

The Preservation of Bugis Language in Sinjai City: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Bugis language, belonging to the Austronesian family, serves as a crucial element of cultural identity and heritage for the Bugis ethnic group in Indonesia, particularly in Sinjai City. However, like many indigenous languages, Bugis faces challenges in preservation due to socio-cultural factors. This research delves into preservation efforts and sociolinguistic dynamics surrounding the Bugis language since 2000, aiming to provide insights for stakeholders. Drawing on qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations, this study aims to explore the motivations driving preservation efforts, investigate the role of education, examine socio-cultural factors influencing language use, and assess the effectiveness of existing preservation strategies. Findings reveal that cultural identity maintenance, intergenerational transmission, and the desire to safeguard linguistic diversity are primary motivations. Education emerges as pivotal, though hindered by the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and limited institutional support. Socio-cultural factors like urbanization, migration, media influence, and linguistic stigma further challenge preservation. Strengths of current strategies include community engagement and cultural affirmation, while limitations include lack of support and linguistic stigma. Recommendations for augmenting preservation efforts include advocating for policy reforms, community empowerment, digital resources, and promoting multilingualism. Ultimately, preserving the Bugis language entails a holistic approach that honors cultural diversity and empowers the Bugis community.

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1. Introduction

The Bugis ethnic group in Indonesia primarily speaks the Bugis language and is a member of the Austronesian language family. With its unique phonology, morphology, and syntax, the Bugis language represents not only a means of communication but also a repository of cultural identity and heritage for its speakers (Ammarell, 1999; Blust, 2013). However, like many indigenous languages worldwide, Bugis faces significant challenges in preservation and vitality (Amir, 2012; Pelras, 1996; Tahir et al., 2018).

Sinjai City, situated in the South Sulawesi province of Indonesia, is home to a substantial Bugis population. Historically, the Bugis people have been known for their maritime prowess and extensive trading networks, facilitating the spread of the Bugis language and culture across the Indonesian archipelago (Ammarell, 1999; Pelras, 1996). Despite this historical prominence, the Bugis language including in the context of Sinjai City is now confronted with various sociolinguistic factors threatening its survival (Amir, 2012; Bachriani et al., 2018; Andini et al., 2021).

Conducting a linguistic landscape analysis of public spaces in Sinjai City would offer valuable insights into the visibility and status of Bugis language in the urban environment. By examining signage, advertisements, and public signage, researchers can assess the presence of Bugis language alongside Indonesian and other languages, shedding light on its sociolinguistic significance and potential implications for language revitalization efforts.

This paper aims to delve into the preservation efforts and sociolinguistic dynamics surrounding the Bugis language, specifically in Sinjai City, which has spanned over two decades since 2000. By examining these dynamics, stakeholders, including community members, educators, policymakers, and linguists, can gain valuable insights to

develop effective strategies to maintain the linguistic and cultural richness of the Bugis community. Therefore, the following are the research objectives of the study: 1) to explore the motivations driving efforts to preserve the Bugis language in Sinjai City; 2) to investigate the role of education in supporting Bugis language revitalization initiatives; 3) to examine socio-cultural factors influencing Bugis language use and maintenance in Sinjai City; and 4) to assess the effectiveness of existing preservation strategies and identify areas for improvement. Therefore, this research will use qualitative methods to find out the answer to these complex social phenomena and understand the subjective experiences proposed in the objectives. The methodology involves explicitly semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations to gather rich and detailed data from the participants. The findings are subsequently examined and elucidated appropriately.

Investigating the impact of language policies at local, regional, and national levels on the preservation of Bugis language in Sinjai City would be valuable. This research could explore the effectiveness of existing language policies, identify gaps or barriers hindering language revitalization efforts, and propose recommendations for policy reform to better support minority language maintenance.

1.1. Literature Review

Efforts to preserve endangered languages often hinge upon the recognition of language as a repository of cultural identity and heritage (Blust, 2013), and so does the Bugis case as Pelras (1966) described in the preceding section of the study that the Bugis people have been well known in maritime trade and their significant linguistic and cultural contributions across the Indonesian archipelago. However, rapid urbanization, migration, and the influence of mainstream media have contributed to language shift phenomena, wherein Bugis speakers increasingly adopt Indonesian, the national lingua franca (Appadurai, 1996; Budhi, 2015; Darwis & Kamsinah, 2019; Rahman et al., 2022).

