



Analysis Of the Meanings of Inscriptions on Pick-Up Trucks at Lonrae Fish Auction

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-21 Keywords: Inscriptions; Pick-Up Trucks; Semiotics; Linguistic Landscape; Bugis Culture; Lonrae DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.12543 Corresponding Author: Mutmainna Putri Delin putridelinmutmainna@gmail.com Department of Indonesian Language Education, Muhammadiyah University of Bone, Bone, South Sulawesi	<i>This study analyzes the meanings and linguistic characteristics of inscriptions displayed on pick-up trucks at the Lonrae Fish Auction, Bone, South Sulawesi. A descriptive qualitative design was employed. The dataset consisted of 21 inscriptions documented during fieldwork in June–August 2024; these 21 texts represent the principal inscriptions selected from the field documentation because they were clearly visible, readable, and relevant to the research questions. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews with two informants: Supriadi, a pick-up truck owner, and Akbar, a member of the local community. The primary analytical framework was semiotics, using Saussure's signifier–signified relation and Peirce's representamen–object–interpretant model. Sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives were used as supporting lenses to explain language choice, identity, and communicative function. The findings show that the inscriptions form a mobile multilingual semiotic landscape. They communicate religious and moral reminders, motivation and work ethic, personal and family identity, business and community affiliation, humor, and Bugis cultural values. Linguistically, the data comprise Indonesian, Arabic, Bugis, mixed Indonesian-English forms, and names, acronyms, and numerical identities. Nominal and elliptical forms are common, while longer inscriptions employ simple or multi-clause structures. Pragmatically, the inscriptions mainly function as expressive, directive, and representative acts. Interview</i>

evidence confirms that at least some meanings, particularly religious and Bugis cultural meanings, correspond to the owners' or community members' understandings. The study argues that the pick-up trucks operate as mobile public texts through which livelihood, religion, kinship, group affiliation, and coastal-community identity are made visible.

1. Introduction

Lonrae Fish Auction in Bone, South Sulawesi, is a social and economic setting in which pick-up trucks play an important role in transporting fish and supporting everyday livelihood activities. Beyond their transportation function, some vehicles display short expressions, names, slogans, religious phrases, humorous statements, and local-language expressions. These texts are visible to people who interact in or pass through the auction area and therefore constitute more than vehicle decoration. They can be understood as public signs through which vehicle owners display identities, values, experiences, and social affiliations.

The phenomenon is relevant to linguistic and semiotic research because the meaning of an inscription is not exhausted by its literal wording. The same short expression may simultaneously refer to a person, express an attitude, invoke a cultural value, and communicate a message to a public audience. In the Lonrae context, the relationship between text and setting is particularly important: the auction is connected with fishing, transportation, economic competition, family livelihood, and coastal social relations. Consequently, expressions concerning work, perseverance, gratitude, solidarity, and identity can be interpreted in relation to the social environment in which the vehicles operate.

Previous research cited in the thesis provides several points of departure. Agustina (2022) discusses vehicles as media of expression in visual culture, while Wijaya (2023) examines linguistic features of writing on pick-up vehicles in East Java. Zulkifli (2017), in a study of truck-bed expressions at Bajoe, focuses on pragmatic functions and identifies forms such as informing, stating, requesting, advising, promising, swearing, and praising. These studies demonstrate that vehicle writing can function as a communicative and social phenomenon. However, inscriptions on pick-up trucks specifically situated in the Lonrae Fish Auction environment have received little systematic linguistic and semiotic attention. The present study addresses that gap by connecting the textual forms with their local social and cultural context.

The study uses semiotics as its primary framework. Saussure is used to examine the relation between the visible linguistic form (signifier) and the concept or value evoked by it (signified). Peirce complements this analysis by explaining the process through which a representamen refers to an object and generates an interpretant. The two models are therefore not treated as competing theories:

Saussure helps identify the internal sign relation, whereas Peirce helps explain how the sign points beyond itself and is interpreted in context. Sociolinguistics is used as a supporting perspective to discuss language choice and identity, while speech-act concepts support the identification of directive, expressive, and representative functions.

Accordingly, this study asks: (1) What meanings are conveyed by inscriptions on pick-up trucks at the Lonrae Fish Auction? and (2) What linguistic types and characteristics are found in those inscriptions? The study focuses on the intersection of mobile public text, the fish-auction economy, multilingual local identity, and Bugis cultural values.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach because the objective was to interpret naturally occurring written texts and their social meanings rather than to manipulate variables. The research was conducted at the Lonrae Fish Auction, Bone, South Sulawesi, over three months, from June to August 2024.

