# Interference of the Bugis Language in the Construction of Indonesian Language Usage

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**ABSTRACT**

This study titled Bugis Language Interference in the Construction of Indonesian Language Usage. Given the importance of an effective communication process in language learning, we still often encounter language errors in Indonesian interactions between students in the academic sphere. This is caused by students' bilingual ability, which is influenced using the first language or mother tongue. This study aims to describe Bugis language interference that affects the use of Indonesian. The study method used descriptive qualitative. Data were collected through direct dialog with students with recording and note-taking techniques through observation during the learning process. The results showed that students of Indonesian Language Education Study Program in Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang tended to mix Bugis language when communicating using Indonesian, even in formal situations.

**Keywords:** Interference; Bugis Language; Indonesian Language

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country, has a wide variety of regional languages, which reflects the diversity of ethnic groups across the nation—each with their own distinct linguistic identity (Izzak, 2019). This linguistic diversity has led to most Indonesians being capable of using more than one language. The use of two or more languages is referred to as bilingualism, and the speakers are called bilinguals. Nevertheless, Indonesia only recognizes one national and unifying language, which is Bahasa Indonesia, officially declared on the Youth Pledge Day, October 28, 1928. Language is a crucial aspect of social and cultural life—not only serving as a tool for communication, but also as a marker of community identity (Sari, R. M., Ecca, S., & Hanafi, M., 2024). This aligns with the current phenomenon in Indonesia: with its rich ethnic and cultural diversity, interlingual interaction has become a common occurrence (Mahmud, N., Widodo, S. T., & Rohmadi, M., 2023). One of the regional languages with a significant influence in South Sulawesi is the Bugis language. In the field of education, especially at the university level, the use of Bahasa Indonesia as a medium of instruction is often influenced by regional languages spoken in daily interactions—particularly the Bugis language, which functions as the mother tongue.

Linguistic phenomena such as interference and integration are common within multilingual communities. These occur as a result of contact between a speaker's

first language (L1) and a second language (L2). According to Weinreich (1968), such contact may cause elements of one language to mix into another across several linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. These effects can be both positive—enhancing the speaker's linguistic competence—and negative—causing deviations from the standard norms of the second language (Chaer & Agustina, 2010).

The issue of language interference has been studied extensively. One such study by Iskandar (2023) confirms that regional languages play a major role in contributing to interference in Bahasa Indonesia usage. Interference refers to the phenomenon where the structure of one language influences the usage of another (Jendra, 1991). Language, as a system of communication, is governed by specific rules in both usage and structure. These rules consider the speaker-listener relationship, the topic, the context, and the situational setting of the conversation. As creative language users, it is important to understand and apply these rules in everyday communication (Alwasilah, 2013). In formal education contexts, it is essential to prioritize the proper and correct use of Bahasa Indonesia as an expression of national pride and cultural preservation. However, it must also be acknowledged that Indonesia is a multilingual society where regional languages still play a dominant role (Chaeril, 2012). This bilingualism often results in mixing of languages, leading to what is known as linguistic interference (Akhyaruddin, 2011). In this case, Bugis language interference in the use of Bahasa Indonesia can be observed in several aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Taufiq, A. M. & Nurali, M. J., 2021). Studying this interference is important as it provides insights into how students adapt to two different languages in academic contexts. Moreover, this phenomenon reflects the socio-cultural dynamics within the community where students are not only learning Bahasa Indonesia as a national language but also maintaining their linguistic identity through the continued use of the Bugis language.

With this in mind, the researcher is interested in conducting a study focused on a bilingual community, namely, the students of the Indonesian Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. In Sidrap, the Bugis language serves as the first language for most residents. As a result, students often make errors in their use of Bahasa Indonesia, influenced by their native language. This interference commonly occurs when speakers switch between both languages. Errors in using Bahasa Indonesia are found not only at home but also within academic environments. This is concerning, given that universities should ideally foster the correct and proper use of the national language. However, the reality is that such language errors persist across all levels of education (Higham, 2012).

Therefore, the researcher is motivated to conduct a study on the use of Bahasa Indonesia and the interference of the Bugis language in student communication, with a specific focus on students enrolled in the Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. This study aims

to observe, investigate, and collect data regarding the phenomenon of bilingual communication and linguistic interference within the academic setting.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of language interference has long been a topic of interest in sociolinguistic studies, particularly within multilingual societies such as Indonesia. According to Weinreich (1968), interference occurs when elements from one language intrude upon another due to prolonged contact between languages, especially between a speaker's first language (L1) and second language (L2). This phenomenon can manifest across various linguistic levels such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Interference is not merely a linguistic error, but a reflection of the dynamic interplay between languages within an individual's cognitive and social environment.

