

# A Comparative Study of Indonesian and Sundanese Homonym Vocabularies

## *Lexical Semantic Review*

Lilis Siti Sulistyaningsih\*, Nunung Sitaresmi, Rahmawati

Departemen Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author. Email: [lilissulistyaningsih@upi.edu](mailto:lilissulistyaningsih@upi.edu)

### ABSTRACT

Language differences in each region become a characteristic of Indonesia, which often causes misunderstanding of meanings among the community. This phenomenon frequently occurs in communication, either direct or indirect communication with speakers of different languages. One of the issues is the complex and dramatic use of homonym. This research aims to identify the homonym vocabularies in Indonesian and Sundanese that are prone to be mispronounced due to possessing different lexical meanings. This research is a qualitative-descriptive with a semantic theoretical approach. The data were Indonesian and Sundanese homonym vocabularies obtained from dictionaries. The data were collected through literature study technique. Then, the data were analysed by using the Miles and Huberman analysis model. This research found 200 homonym vocabularies in Indonesian and Sundanese. It consisted of 180 homographic homophones, 10 non-homographic homophones, and 10 homographic non-homophones. The finding of the study is expected to inform language users in minimizing the potentials of misunderstanding.

**Keywords:** *Comparative study, homonym vocabulary, Indonesian semantic, Sundanese semantics*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is famous for its diversity, including diversity in languages. The Ministry of Education and Culture (2018) stated that Indonesia has 652 local languages. Further, the Summer Institute of Linguistics reported that the number of local languages in Indonesia is 719 languages and 707 of them are active language. Therefore, Indonesian as a national language can be used as an alternative in communication between communities with different local languages, and it has to be accepted by all speech communities and mediate the diversity in languages in Indonesia. This is in line with point three of the Youth Pledge on October 28, 1928, "We the sons and daughters of Indonesia, respect the language of unity, Indonesian." Besides, the function of Indonesian as the unifying language of the nation has also been strengthened through the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2009 concerning the state's flag, language, and coat of arms, and the national anthem. More specifically, Chapter I article 1 point 2 states, "The language of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, hereinafter referred to as

Indonesian, is the national official language used throughout the territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia". Thus, it is very clear that Indonesian has a major function for this nation. In particular, the Indonesian language can be a link to the many regional languages that exist in Indonesia.

Alwi, Dardjowidjojo, Lapoliwa, and Moeliono (2003), stated that the diverse language is still called "Indonesian" because each shares a common core. Besides the positive side of the diversity in languages, indeed the diversity in languages can cause misunderstandings between speakers of different languages. The number of living languages does not rule out the possibility of vocabularies with similarities in both sound and spelling. Pateda (2010, p. 19) stated that a total of 60,000 new headwords were inserted into the Comprehensive Dictionary of Indonesian Language (KBBI) in 1988 and increased to 70,000 words in 1993. The data have been available for 27 years ago. Data increase over time. The great number of words indicates the possibility of vocabularies with similar sound or spelling.

Dewi, Sudaryat, and Kuswari (2019), has conducted a study concerning the comparison of Sundanese and Arabic homonym vocabularies. The research focuses on vocabularies with the same sound or spelling in Sundanese and Arabic, then compared the lexical meaning. Besides, Chindyani (2017) examined the homonym vocabularies in Muara Dayak Language. The research focuses on the homonym vocabularies in Muara Dayak Language along with the position of the vocabulary in the sentence. The result of those studies focuses on the lexical meaning without classifying them based on the similarities. However, homonym vocabularies are grouped into vocabularies with the same sound and spelling, vocabularies with the same sound, and vocabularies with the same spelling. Thus far, the research has not found any studies that classify homonym vocabularies according to the similarities.

Article 36 of the 1945 Law announced in the Youth Pledge on October 28, 1928, stated that Indonesian is the official language of the state. As a national language, Indonesian has to be able to compete with foreign languages to maintain its existence. To realize this, the government of Indonesia has made some efforts including the development of Indonesian by enriching its vocabularies. Indonesian has absorbed a lot of vocabulary from local languages and it becomes a source of pride for the community. However, when viewed from this research, the richer the language, the greater the possibility of homonym vocabularies of Indonesian and Sundanese. Therefore, the researcher decided to compare Indonesian and Sundanese particularly the homonym vocabularies.

