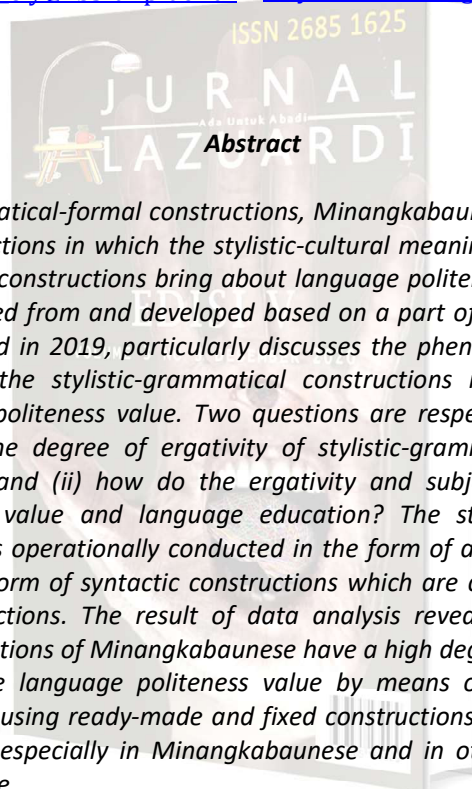# ERGATIVITY AND SUBJECT DELETION IN STYLISTIC-GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MINANGKABAUNESE:
Contributing Ideas for Language Politeness and Language Education

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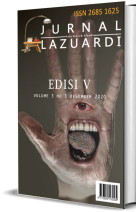
Abstract

In addition to grammatical-formal constructions, Minangkabaunese has another type of grammatical constructions in which the stylistic-cultural meanings are capsulated. Such stylistic-grammatical constructions bring about language politeness values, as well. This paper, which is derived from and developed based on a part of the result of a research conducted in 2017and in 2019, particularly discusses the phenomena of ergativity and subject deletion of the stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese in conveying language politeness value. Two questions are respectively answered in this paper: (i) what is the degree of ergativity of stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese?; and (ii) how do the ergativity and subject deletion convey the language politeness value and language education? The studies were descriptive-qualitative researches operationally conducted in the form of a field linguistic research. The data are in the form of syntactic constructions which are categorized into stylistic-grammatical constructions. The result of data analysis reveals that: (i) the stylistic-grammatical constructions of Minangkabaunese have a high degree of ergativity; and (ii) they bring about the language politeness value by means of ergative construction, subject deletion, and using ready-made and fixed constructions. These are all useful for language education, especially in Minangkabaunese and in other languages with the same or similar culture.

Keywords: *Minangkabaunese, stylistic-grammatical construction, ergativity, subject deletion, politeness.*

INTRODUCTION

The idea that human language is systematically composed of grammatical and socio-cultural features that systematically interact in a complex system is not questioned anymore. In term of language forms, linguists, especially grammarians (see Dixon, 2010:14), argue that human languages differ in the nature and size of the grammatical categories which they include. It is almost as if there was a bag that contained every known grammatical category, in varying sizes, with each individual language putting in its hand,

blindfold, and picking out as many items as it thinks its grammar can handle. The language forms in which language and communicative meanings are encapsulated are the bases for linguistic analyses. It can be also simply stated that such grammatical forms are referred to as the grammatical constructions of a language.

The grammatical constructions in the phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels are the language forms by which language meanings are conveyed. Therefore, the studies on the surface structure of the grammatical constructions should be the first ones to do in order to explore and to describe the meanings, functions, and values of the language. According to Fillmore (see Lambrecht, 1996:34), the grammatical construction as the fundamental unit of grammar is "any syntactic pattern which is assigned one or more conventional functions in a language, together with whatever is linguistically conventionalized about its contribution to the meaning or the use of structures containing it". In the view of Construction Grammar, complex grammatical constructions are not viewed as being derived from more general or simpler structures via generative rules of the type familiar from phrase structure grammars, even though in some cases the principles for the combination of smaller constructions into more complex ones may be fairly general. Rather they are seen as ready-made templates used as such by the speakers of a language. From a specific view-point, the grammatical constructions, particularly in morpho-syntactic level, are the ready-made templates used by speakers to communicate underlying-grammatical meanings.
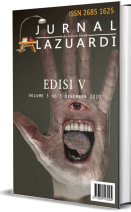
The grammatical constructions so-called actives, passives, middles, ergatives, and topicalization are the formal-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese (see Jufrizal et.al., 2015; Jufrizal et.al., 2016). In addition to the formal-grammatical constructions, Minangkabaunese has "extra-grammatical" constructions which are also productively used in daily communication. The native speakers of the local language are cognitively and culturally aware of the constructions. The followings are examples of extra-grammatical constructions in the local language (see Jufrizal, 2017).