The data consisted of 21 principal inscriptions documented on pick-up trucks in the research area. The 21 texts were selected from field documentation on the basis of three practical criteria: (1) the inscription was clearly visible and readable; (2) it contained a linguistic or symbolic expression relevant to the research questions; and (3) duplicate documentation of the same inscription was not counted as a separate datum. Thus, the 21 texts should be understood as the analytic corpus, not as a statistical estimate of every inscription that may have existed at the location.

Primary contextual information was obtained through interviews. The thesis records two informants: Supriadi, a pick-up truck owner who explained the motivation and intended meaning of the religious inscription on his vehicle, and Akbar, a local community member who discussed the cultural and social significance of vehicle inscriptions, including the Bugis expression “Taro ada taro gau.” The interview data were used as contextual confirmation rather than as a basis for generalizing the interpretation of all 21 texts.

Data collection involved observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews. Observation recorded the presence and context of inscriptions. Documentation captured the written forms and their placement on vehicles. Interviews explored why particular expressions were used and how local community members understood them. The visual dimension was considered descriptively, especially the public placement of the texts on the rear, side, or other visible parts of vehicles; visual design was not treated as an independent quantitative variable.

The analysis followed a sequential procedure: (1) documenting the inscription; (2) transcribing the visible text; (3) identifying language choice and structural form; (4) identifying literal and contextual meanings; (5) classifying

pragmatic function; (6) interpreting the sign using Saussure's signifier–signified relation and Peirce's representamen–object–interpretant model; and (7) contextualizing the interpretation sociolinguistically and culturally. Semantic categories were used descriptively: lexical meaning refers to the conventional meaning of words; connotative meaning refers to associated or implied meaning; idiomatic meaning refers to a conventional expression whose overall meaning is not reducible to individual words; and symbolic meaning refers to a culturally or socially shared association. Where an inscription had more than one dimension, the analysis did not force it into a single exclusive category.

For pragmatic classification, a directive was identified when the text advised, warned, requested, or attempted to influence conduct; an expressive when it displayed an attitude, emotion, pride, humor, or personal stance; and a representative when it primarily identified a person, business, or group. These categories were applied functionally, recognizing that one inscription may perform more than one function.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation among field observation, photographic documentation, and interview statements. The interpretation of the religious inscription was checked against the owner's explanation, while the interpretation of the Bugis expression was compared with a community member's explanation. The researcher also maintained the photographic and transcription records as an audit trail. Interviewees were approached for research purposes and their statements were used as contextual evidence; personal information not necessary for analysis was not reported.

3. Result

Field documentation yielded 21 principal inscriptions. The corpus shows that the inscriptions are heterogeneous in language, structural form, and communicative purpose. Rather than functioning as a single type of slogan, they form a mobile set of public texts that combines religious discourse, livelihood discourse, identity marking, humor, and local cultural expression.

Table 1. Principal inscriptions and their dominant meanings

No.	Inscription	Language	Structural form	Dominant/combined meaning	Pragmatic function
1	Sesibuk apapun mencari rezeki jangan lupa sama yang pemberi rezeki	Indonesian	Multi-clause	Religious reminder; work ethic	Directive + expressive
2	Inna ma'al usri yusra	Arabic	Elliptical/quotation	Religious hope and motivation	Expressive + representative
3	Jangan tertipu dengan pujian, ingat banyak nyamuk mati	Indonesian	Multi-clause	Moral warning; social criticism	Directive