Budiwiyanto (on the website of the National Agency for Language Development, Ministry of Education and Culture) stated that Sundanese is a language with a major contribution to the development of Indonesian in which it has contributed 223 vocabularies (6.21%). Budiwiyanto continued that the more speakers, the more vocabulary contributed. Sundanese has second-highest speakers with a total of 27,000,000 speakers. Thus, the contact between Indonesian and Sundanese is even greater. Meanwhile, along with the development, local languages are slowly left behind by the speakers. There are many Sundanese who does not know all Sundanese vocabularies. One example of this phenomenon shows that adolescents in Bandung do not speak Sundanese much at home. There are less than five students from one class consisting of 33-35 students who speak Sundanese in their homes. This shows that not all Sundanese-speaking adolescents know and preserve Sundanese.

This research examined the Indonesian and Sundanese homonym vocabularies with similar sound or spelling. Then, the vocabularies were classified based on the Sitaresmi and Fasya's (2011) theory grouping the homonym vocabularies into three: homographic

homophones, non-homographic homophones, and homographic non-homophones. It is expected that speakers who do not know Sundanese can avoid words that have the potential to cause misunderstandings in communication. For example, the word "bujur" is a homonym vocabulary in Indonesian and Sundanese as it has the same sound and spelling. The word "bujur" in Indonesian means the length of a field, while in Sundanese means butt. In semantics, this phenomenon is considered homonyms. Therefore, Ullmann (1977) stated that homonym issues are more serious and dramatic.

Wijana (2015, p. 32) mentioned that homonyms are two or more words with the same utterances. Chaer (2011, p. 94) stated that literally, homonymy can be interpreted as 'the same name for another object'. A word that has similarities in sound or spelling does not always refer to the same object or things, but it can also refer to two different things. In line with Sitaresmi and Fasya (2011, p. 94), homonyms are words with the same sound and spelling, but they have different meanings. Lyons in Pateda (2010, p. 211) explained that homonyms are two different words with identical spelling and sound. Suwandi (2017, p. 134) stated that homonym means expressions (words, phrases, sentences) that have the same form as other expressions but have different meanings. Vocabularies with the same sound or spelling have the potential to cause misunderstanding between speakers of different languages.

## 2. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis as it is suitable for the phenomenon to be analysed. This research discussed the linguistic phenomenon related to Indonesian and Sundanese homonym vocabularies. It focused on the description of homonym vocabularies in Indonesian and Sundanese. Mahsun (2014) mentioned that qualitative research focuses on meaning, describing, clarifying, and placing data in a certain context described in words. The data consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary data were Sundanese and Indonesian dictionaries, while secondary data were literature related to research studies.

The procedure of this research adopted the Miles and Huberman model in Sugiyono (2019, pp. 321-330), which started with the collection of homonym vocabulary in Indonesian and Sundanese. The collected data were reduced according to the need. Then, the data were narrated to make it easy to understand. The last stage of this research was concluding.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Findings

The research data consisted of 200 homonym vocabulary. The data were then grouped into 180 homographic homophones, 10 non-homographic homophones, and 10 homographic non-homophones.

#### 3.2. Discussion

Indonesian vocabulary is currently increasingly absorbing local languages. New vocabulary aims to enrich Indonesian vocabulary. However, a lot of Indonesian vocabulary has the same form, sound, and even the same both form and sound as other local languages, especially Sundanese. Vocabulary that has similarities does not guarantee that both have the same meaning, so that the vocabulary must be identified based on the equation and compared to its lexical meaning.

The above problem is a study of the branch of Linguistics which discusses meaning, which is called Semantics. In particular, the issue is included in the Chapter of Meaningful Relations in which there is a discussion of Homonyms. Therefore, the analysis used the theory by Sitaresmi and Fasya (2011) which groups homonyms into three, consisting of homographic homophones, non-homographic homophones, and homographic non-homophones. The following is an analysis of the vocabulary of Indonesian and Sundanese homonyms.

