

Poetic Meter in Sulawesi

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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

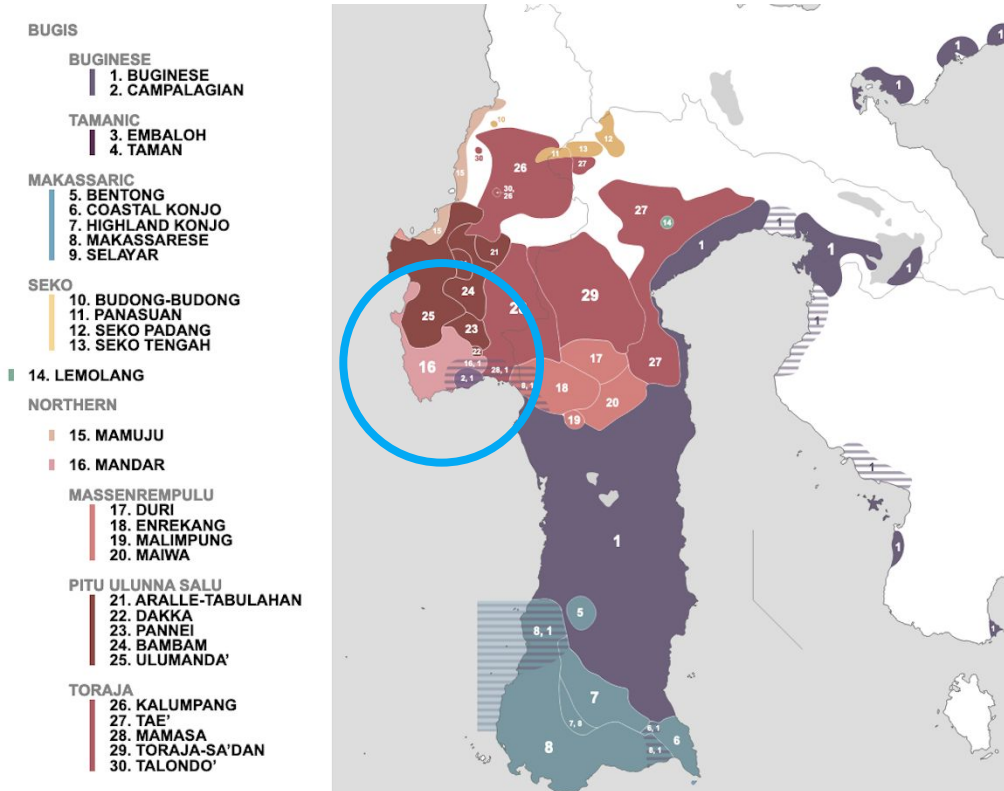
(A regional language of West Sulawesi Province).

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 learn about traditional poetry in Bahasa Mandar
And compare this with the poetry of English.

We'll then connect these patterns to the theory of phonology.

The topics that we'll investigate:

1. The distribution of stress
2. Poetry in Mandar
3. (if we have time): broader literature in Sulawesi

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1.

Word Stress

Word Stress

English is a language where there is one syllable in every word which bears a special kind of “prominence.”

- (1) abra**DA**bra
- Mediterr**A**nean
- ME**rica
- Indo**NE**sia

Word Stress

The classical term for this kind of prominence is “stress.”

In this terminology, the bold syllables are “stressed”
The unbolded syllables are “unstressed”

(2) a bra ca **DA** bra



Stressed syllable: **da**

Unstressed syllables: a, bra, ca, ... bra

Word Stress

There is a complex theory of what “stress” is, linguistically.

- Stressed syllables are usually louder.
- Stressed syllables are longer.
- Stressed syllables are “special” in English grammar.

Word Stress

Our first goal: to understand stress in English poetry.

Consider this verse from Robert Frost:

(3) Whose **woods** these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Word Stress

Here's the same verse with the stresses marked in black:

Notice the pattern:

(3) Whose **woods** these **are** I **think** I **know**.

His **house** is **in** the **village** **though**;

He **will** not **see** me **stopping** **here**

To **watch** his **woods** fill **up** with **snow**.

Word Stress

The pattern in this poetry: “unstressed-**stressed**”

(3) Whose **woods** these **are** | **think** | **know**.

His **house** is **in** the **village** **though**;

This is a form of poetry called “Iambic Tetrameter”

- Iambic: the syllables alternate “unstressed-**stressed**”
- Tetrameter: there are **four pairs** per line.

Word Stress

There are many kinds of stress patterns in English poetry.

- (1) Iambic Tetrameter: unstressed-**stressed** 4 times per line
- (2) Iambic Pentameter: unstressed-**stressed** 5 times per line

(an example from John Keats, Ode to Autumn):

To **bend** with **apples** **the** moss'd **cottage-trees**,
And **fill** all **fruit** with **ripeness** **to** the **core**;
To **swell** the **gourd**, and **plump** the **hazel shells**

Word Stress

There are many kinds of stress patterns in English poetry.