Ma- uleh indak ma- ngasan;
ACT-join NEG ACT-have print
'(If you) joint (separated things) (it should) not have a print'

Mam-buua indak mam-buku.
ACT-knot NEG ACT- swell
'(If you) knot (separated things) (it should) not swell'

Arjuna Minang urang bari ba- namo.
a name (TOP) people give ERG-name
'People name it Arjuna Minang'

Nan bana kato saiyo; nan rajo kato mupakaik.
REL right word agreement REL king word compromised

'The right one is an agreement; the king is a compromised declaration'

Panjang ba- punta; singkek ba-   uleh.
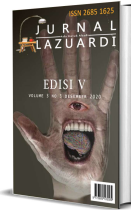long   ERG-spin;   short   ERG-prolong
'(If it is) long (it should) be spun; (If it is) short (it should) be prolonged'

Such extra-grammatical constructions are more stylistic rather than those of formal-grammatical ones. Thus, the extra-grammatical constructions are simply called stylistic-grammatical constructions, the name of such type of construction used in this paper. Such types of constructions are possibly labeled with "grammatical" as they relatively have the same "template" of language constructions at the syntactic level.

The stylistic-grammatical construction is actually the "deviation" of formal-grammatical construction; it is the extra and marginal structural type, which flourishes mainly in special registers. They are liable to show varying degrees of conventionalization, pattern irregularities, and sometimes individual idiosyncrasies. The mediopassive constructions are famous examples in English (see Hundt, 2007:3) in the case of marginal structure or constructions. The forms and grammatical meanings brought by grammatical constructions are mostly influenced by stylistic-cultural features of one certain speech community "capsulated" in the form of stylistic-grammatical constructions. The constructions may lead speakers to have stylistic-cultural ways of communication which are also necessary and common in daily communication. It theoretically relates to the linguistic relativity theory and Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see Saeed, 2016; Carston in Riemer, 2016; Gladkova in Sharifian (ed.), 2015:33).

The basic concept of stylistic-grammatical construction used in this paper is mainly derived from the interrelationship of formal-grammar and stylistics in analyzing linguistic features of texts. According to Simpson (2004), talking about the grammar of a language means talking of a hugely complex set of interlocking categories, units, and structures: in effect, the rules of that language. Stylistics, on another side, believes that language does not only consist of rule-governing constructions; there are a lot of linguistic expressions used by speakers (and also writers) that do not follow all formal-rules in facts. Such linguistic expressions are in stylistic constructions and they are all used culturally and communicatively in the particular speech community. Interestingly, the meanings and uses of the constructions are intuitively understood by speakers. The stylistic constructions are the additional constructions to formal-grammatical ones; they are stylistic and marginal ones.

Even though there have been some typological studies on the formal-grammatical constructions of Minangkabaunese, the studies on stylistic-grammatical constructions in this local language based on typological theories are still relatively limited. Many researchers study the stylistic-grammatical constructions through the framework of Stylistics, Discourse Analysis, or Pragmatics. Thus, the results of studies are more on macro-linguistic views which relate to factors and matters outside of language. To have a basic-linguistic
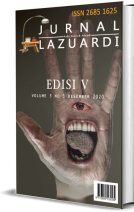
explanation and specific information about the stylistic-grammatical, micro-linguistic view is essentially needed. The result of the analysis then may be extended to broader uses of language and language education. For these reasons, the studies on the phenomena of stylistic-grammatical and their relation to other aspects outside language, such as language education, are linguistically needed.

The stylistic-grammatical constructions bring about language politeness values used by the native speakers in various ways and language events. The language politeness values should be introduced and explained to language learners, particularly for those of advanced learners of the second and foreign language. Therefore, the studies on grammatical constructions packaging "values of language politeness" may contribute to language education programs and the processes of language teaching and learning. On another side, it is claimed as well that linguistic studies provide language data descriptively and language teaching and/or language education use such descriptive data to be formulated as the teaching-learning materials in pedagogical grammar. The pedagogical grammar, the type of grammar in between descriptive and prescriptive grammar, is practically used in language education, especially for the second and foreign language (see Stern, 1994; Westney in Odlin (ed.), 1994; Swan in Bygate et.al. (eds.), 1994). The studies on topological properties of stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese may contribute to the phenomena of language politeness values and language education, as well.

This paper, which is derived from and further developed based on a part of the results of a research conducted in 2017 and supported by another related study conducted in 2019, discusses the properties of ergativity and subject deletion of stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese and how the phenomena relate to language politeness and language education. Based on the available data and information collected, it is assumed that most of the stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese are in ergative-absolutive ones and the grammatical subjects are deleted. In relation to this assumption, there are two questions respectively answered in this paper, namely: (i) what is the degree of ergativity of stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese? ; and (ii) how do the ergativity and subject deletion convey the language politeness values and language education? The analysis and discussion dealing with the degree of ergativity and subject deletion in stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese are linguistically significant in order to discover and to explain the typological-grammatical properties of the stylistic constructions and their contribution to language education, as well. The analysis and discussion contribute particular linguistic data and information for further studies on the interrelationship between language forms, meanings, uses, and values.

