

Dawan Language in Public Space (A Linguistic Landscape Study in Kota Kupang and Soe)

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Abstract: Dawan language as well known by its speakers as Uab Meto is an Austronesian language spoken in west Timor by Atoin Meto. Various world changes and developments nowadays have also caused a change in the culture of Atoin Meto as well as their language. This article is aimed at investigating the existence of Dawan language in public spaces of Kota Kupang and Soe city. Data was obtained through observation and documentation using digital camera for taking pictures of the written sign of Dawan language in public spaces in the two cities. Interview also applied to know the native speakers' perception. The result shows that there are 29 signs found in all around these two cities. Relating to the perceptions, the native speaker seemed to confuse and hesitated to state their position on the importance of Dawan language in the public space.

Keywords: Dawan language; landscape linguistic; public space.

INTRODUCTION

Dawan language is an Austronesian language spoken in West Timor, Indonesia. The speakers of this language that is Atoin Meto prefer to call it Uab Meto (Benu, 2019). According to censuses 2009 based on data from ethnologue.com that there are 700.000 speakers of Dawan language. Other data from <https://omniglot.com/writing/dawan.php> mentioned 800.000 speakers.

There have been many studies and writings about Dawan language can be read in literatures to show that this language has attracted many attention of scholars. The studies and writings is good for the language documentation. Since the last view year, globalization has taking a great role of influencing the language use including the speakers' attitude towards it.

Some scholars said that languages not only need to be heard but it is also important to be seen. Public spaces is an arena where a language played its role of importance by its visibility. By the last few decades, studies on the language in public spaces has grown to be a discipline of linguistic landscape. Cenoz & Gorter (2006:68) said that linguistic landscape is having a great role in the use of language by a community. As they explained that information is processed through what it is seen or appear. By this statement, the written language in public spaces can influence the perception toward the language that someone sees and even shape the attitude toward the language. Public spaces can become the arena for declaring the existence of the language. According to Ben Rafael, (2009:49) linguistic landscape is an approach that not only functioned to count the linguistic composition in the public space, but also can be used to examine factors such as power relationships, demographics, legislation, and symbolic function are viewed, processed, and then reflected in different populations within a small geographic area.

This article is a preliminary study on Dawan language in public spaces in two cities of Kota Kupang and Soe. As stated before that Dawan language has big amount of speaker in West Timor so it is assumed that it is not only spoken but also visible in the public spaces. Cities are chosen as the area of linguistic landscape studies because according to Barni & Bagna (2010:4) studies of linguistic landscape is carried in cities because most of the people are living in the city as well as due to the diversity of social, ethnic, economy, religious, and of course language.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Kota Kupang and Soe on July 2021. These two cities were chosen because located in West Timor, and so are considered as the central of Dawan speaking cities. Kupang is the capital city of East Nusa Tenggara province and Soe is the capital city of SouthCentral Timor Regency. The area of

observation in Kupang in the whole area of Kota Kupang district which consist of six sub districts. While Soe, the whole Kota Soe sub district is taken as the area of observation.

Data was obtained by observation method and photographic technique. Data was completed by interviewing eight native speakers as informants aged 20 to 70 and chosen purposely from various social background. The interview is done by using semi-structured technique to know their responses toward the existence of Dawan language in the public spaces.

FiNDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings showed that there are 24 data of Dawan language found in the public spaces in Kupang and Soe. The number of data in each city can be seen in the following table.