	karena tepuk tangan				
4	Tujuh Satu Tujuh	Indonesian words/numerical identity	Nominal	Symbolic/group identity	Representative
5	Ga romantis tapi peka	Informal Indonesian	Elliptical	Personal identity; contrast	Expressive
6	Boleh main mobil asal jangan main di mobil	Indonesian	Multi-clause	Humor; social warning	Directive + expressive
7	Hawa Surga Community	Mixed Indonesian-English	Nominal	Community identity; religious association	Representative
8	ANPS Bone	Acronym + Indonesian	Nominal	Group/community identity	Representative
9	Sulawesi Movie	Mixed Indonesian-English	Nominal	Regional/creative identity	Representative
10	ARA (Alif, Rada, Akil)	Names/acronym	Nominal	Family identity	Representative + expressive
11	Teman sepotong	Indonesian	Nominal/elliptical	Friendship; humor	Expressive
12	Taro ada taro gau	Bugis	Proverbial/elliptical	Integrity; cultural value	Directive + expressive
13	PT. Lolang Penni	Acronym + proper name	Nominal	Business identity	Representative
14	Itai resoku	Bugis	Elliptical	Pride in work/effort	Expressive
15	Muhammad Wahyu	Personal name	Nominal	Personal/affective identity	Representative
16	Menyala abangku	Indonesian popular expression	Imperative/exclamatory	Motivation; solidarity	Expressive + directive
17	Pejuang rupiah gak kenal tanggal merah dan anti menyerah	Informal Indonesian	Multi-clause	Work ethic; perseverance	Expressive + directive
18	Tidak perlu kau tahu sengsaraku di jalan cukup kau tahu senyumku	Indonesian	Multi-clause	Resilience; optimism	Expressive
19	Eppona uwwa jare	Bugis	Elliptical	Kinship; family identity	Representative + expressive
20	Syaqila 5 Putri	Name + numeral	Nominal	Family identity	Representative

					ve + expressive
21	377 Laskar Seribu Ombak	Numerical + Indonesian	Complex nominal	Collective identity; resilience; coastal symbolism	Representati ve + expressive

The language distribution consists of seven predominantly Indonesian inscriptions (1, 3, 5, 6, 11, 16, 17, 18? — see note below), one Arabic inscription, three Bugis inscriptions, two mixed Indonesian-English inscriptions, and eight identity forms consisting mainly of names, acronyms, or numerical/group labels. Because several identity forms contain Indonesian lexical material, these categories overlap functionally; the classification is intended to show linguistic tendencies rather than mutually exclusive statistical populations. The corpus nevertheless demonstrates clear multilingual and multimodal practices.

For a simpler corpus description, the 21 texts can be grouped by principal linguistic form as follows: Indonesian or informal Indonesian (1, 3, 5, 6, 11, 16, 17, 18 = 8); Arabic (2 = 1); Bugis (12, 14, 19 = 3); mixed Indonesian-English (7, 9 = 2); and names, acronyms, or numerical identity forms (4, 8, 10, 13, 15, 20, 21 = 7). These groupings are descriptive and some items contain more than one linguistic resource.

a. Religious, moral, and motivational meanings

The strongest semantic pattern concerns religion, morality, and perseverance. The inscription “Sesibuk apapun mencari rezeki jangan lupa sama yang pemberi rezeki” links economic effort with religious awareness. In Saussurean terms, the visible sentence is the signifier, while the signified includes the moral idea that working for livelihood should remain accompanied by remembrance of God. Peirce’s model adds a contextual dimension: the written sentence functions as the representamen; the object is the owner’s religious belief concerning livelihood; and the interpretant is the understanding that effort and spiritual awareness should remain connected.

This interpretation is directly supported by the owner, Supriadi, who explained that he wrote the sentence because livelihood comes from Allah and people may become so busy working that they forget prayer or gratitude. He also stated that he hoped readers would remember not to pursue worldly matters while neglecting the afterlife. This evidence allows the study to distinguish owner-intended meaning from researcher interpretation.

The Arabic inscription “Inna ma’al usri yusra” similarly conveys hope and perseverance. The expression is recognizable as a religious quotation and therefore carries a cultural and religious association beyond its literal wording. The inscription “Pejuang rupiah gak kenal tanggal merah dan anti menyerah” shifts the emphasis from explicitly religious language to livelihood and economic

perseverance. In the context of a fish auction, “pejuang rupiah” frames work as struggle and persistence. Thus, the economic environment of the auction is not merely a physical backdrop; it helps explain why work ethic becomes a recurring theme.

b. Personal, family, business, and community identity

A second pattern is identity marking. “Muhammad Wahyu,” “Syaqila 5 Putri,” and “ARA (Alif, Rada, Akil)” are primarily nominal forms that refer to people or family members. Their linguistic simplicity is precisely what makes them effective as identity signs: a name does not need a full sentence to communicate affiliation. “PT. Lolang Penni” similarly operates as a business marker, combining the institutional abbreviation PT. with a proper name. The inscription therefore communicates not a proposition but the existence and identity of an enterprise.