##### 3.2.1. Homographic Homophones

Homographic homophones mean two vocabularies with the same sound and spelling. This group is the most difficult to distinguish because there are no differences in the written or spoken forms. Many Indonesian and Sundanese vocabularies have the same sound and spelling. The sample of homographic homophones of Indonesian and Sundanese vocabularies can be seen below.

**Table 1.** Homographic homophone vocabularies

Vocabularies	Lexical Meanings	
	Indonesian	Sundanese
<i>Asa</i>	Hope; enthusiasm	Doubt
<i>Bujur</i>	Length of a field	Butt
<i>Burung</i>	Two-legged animals with wings and feathers, and usually can fly; poultry.	Cancel; not finished Crazy; memory loss
<i>Mangga</i>	Mango; trees with straight trunks, round-shaped fruits, elliptical-shaped fruits, the color of the fruit, and taste varies, served as fruits, salad, sweets, jams, etc.	Please; OK; want
<i>Teh</i>	Drinks made from tea leaves	Sister

##### a. Asa

The homonym of “*asa*” is from different languages and dialects. The word *asa* in Indonesian means hope or enthusiasm, while in Sundanese it means doubt. For example, the word *asa* in the Indonesian sentence is “*Nina sudah putus asa dalam memperjuangkan mimpinya*” (Nina has given up her hopes). Meanwhile, the word *asa* in the Sundanese sentence is “*Nina asa tara mangkat ka sakola*” which means there is doubt when saying the sentence.

##### b. Bujur

The word “*bujur*” in Indonesian and Sundanese has very different meanings. The word *bujur* in Indonesian means the length of a field, while in Sundanese, it means butt. Consider the following examples:

Indonesian:

*Nina menghitung luas bidang dengan penggaris bujur.* (Nina calculates the length of a field using a half-round protractor scale ruler).

Sundanese:

*Nina boga bujur anu leutik.* (Nina has a small butt).

Sundanese speakers who do not know the meaning of the word *bujur* in Indonesian can incorrectly interpret the meaning of the word *bujur*. Indonesian speakers interpret *bujur* as the length of a field. However, for Sundanese speakers, *bujur* is interpreted as butt. Therefore, this homonym group is the group most prone to create misunderstanding between speakers of different languages.

##### c. Burung

The word “*burung*” in Indonesian means poultry that can fly. Meanwhile, the word “*burung*” in Sundanese means cancel or not finished. The sample in sentences can be seen below:

Indonesian:

*Dino memelihara burung di rumahnya.* (Dino looks after birds in his house).

Sundanese:

*Endog hayamna burung.* (The eggs don’t hatch).

The word *burung* in the Sundanese sentence above means that the chicken’s eggs do not hatch or commonly called as *telur calang* (*calang* eggs).

##### d. Mangga

The word “*mangga*” in Indonesian means mango, while in Sundanese means ‘please’. The word *mangga* in the Indonesian sentence “*Aku makan mangga bersama Dini*” (I eat mangoes with Dini) means mangoes, while the word *mangga* in the Sundanese sentence “*mangga dileueut*” means ‘please drink’.

*e. Teh*

The word “*teh*” in Indonesian means drink made from tea, while in Sundanese it has undergone a morphological process, which is the decapitation of the last syllable. The word *teh* in Sundanese comes from the word *tétéh*, which means sister. Consider the following examples.

Indonesian:

*Ayo kita minum teh bersama.* (Let’s drink tea together).

Sundanese:

*Mangga dileueut, Teh.* (Please, drink).

Therefore, the morphological process is one of the factors causing the homonym.

**3.2.2. Non-homographic homophones**

Non-homographic homophones are two words with a different spelling, but they have the same sound. The most noticeable difference in spelling is the vowels. In Indonesian, the vowel consists of A, I, U, E, O, while in Sundanese, the vowel consists of A, I, U, E, E, EU, and O. The easiest way to distinguish whether the word is Indonesian, or Sundanese is by looking at the vowel E used.