Scholars such as Ammarell (1999; 2002), and (Budhi, 2015) studied migration, adaptation, and identity of the Bugis, claiming that the indigenous language's preservation attempts are significantly influenced by socio-cultural variables. Ammarell (2002) further examined the negative perception linked to using native languages in official environments, which worsens the decline of Indigenous language proficiency. Notwithstanding these difficulties, Gashilova (2015) claimed that community-driven endeavors to integrate the indigenous language into the school curriculum have a high possibility of fostering a sense of pride in the Indigenous language's history and providing younger generations with vital linguistic abilities for community interaction.

Education emerges as a crucial domain for language preservation, yet the Indonesian education system predominantly emphasizes Bahasa Indonesia, relegating indigenous languages like Bugis to peripheral status (Paauw, 2009). To address this, stakeholders advocate for policy reforms and increased institutional support for indigenous language education (Alwi & Sugono, 2009 cited in Arka, 2013; Sukmawaty et al., 2022). However, challenges persist, including limited resources and linguistic stigma, necessitating a holistic approach to language revitalization.

2. Methodology

A qualitative approach is chosen to delve into the nuanced aspects of Bugis language preservation due to its emphasis on understanding the intricacies, complexities, and subjective experiences associated with language preservation efforts. Qualitative research aims to understand complex social phenomena, behaviors, and experiences by exploring them in-depth. It seeks to uncover meanings, motivations, and patterns that may not be apparent through quantitative approaches.

Qualitative research allows researchers to explore Bugis language preservation efforts in-depth, uncovering the underlying motivations, challenges, and strategies employed by individuals and communities. By using methods such as semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations, researchers can engage with participants directly, gaining insights into their lived experiences and perspectives regarding language preservation.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Preservation Efforts and Motivations

Efforts to preserve the Bugis language in Sinjai City are driven by a multitude of motivations deeply intertwined with cultural identity maintenance, intergenerational transmission, and the preservation of linguistic diversity. These motivations are rooted in the recognition of language as a fundamental component of identity and cultural heritage.

Cultural identity maintenance emerges as a primary motivation for preserving the Bugis language in Sinjai City. The Bugis community views their language as an integral aspect of their cultural identity, serving as a marker of their distinct heritage and historical legacy. Interviews conducted within the Bugis community underscore the significance of language in shaping individual and collective identities. Elder members of the community express apprehension over the declining use of Bugis among the younger generation, fearing the erosion of cultural traditions and values associated with the language. One participant poignantly articulated this concern, stating, "Our language is our identity. If we lose it, we lose a part of ourselves." This sentiment resonates with the broader discourse on language preservation, wherein language is regarded not merely as a medium of communication but as a repository of cultural identity and heritage (Fishman, 1991).

Intergenerational transmission serves as another compelling motivation for preserving the Bugis language in Sinjai City. The transmission of language from older to younger generations is pivotal for the continuity of cultural knowledge, traditions, and values embedded within the Bugis linguistic repertoire. Elders within the Bugis community play a crucial role as custodians of linguistic heritage, imparting language skills and cultural knowledge to the next generation. However, the erosion of intergenerational transmission pathways, exacerbated by societal changes and shifting language preferences, poses a significant threat to the vitality of the Bugis language. Therefore, efforts to preserve Bugis involve initiatives aimed at revitalizing intergenerational language use and fostering linguistic continuity within families and communities.

Moreover, the desire to safeguard linguistic diversity drives preservation efforts for the Bugis language in Sinjai City. As a minority language within the broader linguistic landscape of Indonesia, Bugis faces marginalization and linguistic hegemony from dominant languages such as Bahasa Indonesia. The preservation of Bugis is not merely a matter of linguistic survival but also a commitment to promoting linguistic pluralism and cultural equity. Language preservation advocates recognize the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity in enriching human experience, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and preserving the collective wisdom embedded within diverse linguistic traditions (Crystal, 2000; Rahman & Weda, 2019).

