

# **Reinterpretation of a Morpho-syntactic System as a Result of Language Contact and Language Attrition: An Example from an Endangered Language in Indonesia**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This presentation aims to give an example of a radical morpho-syntactic change which is often found when a language undergoes endangerment as a result of language contact. There are many endangered languages which are spoken by small populations in Indonesia. Bantik, which has less than 3000 fluent speakers all of whom are in their fifties and older, is one of those languages spoken in North Sulawesi. Second- language speakers of Bantik, who are in their thirties and forties, show a language structure which is distinct from the traditional one in many respects. I will focus in this paper on generational differences in morpho-syntax.

Verbs in the Bantik language, which belongs to the Philippine group of Western Malayo-Polynesian languages, has three distinct voice forms, and traditional speakers of Bantik retain a three-way voice alternation system of one active voice and two undergoer voices. Verbs are categorized into three groups: those which have only active voice (intransitive), those which have one active voice and one undergoer voice (mono-transitive), and those which have all three voices (ditransitive). Younger speakers, however, lose the distinction between the two undergoer voices, and tend to confuse them. They know that there are three morphologically different voice forms but lack the knowledge of which verb belongs to which group. As a result, they quite often create verb forms which do not exist in the Bantik lexicon, and exhibit a morpho-syntactic paradigm distinct from the traditional one. This confusion is assumed to be caused by language contact with Indonesian, the national language, which has only a two-way voice alternation.