**Table 2.** Non-Homographic homophone vocabularies

Vocabularies	Lexical Meanings	
	Indonesian	Sundanese
Indonesian: <i>Benang</i> Sundanese: <i>Beunang</i>	Thread; fine ropes spun from cotton (silk, etc.) used for sewing or weaving	Can Get caught
Indonesian: <i>Berang</i> Sundanese: <i>Beurang</i>	Furious; very upset	Afternoon
Indonesian: <i>Pesing</i> Sundanese: <i>Peusing</i>	The smell of urine	Anteater; bores
Indonesian: <i>Sengit</i> Sundanese: <i>Seungit</i>	Smells bad like the smell of burnt food (cloth, hair, etc.); Sharp; hard; and hurtful (about enrichment); spicy (about words) Great and terrible (about fights and so on) Vile (about facial expressions, deeds, etc.)	Fragrant; smell good
Indonesian: <i>Bung</i> Sundanese: <i>Mbung</i>	Greetings for brothers; brothers	do not want

*a. Benang and Beunang*

The word “*benang*” in Indonesian means fine rope spun from cotton for sewing, while the word “*beunang*” in Sundanese means it can or get caught. The two words look different in the writing form, but have the same sound in the spoken form. The examples can be seen below:

Indonesian:

*Dewi menjahit baju dengan benang dan jarum.* (Dewi sews clothes with thread and needles).

Sundanese:

*Malingna geus beunang. Aina keur dibawa ka kantor polisi.* (The thief has been caught. Now he is sent to the police station).

*b. Berang and Beurang*

The word “*berang*” in Indonesian means furious. Meanwhile, the word “*beurang*” in Sundanese means afternoon. Similar to the words *benang* and *beunang*, these two words can be distinguished through the use of EU vowels in Sundanese. To see the difference between the two words, see the following examples.

Indonesian:

*Nia berang kepada Nani.* (Nia is furious at Nani).

Sundanese:

*Tita keur saré beurang.* (Tita is taking a nap).

*c. Pesing and Peusing*

The word “*pesing*” in Indonesian means the smell of urine, while the word “*peusing*” in Sundanese means anteater or bores. For more details, see the following examples.

Indonesian:

*Ade pipis di celana sampai bau pesingnya tercium.* (Ade peed in his pants making it so smelly).

Sundanese:

*Bapak kapanggih peusing di leuweung.* (Father saw bores in the forest).

*d. Sengit and Seungit*

The word “*sengit*” in Indonesian means bad smell, sharp, fierce, or fights, while in Sundanese, the word “*seungit*” means fragrant; smell good. These two words have something in common, which both means scent, but in Indonesian, it means unpleasant smell, while in Sundanese, it means fragrant or nice aroma. The examples can be seen below.

Indonesian:

*Bau sengit ini berasal dari masakan yang hangus.* (This fierce smell comes from burnt foods).

Sundanese:

*Buuk Dinda meni seungit.* (Dinda’s hair is very fragrant).

e. *Bung* and *Mbung*

The word “*bung*” in Indonesian means a greeting to a brother or brothers. Meanwhile, the word “*mbung*” in Sundanese comes from the word *embung* which means ‘do not want to’. The word has undergone a morphological process, which is the decapitation of the last syllable. Although there is an initial letter m, the sound is the same as the word *bung* in Indonesian. The examples can be seen in the following sentences.

Indonesian:

*Apa kabar, Bung? Lama ya kita tidak bertemu.* (How are you, Bro? Long time no see).

Sundanese:

*Abdi gaduh kueh di bumi. Hayang mbung?* (I have cakes at home. Want it or not?)

3.2.3. Homographic non-homophones

Homographic non-homophones are two words that have similar spelling with different sounds. The same with the second homonym group, the way to distinguish them is to look at the vowels used in the Sundanese word. The vowels É and E in Sundanese have different pronunciation so that if there are the same words with Indonesian, they still have different sounds.

