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Challenges in Regional Language Pedagogy

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Bina Nusantara University, 13/11/23

Background on me

I'm a graduate student and a linguist who studies **syntax**

(the abstract structure of human language).

The central questions of syntactic research:

- What types of sentences exist in human languages?
- Are there sentence types that exist in every language?

- What are the ways that sentence structure
 - Can be different across different languages?
 - Must be the same across different languages?

Background on my work

Since 2019, I have been doing research on Bahasa Mandar

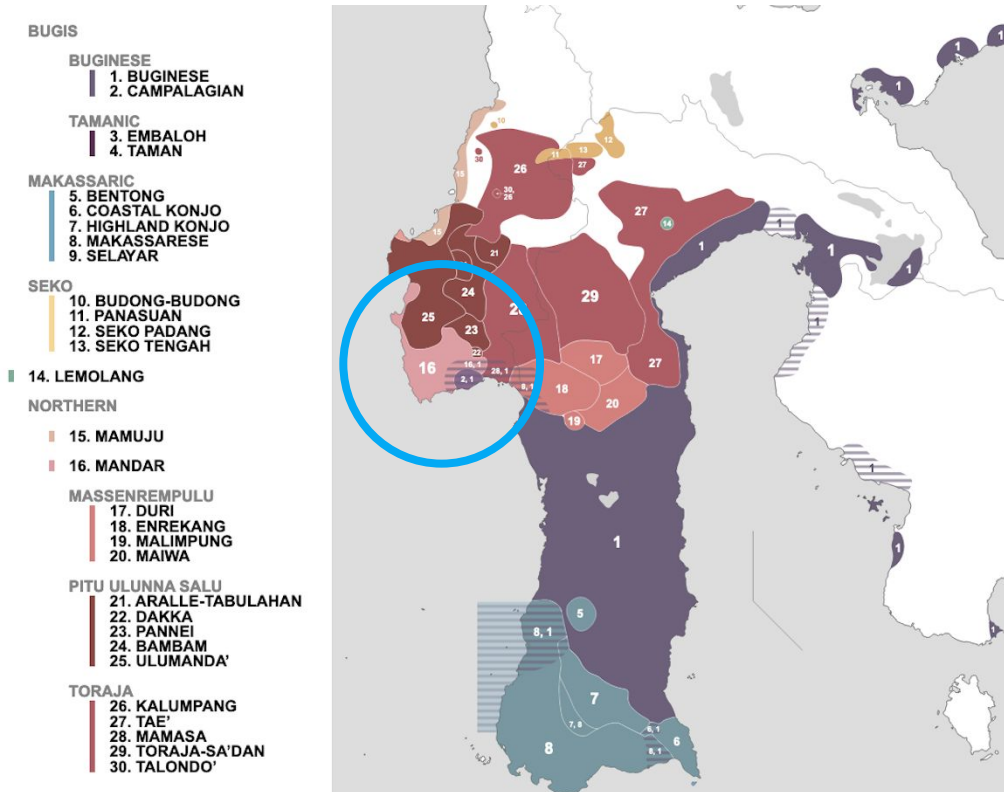
(A regional language of West Sulawesi Province).

Bahasa Mandar is a language of the South Sulawesi Subgroup.

It is related to Bahasa Bugis and Bahasa Makassar.

All of these languages are very different in the syntax
from Bahasa Indonesia and the languages of Java.

Background on my work



Today's focus:

Our goal is to investigate the syntax of Bahasa Mandar and study certain differences with Bahasa Indonesia.

We'll then connect those differences to the syntax of English.

The topics that we'll investigate:

1. The shape of the sentence
2. The agreement on the verb
3. The status of prepositions

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1.

Word Order

Sentence Shape

There are abstract grammatical similarities in word order across many of the languages of the world.

Example one: the order of “subject and verb”

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Example one: the order of “subject and verb”

- | | | |
|-----|----------------|---------------|
| (1) | Dia | pergi. |
| (2) | He | left |
| (3) | Subject | Verb |

Sentence Shape

There are abstract grammatical similarities in word order across many of the languages of the world.

Example one: (3) **Subject Verb**

Example two: the order of auxiliary verbs.

(4) Dia **harus** **tidak** pergi

(5) He **should** **not** leave

(6) Dia **harus** **bisa** pergi.

(7) He **should** **be able to** leave

Sentence Shape

There are certain patterns of word order that are the same in English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Bahasa Mandar.

(8) Dia **tidak** **pernah** pergi.

(9) Ia **ndang** **rua** lama. (Mandar)

(10) **Not** **Ever**

Sentence Shape

But there are other patterns of word order that are different.

(11) **Si Ali** pergi.

(12) **Ali** left.

