finding is consistent with the view of Verhaar (as cited in Pateda, 2001) that homonymy is an expression that shares the same form as another expression but differs in meaning.

Homonymy at the adjective level was found less frequently than in the two previous categories. The word *beresi* is an example of a lexical homonym meaning “settled/finished” and “clean/free of dirt,” where both meanings function as adjectives. Meanwhile, the word *debo* is classified as a grammatical homonym because it undergoes a change of word class from adverb (meaning “still/remain”) to conjunction (meaning “also”) in different sentences. This finding reinforces the view of Ullmann (1972) that differences in

meaning within homonymy can originate either from lexical diversity or from a change in grammatical function.

In addition to homonyms, this study also found four homographic words in the Gorontalo language — *bali*, *letu*, *tilo*, and *lombu* — all of which belong to the noun category. A homograph is a word with the same spelling but different pronunciation and meaning, unlike a homonym, which shares similarity in both sound and writing. The words *bali*, *letu*, and *tilo* are classified as lexical homographs because their word class does not change in either of their two uses. The word *bali*, for example, functions as a noun both when it means “ball” and when it means “owner/occupant of a house.” Meanwhile, the word *lombu* is classified as a grammatical homograph because it undergoes a change of word class from noun (meaning “bamboo shoot”) to adverb of time (meaning “tomorrow”). This finding is in line with the explanation of Muslich (as cited in Saeful et al., 2024) that homographs fall into the category of paradigmatic meaning relations, while also proving that this phenomenon is found not only in major languages but also in regional languages rich in lexical diversity, such as the Gorontalo language.

CONCLUSION

First, a total of 80 homonymous words were found in the Gorontalo language, consisting of verbs, nouns, and adjectives. At the verb level, both lexical and grammatical homonyms were found. Lexical homonymy among verbs is marked by the similarity of a verb form in two different contexts without any accompanying change of word class, as in the word *mongabuto*, meaning “to call out to/stop someone passing by” and “to take a shortcut,” and the word *a:ntuluwolo*, meaning “demolished” and “torn.” Grammatical homonymy among verbs, meanwhile, is marked by a shift in grammatical function, as in the word *ahuwa*, which in one sentence functions as an adjective meaning “used up,” but in another sentence functions as a passive verb meaning “able to be won over.”

Second, homonymy at the noun level was found in the greatest number, and all instances are classified as lexical homonyms, since the noun word class does not change in either of their two uses. Examples found include the word *biihu*, meaning “lip” and “edge/border”; the word *botuliyo*, meaning “its seed” and “bullet”; the word *bulotu*, meaning “boat” and “sound/noise”; and the word *buubua*, meaning “a place of fighting/brawling” and “market.” These findings as a whole demonstrate the richness of the Gorontalo lexicon, which contains many words with identical form but carrying very different and unrelated meanings.

Third, tomonymy at the adjective level was found in a smaller number compared with the two previous categories. Lexical homonymy among adjectives can be seen in the word *hulodu*, meaning “stupid” and “thick,” where both uses function equally as adjectives without any change of word class. Grammatical homonymy among adjectives, meanwhile, can be seen in the word *debo*, which in one sentence functions as an adverb meaning “still/remain,” but in another sentence shifts to function as a conjunction meaning “also.”

Fourth, a total of 4 homographic words were found in the Gorontalo language, namely *bali*, *letu*, *lombu*, and *tilo*, all of which fall into the noun category. Three of these are lexical homographs: *bali*, meaning “ball” and a form of address for a man who is already married or already old; *letu*, meaning “disgrace” and “handkerchief”; and *tilo*, meaning “lime/chalk” and “mother.” The remaining word, *lombu*, is a grammatical homograph, since it undergoes a change of word class from a noun meaning “bamboo shoot” to an adverb of time meaning “tomorrow.”

Fifth, the difference in meaning between homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language can only be correctly understood through the context of the surrounding sentence. This difference emerges through two main patterns: a purely lexical difference not accompanied by a change of word class, and a difference accompanied by a shift in grammatical function.

Without adequate contextual understanding, the existence of homonyms and homographs in the Gorontalo language has the potential to cause ambiguity in everyday communication.

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