Indonesia, as a linguistically diverse nation, presents a fertile ground for studies on bilingualism and language interference. The use of regional languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, or Bugis alongside Bahasa Indonesia often results in interference, particularly in educational settings. According to Chaer and Agustina (2010), this contact can be both enriching and problematic. On one hand, bilingual speakers may develop a more nuanced understanding of both languages; on the other, their mastery of the national language may suffer if regional linguistic patterns are overapplied in formal contexts.

Bugis, as one of the dominant regional languages in South Sulawesi, plays a significant role in shaping language behavior in the region. The Bugis language is deeply rooted in the cultural identity of the people and often becomes the primary means of communication at home and within the community. As noted by Taufiq and Nurali (2021), the linguistic structure of Bugis especially its phonological and syntactic characteristics frequently interferes with students' ability to express themselves in standard Bahasa Indonesia, particularly in academic writing and formal speaking.

Bilingualism itself is not inherently detrimental; rather, the cognitive ability to switch between two languages can enhance mental flexibility and language awareness. However, as Jendra (1991) points out, without sufficient language control, bilinguals may unintentionally transfer rules from L1 to L2, causing language interference. In the context of students, this often results in structural errors, pronunciation deviations, and lexical borrowing from their mother tongue, all of which may affect their academic performance and communicative clarity in Bahasa Indonesia.

Previous research has highlighted the need for greater linguistic awareness and targeted interventions in educational settings. Studies such as Iskandar (2023) and Akhyaruddin (2011) emphasize the importance of recognizing regional language influence and addressing it through structured language education. These findings

suggest that educators should not merely enforce standard language rules but also understand the linguistic backgrounds of their students to design more inclusive and effective learning strategies. the study of Bugis language interference in Bahasa Indonesia usage is not only relevant to linguistic theory but also to practical pedagogical concerns. It reflects broader issues of language identity, language policy, and education in multilingual contexts. Understanding how and why interference occurs can help educators, linguists, and policymakers formulate more responsive approaches to language teaching and learning, particularly in regions with strong bilingual traditions.

## METHOD

### Design and Sample

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, aiming to describe and analyze the forms of Bugis language interference in the spoken discourse of students. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to explore naturally occurring speech in its social context and to examine language phenomena in depth without manipulation of variables. The source of data in this study is spoken utterances produced by students during informal and semi-formal interactions on campus. The data units include full sentences, phrases, or clauses that exhibit signs of interference. The selected informants are bilingual speakers, with Bugis as their first language (L1) and Bahasa Indonesia as their second language (L2), making them a suitable population for this type of linguistic study.

### Instrument and Procedures

The data collection technique used in this research is the observational method, specifically implemented through the recording technique (teknik rekam). The researcher recorded conversations in which students of the Indonesian Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang were actively speaking. The recordings were made using a mobile phone device to capture spontaneous and natural utterances. The researcher did not participate in the conversations, maintaining an objective observational stance. Once the recordings were collected, the researcher applied the note-taking technique (teknik catat) to transcribe and classify the data according to relevant categories of language interference. The transcription process involved listening repeatedly to the recorded data, identifying utterances that reflect interference features such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical elements influenced by the Bugis language.

### Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the researcher used the flow model of analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman and also referred to by Arikunto (1993). This model consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The process is interactive and ongoing throughout the research period. This model helps the researcher to systematically identify patterns and draw valid conclusions based on observed language use. Finally, after completing the analysis, the researcher described the syntactic forms of Bugis language interference found in students' spoken Bahasa Indonesia. The results are expected to provide a deeper understanding of how local languages influence national language usage, particularly in educational contexts, and to offer insights for developing more responsive language education strategies in bilingual regions.

## RESULT AND DISUSSION

This study aimed to identify and classify the types of Bugis language interference in the spoken discourse of students in the Indonesian Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The data collected through observation and recording revealed several patterns of interference at the phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels.

The phonological interference found in students' utterances involved phoneme substitution, reduction, and addition. A frequent pattern was the reduction of the /r/ phoneme in the middle of words, such as "*darah*" being pronounced as "*dara,*" and "*tanah*" as "*tana*" This reflects a common tendency among Bugis speakers to simplify consonant clusters and modify sounds according to their native phonological system. Another observed pattern was the addition of the /ng/ phoneme at the end of words, such as "*makan*" becoming "*makang*" and "*depan*" becoming "*depang*" This is a direct influence of the Bugis language, in which final nasals are frequently pronounced with a velar nasal sound.