Unit of Sign	Number of sign	
	Kupang	Soe
Government Building	1	
Bank	1	
Church	5	
Hospital		1
Public Transportation	5	
Restaurants/warung	5	3
Public signs on the street	1	2
Place name and direction		4
Bus Terminal		1
Total	18	11

Linguistic Landscape of Dawan Language In Kupang

One of The most visible signs of Dawan language in linguistic landscape Kupang city are five signs found on public transportation and the name of restaurants or *warung*. Signs on transportation are writings on the body of public transportation such as *bemo*, pickup truck and big truck. Writing on the public transportation are appearing as the name of *bemo*, namely *Oehonis* (water of life) and *Tetus* (blessing), some signs are written on the body of the public transportation such as *manekan* (love), *metan* (black) with two signs.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1 and 2 above are the examples of the Dawan language found in public transportation

In restaurants or *warung*, it is only one word, namely *se'i*. The word *se'i* in Dawan Language is lexically means grill or smoked. In Dawan language, a process of drying things using the heat of fire is called *se'i*. Some sources said that the word *se'i* is a Rote language by defining it as sliced cuts in long form of meat using a special spices and smoked (Kompas.com, 24/07/2020) but it is not true because it is found that it is existed in some cultural life of Atoin Meto. Another evidence is that there are some other phrases using the word *se'i*, for example *sei pena* that is the process of drying corn after harvesting. Relating to the health aspect,

a treatment of *se'i* is applied to a mother and her baby after giving birth in an *ume kbubu*. The process of *se'i* is not the same as common grilling process but it uses a special technique such as way of grill, the heat (referring to temperature to get a better result of meat), and wood that used to make fire and so on. So, *se'i babi* means grilled or smoked pork. In food services as in restaurants, *warungs* or street foods in Kupang are mostly serve pork (*se'i babi*).



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure above are example of Dawan language found in food sign or name of restaurants or warung in Kupang city

Dawan language is also appeared as the name of institution such as Bank TLM which is the acronym of *Tanoba Lais Manekat* (applying love). It is one of the banks operated in Kupang and has several branch offices in all over East Nusa Tenggara province. There are five churches named in Dawan language found in Kota Kupang district, namely *Nekmes* (*unite*), *Sonaf Manekan* (*palace of love*), *nekaf mese* (*one love*), *tilon aknino* (*straight and holy*), and *sonaf amasat* (*the palace of of beauty*).



Figure 5 : a name of a bank in Dawan language



Figure 6 : one of the churches in Kota Kupang

Another Dawan language found in Kupang area is written in Taman Patung Kasih in Kupang. It is located in airport as the gate to enter Kupang city. It is written "*Uis Neno Nokan Kit*" means God Bless Us in a big size and can be read clearly by passersby.



Figure 7 : The sign of Dawan language in Taman Patung Kasih Kupang city
Linguistic Landscape of Dawan language in Soe

Linguistic landscape in Soe are names of hospital, farming community, name of place found on name board or place direction on the street, regent's house, restaurants, and blessing expression found on the gate and church. The most appearing signs are name of place or place direction because there are many name of places in Soe which are in Dawan language, for example name of the village such as Noe Meto, Nonohonis, Oekefan, Oeniupsai Oebesa, Nifu, Fafinisin or Oenali and many more.



Figure 8



Figure 9

Pictures above show the signs to show the direction to the institution or the place.

There are four institutions are named in Dawan language, namely a hospital that is Rumah Sakit Ibu dan Anak *Ume Manekan*, a bus terminal called terminal *Haumeni*, The regent's house (rumah jabatan bupati) of South Central Timor regency called *sonaf haumeni*, and a farming community called kelompok tani *tlu'an feu*. *Ume Manekan* means house of love, *haumeni* means sandalwood, *Sonaf Haumeni* means palace of sandalwood, and *tlu'an feu* means new plants.

There are two signs of the word *haumeni* (sandalwood) found in Soe. This may because of *haumeni* is mostly grow in all over here and had become a symbol of South Central Timor regency. The existence of the word *houmeni* in the public space will not only helping the reservation of the language but also reminding people about the existence of sandalwood tree that getting lost every day.

Food services in Soe such as restaurants, warungs, or street food are dominated by Bahasa Indonesia or Javanese. The only word in Dawan language related to food services is *se'i* or *sei* for example *se'i babi* in Depot Remaja and Rumah Makan Larisa.



Figure 12



Figure 13

The used of word *se'i* in food services

The last signs to appear in linguistic landscape in Soe is a blessing expression “*uis neno nokan kit*”. This sentence found in the gate or border of Soe city and in front of a church in the city. The sentence *Uis Neno Nokan Kit* means God bless us.