- (1) Iambic Tetrameter: unstressed-**stressed** 4 times per line
- (2) Iambic Pentameter: unstressed-**stressed** 5 times per line
- (3) Dactylic Hexameter: **stressed**-unstressed-unstressed **x6**

"**This** is the **fore**st **prime**val. The **mur**muring **pine**s and the **hem**locks
Bearded with **moss**, and in **gar**ments **green**, **in**di**stinct** in the **twi**l**ight**,
Stand like **dru**ids of **eld**, with **voic**es **sad** and **prop**hetic..."

(Longfellow; Evangeline)



2.

Local Poetry

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Mandar is a language that has a rich poetic tradition.

- The traditional form of poetry is called Kalinda'da'.
- The goal of today's lesson: to look at several poems and try to understand their metrical structure.

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Here is an example of a Kalinda'da' poem:

Aku bagaikan batang terdampar,
Yang hanyut ke negeri orang,
Bila ombak menghempas,
Daku ikut bersamanya.

*Batang rappe daq iyau,
Di banuanna tau,
Pole i lembong
Napalaiang¹ bomaq.*

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Here is an example of a Kalinda'da' poem:

(1) Batang rappe da' yau
batang terdampar saja saya

Di banuan na tau
Di negeri nya orang

Pole i lembong
Datang ia ombak

Napalaiang bo ma'
Kembalikan lagi saya

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Here is an example of a Kalinda'da' poem:

(1) **Batang rappe** da' **yau**
batang terdampar saja saya

Di **banuan** na **tau**
Di negeri nya orang

Pole i **lembong**
Datang ia ombak

Napalaiang **bo** ma'
Kembalikan lagi saya

Puisi Kalinda'da'

The shape of this poem:

(1) **Batang rappe** da' **yau** → 7 syllables
batang terdampar saja saya

Di **banuan** na **tau** → 7 syllables
Di negeri nya orang

Pole i **lembong** → 5 syllables
Datang ia ombak

N**apalaiang** **bo** ma' → 7 syllables
Kembalikan lagi saya

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Let's examine some more poems from this tradition.

Bila daku telah pergi,
Dan hari mulai mendung,
Jangan Dinda bertanya lagi,
Itulah lambang kerinduanku.

*Muaq lesseaq malai,
Anna³ maullung allo,
Damoq pettuleq,
Saliliqumo tuqu.*

Puisi Kalinda'da'

The shape of this poem:

(2) Mua' lesse a' malai
 Jika pergi saja pulang

Anna maullung allo
Dan mendung hari

Damo' pettule'
Jangan bertanya

Salili'u mo tu'u
Kerinduanku lah itu

Puisi Kalinda'da'

The shape of this poem:

(2) **Mua'** **lessa'** **malai**
Jika pergiku pulang

Anna **maullung** **allo**
Dan mendung hari

Damo' **pettule'**
Jangan bertanya

Salili'u mo **tu'u**
Kerinduanku lah itu

Puisi Kalinda'da'

The shape of this poem:

(2) **Mua'** **lessa'** **malai** → 7 syllables
Jika pergiku pulang

Anna **maullung** **allo** → 7 syllables
Dan mendung hari

Damo' **pettule'** → 5 syllables
Jangan bertanya

Salili'u mo **tu'u** → 7 syllables
Kerinduanku lah itu

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Let's try some more poems:

Kusangka bintang jatuh terkapar,
Di atas pundak si bolong;
Adikku juga,
Yang menyebarkan senyumnya.

*Usanga bittoeng raqdaq,
Di pondoqna i bolong,⁵
I kandi q pala,
Membure pecawanna.*

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Let's try some more poems:

Anda lewat tak menoleh,
Aku pun tak peduli di jendela,
Anda separuh hati,
Aku pun tidak sepenuh hati.

*Iqo landur tammenggiling,
Iau tammepatto,
Iqo sambere,
Iau takkalepu.*

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Let's try some more poems:

Seandainya 'ku seperti bambu,
Adik silakan membelahnya,
Agar adik dapat menyaksikan,
Betapa merana hatiku ini.

*Tennaq rapang daq marepeq,⁸
Bisaq tangnga maq naung,
Na muitai,
Ate u lalang mongeq.*

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Let's try some more poems:

Bungkuskan aku selemba,
Rambut keriting di dahi adik,
Akan kujadikan bekal,
Berangkat ke kampungku.

*Kaluppinganaq sallambar,
Gariting di lindomu,
Nau pibong i,
Malai di kappungu.*

Puisi Kalinda'da'

Summary of what we know so far:

1. There's a syllable-counting schema in Kalinda'da Poems
 - a. The first and second lines: 7-8 syllables
 - b. The third line: 5 syllables
 - c. The final line: 7-8 syllables again

2. Standing questions:
 - a. Is there a regular rule of how syllables alternate?
 - b. Are there generalizations about why 7 or 8 syllables?
 - c. How does this compare to poetic traditions in other parts of Sulawesi?



3.

A Summary

Similarities and Differences

Today we have learned two things about poetic traditions:

1. English poetry makes use of many different organizations of stressed and unstressed syllables
 - a. Iambic Tetrameter
 - b. Iambic Pentameter
 - c. Dactylic Hexameter
2. The same types of organization appear in the poetic traditions of the languages of Indonesia
3. The mystery: what will happen as we study these more?

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!