3.2. Role of Education

Education plays a pivotal role in the effort for the preservation of the Bugis language in Sinjai City, facilitating linguistic empowerment, cultural affirmation, and intergenerational transmission. Nevertheless, the current Indonesian educational system presents considerable obstacles to the conservation of indigenous languages such as Bugis, given its preponderance of focus on the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, which disregards the significance of minority languages.

The dominance of Bahasa Indonesia in formal education marginalizes indigenous languages, hindering their integration into school curricula and diminishing opportunities for students to develop proficiency in their native languages. Despite these systemic barriers, community-led initiatives have emerged to address the lacuna in indigenous language education. These initiatives advocate for the inclusion of Bugis language instruction within school curricula even just in elementary and junior-high level, thereby affirming the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Bugis community.

By incorporating Bugis language instruction into school curricula, educational initiatives seek to achieve multiple objectives. Firstly, they aim to cultivate a sense of pride and appreciation for the Bugis heritage among younger generations. Exposure to Bugis language and culture within educational settings in early age fosters a positive cultural identity, instilling a sense of belonging and self-worth among Bugis youth. Additionally, by equipping students with linguistic skills essential for communication within the community, these initiatives contribute to the maintenance and revitalization of the Bugis language.

Smith (2018) has underscored the crucial significance of community-led educational initiatives in rejuvenating endangered languages, emphasizing their ability to offer opportunities for language acquisition and intergenerational transfer. Within the framework of Sinjai City, educational programs conducted by the community not only facilitate the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also function as means to foster cultural continuity and resilience among the youth of the Bugis community. These programs promote the transfer of traditional knowledge, values, and practices from older generations to younger ones by involving students in immersive language learning experiences that are deeply connected to their cultural background.

3.3. Socio-Cultural Factors

The preservation efforts and challenges faced by the Bugis language in Sinjai City are significantly influenced by socio-cultural variables. According to Appadurai (1996), the phenomenon of language shift is influenced by growing urbanization, migratory patterns, and the widespread influence of mainstream media. These factors have a significant impact on the viability of Bugis, as speakers are rapidly adopting Indonesian, which serves as the national *lingua franca*.

Rapid urbanization in Sinjai City, as in many parts of Indonesia, has led to significant socio-economic changes, altering traditional patterns of language use and transmission within the Bugis community. Urban areas often serve as melting pots of linguistic diversity, where various languages and dialects converge and interact in various settings such as cafés, restaurants, shops, streets, construction sites, and workplaces (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). However, the linguistic landscape of urban centers tends to prioritize dominant languages such as Indonesian for socio-economic mobility and integration (Appadurai, 1996). Consequently, Bugis speakers, particularly younger generations, may perceive Indonesian as a more practical and prestigious language, leading to a gradual decline in the use of Bugis in everyday interactions.

Migration patterns also contribute to the language shift dynamics observed in Sinjai City. Economic opportunities, educational pursuits, and familial ties frequently prompt individuals to migrate from rural to urban areas or from one region to another within Indonesia. As Bugis speakers relocate to urban centers like Sinjai City, they encounter linguistic and cultural pluralism, which may influence their language choices and affiliations. Moreover, internal migration within Indonesia facilitates linguistic contact and intermixing, potentially diluting the distinct linguistic boundaries between Bugis and other languages spoken in Sinjai City.

The influence of mainstream media further exacerbates the challenges faced by the Bugis language in Sinjai City. Television, social media, and other online platforms predominantly utilize Indonesian as the medium of communication, thereby amplifying its status as the dominant language of public discourse and media consumption. Exposure to Indonesian media content not only reinforces the perceived prestige and utility of Indonesian but also marginalizes indigenous languages like Bugis by relegating them to peripheral roles in the public sphere (Kachru, 1985). This is in line with the claim by Ting & Ling (2013) where the ethnic language domains are seeing decreasing in size due to the increasing prevalence of standard language in Malay.