Morphological interference was also apparent, particularly in the form of clitic usage. Students frequently used Bugis-origin clitics such as *-mi, -pi, -ji, -ta, -na*, and *-ki* in their Indonesian utterances. Although these clitics do not exist in standard Indonesian grammar, students applied them naturally in their speech, influenced by habits from their mother tongue. For example, students would say "*pergiki*" to mean "kita pergi" or "*kamu pergi*" combining the Indonesian verb with the Bugis clitic -*ki*. In another case, students added -*ta* to express possession, such as "*bukuta*" (our book), which would be "*buku kita*" in standard Indonesian. These clitic forms were used to express politeness, ownership, or emphasis functions originally derived from Bugis grammar.

The syntactic level also exhibited interference. Students were found to construct sentences following Bugis syntactic rules rather than standard Indonesian sentence structures. For instance, word order was sometimes reversed or overly simplified, resulting in non-standard but understandable sentences. Such syntactic interference is most prominent in informal communication. However, it was also found in semi-formal classroom discourse, where students used Bugis-influenced sentence structures in presentations and discussions. This shows the pervasive nature of L1 influence even in academic contexts.

The data also indicate that most students are aware that the way they speak deviates from standard Indonesian, but they continue using these forms due to social acceptability and ease of expression. This supports the view that interference is not merely unconscious error but may also be shaped by cultural and pragmatic considerations.

*Table 1. Types of Bugis Language Interference in Student Discourse*

| No | Type of Interference | Form/Example | Explanation |
|----|---------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Phonological | "darah" → "dara"; "makan" → "makang" | Omission and addition of phonemes based on L1 habits |
| 2 | Morphological (Clitic) | "pergiki", "bukuta", "makanko" | Addition of Bugis clitics to Indonesian root words |
| 3 | Possessive Clitic | "-ta", "-na" | Used to indicate ownership and politeness |
| 4 | Syntactic | Word order changes, sentence structure | Bugis sentence logic applied to Indonesian sentences |

The findings of this research confirm that Bugis language interference significantly affects students' spoken Bahasa Indonesia, particularly at the phonological and morphological levels. These interferences align with the theory of bilingual language contact as described by Weinreich (1968), where L1 structures influence the production of L2 through lexical, phonological, and syntactic transfers. At the phonological level, the tendency to reduce, replace, or add phonemes is a clear sign of negative transfer from L1. These deviations may not hinder communication in informal contexts, but they may be considered non-standard in formal settings. Such features indicate that Bugis phonology remains dominant in students' subconscious linguistic framework, even when using Bahasa Indonesia.

Morphological interference, especially the use of clitics, demonstrates how students blend their native language rules into their second language. Although these forms are not part of standard Indonesian grammar, their continued use indicates the functional utility of such forms for expressing politeness, ownership, or emphasis— cultural values highly regarded in Bugis society. The presence of syntactic interference reveals deeper challenges in mastering the structural aspects of Bahasa Indonesia. Students tend to follow familiar patterns from their mother tongue, especially when constructing complex sentences or organizing clauses. This syntactic transfer supports the claim that bilingual speakers rely heavily on L1 structures when L2 proficiency is still developing.

Another important implication is the sociolinguistic acceptance of these interference patterns. The use of Bugis clitics and sentence structures is not only tolerated but often expected within the local communication context. This shows

that language use is strongly shaped by social norms, identity, and local cultural practices. Educationally, these findings underscore the importance of integrating local language awareness into language instruction. Rather than merely correcting students' "errors," language educators should understand the roots of interference and design strategies that acknowledge students' linguistic backgrounds while guiding them toward appropriate usage in formal settings. In conclusion, Bugis language interference in Bahasa Indonesia is not simply a reflection of linguistic deficiency but a complex phenomenon involving identity, culture, and bilingual processing. This understanding can help inform both linguistic theory and practical language teaching in multicultural and multilingual societies.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that there is a significant tendency among students of the Indonesian Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang to experience Bugis language interference when engaging in oral communication using Bahasa Indonesia. This linguistic interference was observed not only in informal interactions but also in formal academic settings. The phenomenon reflects a divergence from the standardized norms of Bahasa Indonesia, particularly influenced by the students' habitual use of their first language Bugis. The influence of the Bugis language was evident across various linguistic domains, including phonology, morphology, and syntax. There is a clear pattern of errors in the students' spoken Indonesian, indicating a need for greater attention from educators regarding language use. One of the primary causes of this interference is the dominant role of local language habits in daily communication. As a result, when students attempt to use Indonesian, they are often unaware of the deviations from standard norms. Therefore, the role of Indonesian language teachers becomes critical in guiding and correcting students' language use to align with proper linguistic standards, particularly in formal and academic contexts.

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