(13) **Lamba** **i Ali.**

Sentence Shape

This is one difference between English and Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Mandar:

(14) Structure one: (Bahasa Indonesia)

Subject	Verb
Si Ali	pergi

(15) Structure two: (Bahasa Mandar)

Verb	Subject
Lamba	i Ali

Sentence Shape

This means that speakers of different languages will differ in their knowledge of rules that are “also true in English.”

- Native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia will already know this:

“**Sentence** = **Subject** + **Verb**”

- But native speakers of Bahasa Mandar will know this:

“**Sentence** = **Verb** + **Subject**”

- And they will have to learn a new rule to speak English.



2.

Agreement

The Shape of the Verb

There are also similarities in the shape of the verb.

- Bahasa Indonesia is famous because its verbs are extremely complex.

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(16) Forms of the verb “**angkat**”:

berangkat

mengangkat

diangkat

terangkat

mengangkat**kan...**

The Shape of the Verb

There are also similarities in the shape of the verb.

- The verbs in Bahasa Mandar are not too different.

(17) Forms of the verb “**akke**” (“angkat”)

mi akke'	(berangkat)
ma 'akke'	(mengangkat)
di akke'	(diangkat)
ti akke'	(terangkat)

...

The Shape of the Verb

But there is one thing that Indonesian verbs do not do:

- English verbs change form depending on the subject.

(18) Forms of English verbs

I **am**

You **are**

She **is**

The kids **run**

The kid **runs**

The Shape of the Verb

But there is one thing that Indonesian verbs do not do:

- English verbs change form depending on the subject.
- This does not happen in Indonesian...

(19) **saya** mengangkat
 kamu mengangkat
 dia mengangkat

The Shape of the Verb

But there is one thing that Indonesian verbs do not do:

- English verbs change form depending on the subject.
- This does not happen in Indonesian...
- But it does happen in Bahasa Mandar.

(20) uakke'	=	saya	mengangkat
muakke'	=	kamu	mengangkat
naakke'	=	dia	mengangkat

Verb Shape

This means that speakers of Mandarin might have an easier time understanding the rules of agreement in English.

- Native speakers of Bahasa Mandarin will already know this rule:

“The shape of the verb depends on the subject.”

- But native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia will not know the rule.

- So native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia will have to learn a new rule to speak English.



3.

Something Crazy

The Preposition

Many languages have “prepositions,” which are small words that come before the noun.

- Some examples from English and Indonesian:

(21) **di** meja
on the table

ke sekolah
to school

dari mana
from where?

The Preposition

English also has a rule of movement,
which shifts question words to the start of the sentence.

- The normal order of English is “**Subject Verb Object**”

(22) Ali **bought** **a car**

- When you ask questions in English, the order changes:

(23) **What** did **Ali** **buy** _____?

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The object “moves” to the front of the sentence.

The Preposition

There is an interaction between questions and prepositions.

- You can ask a question about a noun after a preposition.

(24) Suratnya dikirimkan **kepada siapa?**

- When you ask these questions in English, the question word has to move.

(25) **Who** did you send the letter **to** ____?

- ... but the preposition gets “left behind”.

The Preposition

The exact same thing happens in Bahasa Mandar.

- Bahasa Mandar has prepositions, like Bahasa Indonesia

(26) Di-kiring-ang **lao** **i** Ali.
Di-kirim-kan **kepada** **si** Ali

- If you ask a question about the noun after a preposition:
the question word has to move, and
the preposition gets “left behind.”

(24) **Inne** dikiringang **lao** ____?
Who was it sent to ____?



4.

A Summary

Similarities and Differences

Today we have studied three ways that languages can differ:

1. The basic word order: “Subject-Verb vs. Verb-Subject”
2. The shape of the verb: “Changes with the subject vs. not”
3. The syntax of questions and prepositions:
 - a. Do question words move to the front of the sentence?
 - b. Do prepositions get “left behind?”

Similarities and Differences

There are many different shapes that languages can have.

Language	Basic Order	Verb Changes?	Wh-Movement?	P-Stranding?
Indonesian	Subject - Verb	No	No	No
English	Subject - Verb	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandar	Verb - Subject	Yes	Yes	Yes
Irish	Verb - Subject	No	Yes	Yes
French	Subject - Verb	Yes	No	No

Similarities and Differences

These similarities and differences will affect the ways we learn.

- Native speakers of Mandar will have an easier time:
 - Learning how English verbs change for the subject
 - Learning how to form questions in English
 - Learning how to place prepositions in English
- Native speakers of Mandar will have a harder time:
 - Learning the basic word order of the English sentence.

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5.

The Mystery

The Goal of Syntactic Theory

Why do languages have the properties that they do?

- English and Bahasa Mandar versus Bahasa Indonesia:
 - Why do verbs change for the subject?
 - Why do question words go to the front?
 - Why do prepositions get left behind?
- Are these properties connected in any way?
- If they are: why so?

Thank you very much!

If you have any follow up questions, please contact me here:

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Thank you very much for your time and attention!