

Language Change in Bugis Society: to be polite or to be *maju*

Murni Mahmud
FBS Universitas Negeri Makassar
dwimurnye@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper deals with the possibility of language change experienced in Bugis society. I examine the future usages of Bugis and Indonesian language among Bugis society and the possibility of Bugis language of becoming an endangered language caused by the numerous usages of Indonesian language especially among the younger Bugis generations.

This paper is based on the research I conducted in 2005 as part of wider research into language use, focusing particularly on forms of expressing politeness: the first was in Awangpone, Bone and the second one is Parepare. In these two different Bugis communities, there is a different pattern of their language use. Bugis is mostly used in rural area whereas Indonesian is mostly used in urban area. It is found that although Indonesian is mostly used among younger generations, Bugis will not be endangered. Bugis language is still used by many speakers for the sake of maintaining politeness.

Introduction

The Bugis is one of the largest ethnic groups in Eastern Indonesia. Based on the 2000 Census, the Bugis accounted for 2.49 per cent of the whole population of Indonesia (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Bangkok Thailand. 2006 online) The Bugis homeland is the south-western peninsula of Celebes island—Sulawesi, however, they can be found in other areas in Indonesia such as Kalimantan, Southeast Sulawesi, Maluku, East Nusatenggara, Irian (New Guinea), Jambi (eastern Sumatra), and even in Java (especially Jakarta) (Hugo, 1982:65).

The Bugis have a rich cultural, religious, and social system. Their cultural norms are concepts of *ade'* or *pangngaderreng*, *siri' na pessé*, and the symbolism of *sarung sutra* that should be followed by the Bugis to maintain a real Bugis identity. Another important aspect is religion which is unique as it blends the Bugis cultural and religious systems. Other important facets of the Bugis social system are social status, age, and gender differences.

The Bugis belong to the great family of Austronesian peoples (Pelras, 1996:1). Their language is one of the four major language groups in South Sulawesi, the other three being Mandar, Toraja, and Makassar, which are all western Austronesian languages.

Bugis people are bilingual. They use two dominant languages. The first one is Bugis, their traditional language, and the second one is Indonesian, their national language. In both of the areas of my fieldwork, Bugis is the main local language. In addition, residents use Indonesian.

Interestingly, Indonesian used by Bugis speakers is not usually the standard formal Indonesian, identified by Sneddon (2003:121) as:

[T]he language of government and administration, and of formal situations (such as speeches, lectures and writing. It is the language of the mass media (television and radio, newspapers, and magazines) and of most novels. It is the medium of education at all levels and is expected to be mastered by educated Indonesians.

Bugis people also typically use a mixed language, either Bugis with Indonesian, in which Bugis is the main language with some additional Indonesian, or Indonesian with Bugis in which speakers mostly use Indonesian but add some Bugis expressions. In other words, the Indonesian used here is influenced by the local Bugis dialect and is specifically used in South Sulawesi. This can be easily recognized by the use of Bugis affixes such as *-ki*, *-ko*, *na-*, *-ji*, *-mi*, etc. This type of Indonesian is not only found in Bugis communities in South Sulawesi, but also in other parts of Indonesia which have Bugis residents. Other ethnic groups in South Sulawesi, such as the Makassar, Mandar, or Toraja also use this mixed-Indonesian.

Indonesian used by Bugis speakers is a type of informal Indonesian referred to as *bahasa sehari-hari* 'everyday language' (Sneddon, 2003:10). According to Quinn (2006:6), this informal Indonesian is used in conversation and is characterized by the dropping of certain affixes, especially the prefix *ber-*, and the liberal borrowing of idioms from local languages, and by mixing with words or phrases or dialects from regional languages. Errington (1998:98) refers to it as *bahasa gado-gado*, a phrase translated as 'language salad', a mixed bilingual Javanese-Indonesian whereas Buchori (1994:26) translates it as 'hybrid language', a phrase refers to the mixture of the use of Indonesian with some other terms from other foreign languages, such as Arab, English, Dutch, or German.

In the two different Bugis communities I observed, there was a different pattern of use of the Bugis and Indonesian. In Awangpone, the rural area, Bugis was preferred over Indonesian. Only in certain situations was Indonesian used. In Parepare, the urban area, Indonesian was chosen more frequently than Bugis, although the Bugis also used Bugis in certain situations. This is influenced by several factors. One of the important factors is setting. In general, Bugis is used in informal settings, such as in families or neighbourhoods, whereas Indonesian is used mostly in formal settings such as in schools or offices.

This issue may lead to the possibilities of being endangered for Bugis language, in which Bugis people prefer to use Indonesian rather than Bugis language. One of the reasons is the desire not to be left behind or the need to be *maju* 'modern'. With the growth of education in Bugis society, the need to use Indonesian is also increasing. This is particularly noticeable in Parepare, an urban area with much recent development, especially in education. In Awangpone, this need is greater in formal settings such as in schools or offices, where education has an important role.

However, some of the recorded conversations show that Bugis speakers still use Bugis language for their need to show their identity as Bugis and to maintain their politeness. These become the potential reasons for still preserving Bugis language in their daily usage and therefore, Bugis language is not endangered in the future.