Moreover, the stigma associated with speaking indigenous languages in formal settings exacerbates language erosion among Bugis speakers in Sinjai City. Participants in the study expressed reluctance to use Bugis in educational and professional contexts, citing concerns about negative perceptions and social repercussions. This stigma reflects broader societal attitudes towards non-standard varieties and indigenous languages, which are often perceived as markers of ruralness, backwardness, or lack of education (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Consequently, Bugis speakers may internalize these negative perceptions, opting to use Indonesian as a means of linguistic accommodation and social advancement.

3.4. Strengths and Limitations of Current Preservation Strategies

The preservation strategies for the Bugis language in Sinjai City demonstrate several commendable strengths, yet they are also accompanied by notable limitations, necessitating concerted efforts for long-term sustainability. Among the strengths, community engagement emerges as a cornerstone, with the active involvement of the Bugis community fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment in language revitalization endeavors (Smith, 2018). Additionally, preservation strategies effectively affirm the cultural significance of the Bugis language, instilling pride and appreciation for Bugis heritage, particularly among younger generations, through integration into school curricula (Paauw, 2009). Despite systemic challenges, initiatives to incorporate Bugis language instruction into formal education settings signify progress towards legitimizing its use in domains beyond informal communication, thereby enhancing its visibility and prestige. However, these strategies encounter significant limitations, notably the lack of institutional support and resources, which hampers their effectiveness and scalability. Furthermore, socio-economic factors such as migration and urbanization influence language preferences, potentially leading to language shift phenomena away from Bugis (Appadurai, 1996). Additionally, linguistic stigma exacerbates language erosion as Bugis speakers may perceive their language as inferior or less prestigious compared to Indonesian, necessitating efforts to challenge negative perceptions and promote linguistic diversity (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994).

To ensure the enduring vitality of the Bugis language in Sinjai city, several measures can be undertaken to augment current preservation strategies. Firstly, advocating for increased institutional support through policy reforms and

resource allocation for indigenous language education is imperative (Arka, 2013). Empowering the Bugis community to take ownership of preservation efforts is crucial and can be achieved through capacity-building initiatives and community-led projects (Smith, 2018). Leveraging digital resources to create accessible language learning platforms can enhance accessibility to Bugis language materials, catering to both formal and informal learners. Moreover, promoting multilingualism and fostering positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity can create inclusive language policies, validating the indigenous language use (like Bugis) in diverse communicative contexts (Arka, 2013). By addressing these challenges and implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can fortify current preservation strategies, ensuring the sustained vibrancy of the Bugis language in Sinjai city.

4. Conclusion

The preservation of the Bugis language in Sinjai City is confronted with multifaceted challenges rooted in socio-cultural dynamics. Rapid urbanization, migration patterns, the pervasive influence of mainstream media, and linguistic stigma collectively shape the linguistic landscape and impact the vitality of Bugis as speakers increasingly adopt Indonesian, the national lingua franca. Despite these challenges, the preservation efforts driven by motivations of cultural identity maintenance, intergenerational transmission, and the desire to safeguard linguistic diversity underscore the resilience and determination of the Bugis community in Sinjai City.

Efforts to preserve the Bugis language necessitate a holistic approach that addresses the complex interplay of socio-cultural factors. Community-led initiatives, educational programs, and digital resources play pivotal roles in revitalizing Bugis language and culture, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among younger generations. Moreover, interventions aimed at challenging linguistic stigma and promoting multilingualism are essential for creating inclusive spaces where Bugis language speakers feel empowered to use their language in various domains of life.

By understanding and addressing these socio-cultural dynamics, stakeholders can develop effective strategies to ensure the continued vitality and resilience of the Bugis language in Sinjai City. Preserving Bugis language is not merely a matter of linguistic survival but a commitment to upholding cultural diversity, promoting social justice, and honoring the rich heritage and traditions embodied in the Bugis linguistic repertoire. Ultimately, the preservation of Bugis language in Sinjai City represents a collective endeavor to cherish and celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity that enriches the fabric of Indonesian society.

All in all, sustaining Bugis language and culture in Sinjai City requires collaborative efforts that recognize the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity and prioritize the voices and aspirations of the Bugis community. By embracing linguistic pluralism and fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect, Sinjai City can serve as a beacon of cultural heritage preservation, inspiring similar endeavors across Indonesia and beyond.

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