**Table 3.** Homographic non-homophone vocabularies

Vocabularies	Lexical Meanings	
	Indonesian	Sundanese
<i>Bebek</i>	Duck	Grinding until smooth
<i>Lebar</i>	Roomy; not narrow Width of a field Large	Unfortunat ely
<i>Mental</i>	Concerned with the human mind and nature; which is not body or energy	Effective; bounce off
<i>Resep</i>	Prescription containing information about drugs and the dosage for patients and can be exchanged for drugs at the pharmacy	Happy; like; love; interested
	Information about ingredients and procedure to cook foods	
<i>Serep</i>	Spare or supply to replace if something needs to be replaced (for example due to broken, lost); reserve	Choked

a. *Bebek*

The word “*bebek*” in Indonesian and Sundanese has similarities in spelling but a different sound. It is because the pronunciation of the vowel E in the word ‘*bebek*’ is the same as vowel E in the word ‘*bener*’ in Indonesian. Meanwhile, the word ‘*bebek*’ in Indonesian is the same as the word ‘*bérés*’ in Sundanese. The sample can be seen below.

Indonesian:

*Tono makan daging bebek.* (Tono eats duck meat).

Sundanese:

*Bibi keur tuang rujak bebek.* (Auntie is grinding the fruit salad in the kitchen)

b. *Lebar*

The word “*lebar*” in Indonesian is to express a measure, while in Sundanese, it is used to express something unfortunate. The sample can be seen below.

Indonesian:

*Aku mempunyai kamar yang lebar.* (I have a wide room).

Sundanese:

*Aji budak pinter, lebar lamun sakolana teu dilanjutkeun.* (Aji is a smart kid, unfortunately, he does not continue to the next level of education).

c. *Mental*

The word “*mental*” in Indonesian means something related to psychology, while in Sundanese, it means to bounce off. The word “*mental*” in Indonesian is pronounced the same as the letter é in Sundanese. The sample can be seen below.

Indonesian:

*Ani mentalnya terganggu.* (Ani has a mental disorder).

Sundanese:

*Ani katabrak mobil sampe mental.* (Ani was hit by a car so that she bounced off).

d. *Resep*

The pronunciation of vowels has been explained in the previous example. The word “*resep*” in Indonesian means the prescription containing information about drugs and the dosage for patients and can be exchanged for drugs at the pharmacy, and information about the ingredients and procedure to cook foods. Meanwhile, the word “*resep*” in Sundanese means happy; like; love; interested. The sample can be seen below.

Indonesian:

*Dokter memberiku resep obat penambah nafsu makan.* (The doctor gave me a prescription for returning by appetite).

Sundanese:

*Dadan resep ka Ani.* (Dadan likes Ani)

e. *Serep*

The word “*serep*” in Indonesian means spare or supply to replace if something needs to be replaced (for example due to broken, lost); reserve, whereas in Sundanese, it means chokes. The word “*serep*” in Sundanese is included as a verb, so it has a prefix. Here is the example sentence.

Indonesian:

*Pak Junaedi mempunyai ban serep.* (Mr. Junaedi has a spare tire).

Sundanese:

*Daging keur dimasak supaya bumbuna nyerep.* (Dono chokes while eating)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that different languages or dialects highly affect the phenomenon of homonyms. Vocabularies with the same sound or spelling do not always have the same meaning. Based on the result of this study, the easiest way to distinguish the sound of words in Indonesian and Sundanese is by looking at the vowels in the word. It is because each language has its own characteristics, in which Sundanese has vowels É, E, and EU while in Indonesian, they are written with the same letter E. There are homonyms with the same sound and spelling, homonym with the same sound only, and homonym with the same spelling only. Homonym is a natural phenomenon in society. A large number of vocabularies that have homonym, especially those in Indonesian and Sundanese, have the potential for misunderstanding between speakers. There must be awareness for all people to regularly learn local languages where language contact often occurs with the language they speak. The more Indonesian absorbs local languages, the greater the chances of creating other homonym vocabularies. Therefore, for further research, it is expected to explore more vocabulary of homonym Indonesian and Sundanese that are not yet explained in this research, so that they can complement each other.

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