Figure 14



Figure 15

The use of a blessing expression in Dawan language

Perception toward Linguistic landscape in Kupang and Soe

One of the aim of this study is to find out perception on the visibility of Dawan language in public spaces in Kupang and Soe. Interview was used to collect data from eight informants chosen from different social background but they are all the native speakers of Dawan language. The questions in the interview were divided into two sections to gather information and their responses toward the existence of Dawan language in public spaces.

The first section is about informant's language competence. In this part, the informants were asked about their fluency, frequency, or how often they used the language, including to whom and where. In the second section, informants were asked about their responses and attitude toward the existence and visibility of Dawan language in public spaces. The following question were asked: Do you like using your mother tongue? Why? Do you like to write a text in Dawan language that everybody can see? Did you ever see Dawan language in a written sign anywhere in the city? If the answer is yes, could you please specify the places where such linguistic writings appear: If the answer is no, why do you think that your language does not appear in the linguistic landscape?

Based the interview, the following conclusion is made:

1. Informants are still fluently using Dawan language but are limited in use.
2. They realized that Dawan language is need attention due to its vitality
3. They also realized the Dawan language is played no significant role in this globalization development
4. All informants knew the written sign 'Uis Neno Nokan Kit' as written at Taman Patung Kasih in Kupang and border of Soe. Four informants from Soe know very well some iconic signs in Dawan language.
5. Domination of English is taken for granted.
6. They will proud to have their language seen in public space but it depend on the government as policy maker.

The points above can be used to analyze the perception and ideology of Dawan language speaker relating to Dawan language as the identity of Atoin Meto.

Discussion

Based on data presented in findings, it is clearly seen that Dawan language as the biggest populations of speakers in west Timor is not much visible in public spaces. It is caused by several reasons but the most aspect that come first in the mind of informants is economic factor. In the economic aspects, English or Indonesia is considered to be more attractive, prestigious, or more 'selling' instead of Dawan. Besides, most of the economic factors such as shop owners and restaurants or *warungs* owners are not Atoin Meto. We will find some *warung* are in Javanese such as *warung Moro Seneng* or *Dulur Dewe*. There is a suggestion from an informant that it needs to think about a way of making use of Dawan language to contribute in increasing people income or at

least give economic benefit. This is a big task for the Dawan language speakers to make their language visible in public spaces. Some shop owners and *bemo* owners are prefer to use English or Indonesian to name or promoting their business.

The idea of glocalization relating to revitalization of culture and language as proposed by Artawa and Sartini (2019) is a way to overcome the problem. Looking at the visibility of Dawan language in public spaces must not be seen from economic benefit but its cultural and educational aspects. Benu (2019) said that there are many cultural expression in Dawan language that may be used as lesson in everyday life. These expressions are as important as economic value to put it in the public space that everyone from different language speakers or ethnics can learn. Some expressions, for example “*Uis Neon Nokan Kit*” (God bless us) or “*nekaf mese, ansaof mese*” (one heart, one soul) and many more are the expression that contain cultural and life lesson.

Availability of space in the public spaces in the city or elsewhere is another problem. It needs a policy to regulate how and where these signs must be put including the size and color. The only language policy in East Nusa Tenggara Province today is the regulation of Governor No 56 in 2018. This regulation is about the use of English every Wednesday. This regulation is aimed at increasing the English competence of human resources in East Nusa Tenggara province. A language policy about the use of local language in public spaces will use full for not only preserving local languages but also as a recognition on the local culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion, it can be concluded that Dawan language is not many to find in public spaces of Kupang and Soe even though it has the biggest number of speakers. The native speakers are still proud of the language and willing to preserve it as their identity but there is no idea how make it visible publicly. People is looking at language existence only from economic point of view, so that it makes the less of language visibility on the public space as something usual. Therefore, language policy is needed to regulate the use of language in public space to not only preserving local language but as a medium to learn from the local knowledge.

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