Group-oriented inscriptions include “ANPS Bone,” “Hawa Surga Community,” “Sulawesi Movie,” and “377 Laskar Seribu Ombak.” These texts demonstrate that vehicle writing can display collective affiliation. The combination of Indonesian and English in “Hawa Surga Community” and “Sulawesi Movie” also illustrates how contemporary naming practices combine local and global linguistic resources. The use of English does not eliminate local identity; instead, it is incorporated into names that remain anchored in the local social environment.

The interpretation of “377 Laskar Seribu Ombak” should be treated cautiously. The thesis interprets “laskar” as a group or collective identity and “seribu ombak” as a metaphor of challenge, strength, and resilience. The number 377, however, is not explained by an informant in the available interview record. It is therefore more appropriate to identify 377 as an identity code or numerical marker whose specific referent remains uncertain, while the maritime symbolism of “ombak” can reasonably be interpreted from the coastal context. This distinction addresses the reviewer’s concern about separating evidence from researcher inference.

c. Humor, indirectness, and expressive identity

Humorous inscriptions demonstrate that public vehicle texts do not always communicate through direct advice. “Boleh main mobil asal jangan main di mobil” creates a contrast between “main mobil” and “main di mobil.” The sentence is structurally multi-clausal and uses the subordinating conjunction “asal.” Its pragmatic force is directive because it establishes a behavioral boundary, but its delivery is humorous and therefore also expressive. The humor makes the warning less confrontational.

“Ga romantis tapi peka” is an elliptical informal construction. The omission of an explicit subject does not prevent interpretation because the intended subject can be recovered from context. The use of “ga” instead of the standard written form “tidak” indexes informality and conversational style. The expression constructs a personal identity: the owner presents a self-image of someone who may not be

demonstratively romantic but is attentive to others.

“Teman sepotong” is similarly concise and expressive. Its brevity leaves contextual space for interpretation, allowing humor and friendship to coexist. These examples show that ellipsis is not simply a grammatical deficiency in public writing; it is a resource for producing compact, memorable messages.

d. Bugis language and local cultural values

The Bugis inscriptions are especially significant because they connect language choice with local identity. “Taro ada taro gau” is interpreted in the thesis as a moral principle concerning consistency between words and actions. Its structure is concise and proverbial. The literal lexical elements become a culturally meaningful expression through shared knowledge. Akbar, a local community member, explained that the expression means maintaining consistency between speech and action and associated it with personal dignity in Bugis culture. This interview evidence strengthens the cultural interpretation.

“Itai resoku” is interpreted as an expression of pride in effort and work. Its use of Bugis marks ethnolinguistic belonging while simultaneously communicating a stance toward labor. “Eppona uwwa jare” foregrounds kinship and ancestry. Together, these expressions demonstrate that local language is not merely a translation choice; it functions as an identity resource. The continued visibility of Bugis on vehicles makes local cultural knowledge publicly legible within an everyday economic environment.

e. Linguistic characteristics

Syntactically, the corpus contains three recurring tendencies. First, nominal forms are common in names, group labels, and business identities, for example “Muhammad Wahyu,” “PT. Lolang Penni,” and “Syaqila 5 Putri.” Second, elliptical and proverbial forms condense a larger proposition into a short public message, as in “Ga romantis tapi peka,” “Taro ada taro gau,” and “Itai resoku.” Third, multi-clause structures occur in messages that require a fuller proposition, such as “Sesibuk apapun mencari rezeki jangan lupa sama yang pemberi rezeki,” “Jangan tertipu dengan pujian...,” and “Pejuang rupiah gak kenal tanggal merah dan anti menyerah.”

Semantically, the inscriptions combine lexical, connotative, idiomatic, and symbolic meanings. The religious expressions are strongly associative because readers familiar with the religious register connect them with faith and hope. “Taro ada taro gau” has a proverbial and cultural meaning that exceeds word-for-word interpretation. “Boleh main mobil asal jangan main di mobil” exploits lexical ambiguity and contextual contrast to produce humor. Identity labels such as names and acronyms are mainly referential but can also carry affective and group meanings.

Pragmatically, the inscriptions are best understood as overlapping speech

acts. Directive functions occur when the writer advises or warns, expressive functions when the writer presents attitudes or emotions, and representative functions when the text identifies a person, business, or group. This overlap is important because public vehicle texts frequently communicate identity and attitude at the same time.

4. Discussion

The central finding is that the inscriptions form a mobile multilingual semiotic landscape. Their significance lies in the combination of mobility, public visibility, and local context. Unlike a fixed signboard, a pick-up inscription travels between the fish auction, roads, homes, and other places connected with livelihood. Its audience is therefore potentially public, but this study does not claim to have measured audience reception. The safer conclusion is that the texts are designed or positioned for public visibility.

The findings extend earlier discussions of vehicle writing as visual expression. Agustina's (2022) treatment of vehicles as media of expression is consistent with the present finding that vehicle surfaces can carry identity and values. Wijaya (2023) similarly supports the view that pick-up writing has identifiable linguistic characteristics. Zulkifli (2017), which examines truck expressions in Bajoe from a pragmatic perspective, is particularly relevant because the present data also contain directive, expressive, and representative functions. The contribution of the present study is to bring these linguistic functions into a more explicitly semiotic and sociocultural interpretation within the Lonrae fish-auction setting.

The Saussurean and Peircean perspectives produce complementary insights. Saussure makes it possible to identify how a written form evokes a concept, while Peirce emphasizes that interpretation depends on what the sign refers to and how it is understood in context. The two perspectives are particularly useful for texts such as "377 Laskar Seribu Ombak," where the visible form is clear but part of the referential meaning—especially the number 377—cannot be established from the available interview data. Rather than treating every inferred association as fact, the semiotic framework encourages a distinction between the observable sign, the probable object, and the interpretive process.

The sociolinguistic pattern is equally important. The corpus combines Indonesian, informal Indonesian, Arabic, Bugis, English elements, names, acronyms, and numbers. This multilingual repertoire reflects a community in which local identity coexists with religious discourse and contemporary popular naming practices. Bugis expressions in particular operate as ethnolinguistic identity markers. Their placement on vehicles makes local cultural values visible in a public setting.

The fish-auction context also shapes the thematic pattern. Work ethic, perseverance, livelihood, religious gratitude, kinship, and solidarity recur across the data. These themes are compatible with a coastal economic environment in

which transportation and fishing-related work are central to everyday life. The inscriptions therefore connect the personal world of vehicle owners with the collective world of the community.

At the same time, the data indicate that the meaning of a public text should not automatically be equated with actual audience interpretation. The available evidence establishes owner-intended meanings for the religious inscription and community interpretation for “Taro ada taro gau,” but there is no systematic audience-reception study for all 21 inscriptions. The study consequently treats the meanings of the remaining items as contextual interpretations grounded in textual form, cultural knowledge, and the documented research context.

Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in one location, so the findings should not be generalized to all pick-up trucks in Bone or South Sulawesi. Second, the analytic corpus contains 21 principal inscriptions and therefore represents a bounded qualitative corpus rather than a census of all vehicle writing. Third, only two interview informants are documented in the thesis, limiting the extent to which owner-intended meanings can be confirmed across the corpus. Fourth, some symbolic interpretations, especially numerical or group codes, remain tentative when no direct informant explanation is available. Fifth, the study does not systematically analyze audience reception or the full visual grammar of typography, color, and imagery. These limitations indicate directions for future research rather than weaknesses that invalidate the qualitative interpretation.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that inscriptions on pick-up trucks at the Lonrae Fish Auction function as mobile public texts and form a multilingual semiotic landscape. The 21 principal inscriptions communicate several overlapping meanings: religious and moral reminders, motivation and work ethic, personal and family identity, business and community affiliation, humor, and Bugis cultural values. The primary semiotic analysis shows how visible linguistic forms acquire signified concepts and contextual interpretations, while sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives clarify language choice, identity, and communicative function.

The linguistic characteristics are dominated by nominal, elliptical, and multi-clause forms, with Indonesian, Bugis, Arabic, mixed Indonesian-English expressions, names, acronyms, and numerical markers represented in the corpus. Pragmatically, the texts function mainly as expressive, directive, and representative acts. Importantly, the findings show that vehicle inscriptions should not be treated merely as decoration: in the Lonrae context, they make livelihood, faith, family, solidarity, and local cultural identity publicly visible.

Future studies could expand the corpus to several fish auctions or transport

communities, systematically document visual features, include more vehicle owners and audience members, and investigate how inscriptions change over time. Such research would further develop the concept of mobile semiotic landscapes in Indonesian local communities.

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