METHODS

This study was descriptive-qualitative research in linguistics conducted in 2017 and continued to another study in 2019. The studies were operationally conducted in the form of field research and supported by a library study. These two types of research were operationally executed in West-Sumatera where the native speakers of Minangkabaunese
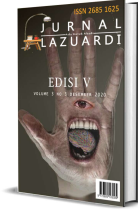
originally and socially live. The data were in the form of clause-syntactical constructions which were categorized as those of stylistic-grammatical constructions. Practically, the data were collected by means of participant observation, depth-interview, administrating questionnaires, and quoting data from written publications. The instruments used were field-notes, observation sheets, recorders, and questionnaire sheets. In such ways, the sources of data were the native speakers of Minangkabaunese, intentionally selected as informants and respondents, and the manuscripts written in Minangkabaunese. In addition, as the researchers are also the native speakers of Minangkabaunese, they were also the sources of data, but the intuitive data were systematically cross-checked and discussed with informants in order to have valid ones. The data obtained then were classified into clausal-syntactical categories in order to decide whether the data were appropriate and ready to analyze. The data were linguistically analyzed based on the relevant theories of grammatical typology, particularly those dealing with ergativity and grammatical subjects. The results of the analysis are argumentatively described informal ways commonly used in linguistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The previous studies on a grammatical typology of Minangkabaunese inform that active, passive, middle clauses with their own universal and specific characteristics are the formal-grammatical constructions in this local language. It has been also reported that in addition to the formal-grammatical constructions, Minangkabaunese has other types of syntactical constructions which are also commonly and productively used by Minangkabaunese in certain communicative events. Such constructions seem like the deviation of the formal-grammatical ones, but they are intuitively understood and communicatively used in daily communication. They are more on stylistic and cultural constructions rather than formal ones. Based on the grammatical characteristics and semantic properties possessed by the constructions, they are collectively called stylistic-grammatical constructions of Minangkabaunese. The clauses (1) – (5) above and the following ones are examples of this type of clause construction (Jufrizal et. al., 2016); Jufrizal, 2017).

(1) *Ma- napuak aia   di dulang; ma- nuuak kawan sairiang*.
   ACT-hit   water in pan   ACT-beat friend inline
   '(You) hit the water in a pan; (you) beat your own friend'

(2) *Ma- ngana badan ka pulang; ma- ingek untuang di rantau*.
　　The ACT-think body will go away; ACT-remember condition in other towns
　　'(You) think you will go away; (you) remember yourself in other towns'

(3) *Sambah kito pulang-kan kapado Allah*.
　　Salutation (TOP) PRO2PL go back-CAU to Allah
　　'It is a salutation that we have given back to Allah'

(4) *Sasek jo gawa ambo bao suruik*.
　　Mistake and error PRO1SG bring behind
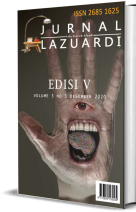　　'I will revise all possible mistakes and errors'

(5) *Pituah nan dapek ambo pacik arek*.
　　　Advice REL get (TOP) PRO1 hold strictly
　　　'The advice I got will be strictly held'

(6) *Nan pandai tampek batanyo*.
　　REL clever (TOP) place ask
　　'Those who are clever is the pace for asking question'

(7) *Kato daulu kato ba- tapek-i*.
　　word previous word ERG-use- APL
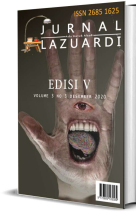　　'The previous word should be strictly used'

(8) *Kato kudian kato ba- cari*.
　　the word next word ERG-look for
　　'The next agreement should be looked for'

Based on grammatical-typological analysis toward the data that can be categorized as the stylistic-grammatical (clause) constructions (partially presented by the data above), five grammatical-semantic properties can be assigned as the main characteristic of the constructions (Jufrizal, 2017); (i) the grammatical subject is mostly deleted; it may be in the relative clause, as an agent or a patient, and most of the subject is topic; (ii) the agentivity of subject is relatively low, but it is not as the patient; (iii) the information structure of the construction brings about high language politeness, stylistic meanings, metaphorical sense of meanings; (iv) the grammatical constructions tend to be consistent (static); and (v) choice of word and constructions are relatively static and stylistic.

The data dealing with stylistic-grammatical construction of Minangkabaunese tell that such deviation clauses can be syntactically re-configured as actives, passives, ergatives, middles, and/or topicalizations. This paper, however, does not discuss all grammatical properties of the constructions; it only focuses on the degree of ergativity and subject deletion, a part of grammatical-typological properties possessed by the stylistic-grammatical constructions and how they convey values of language politeness in order to give a particular contribution to language education, as well. Therefore, the basis of the discussion presented in this paper is the grammatical-semantic properties (i) – (iii) of the constructions, as mentioned in the previous part. In the syntactic category, Minangkabaunese belongs to pro-drop languages or null-subject languages. In a pro-drop language, it is grammatically allowed to have *zero pronominalization* (or *zero anaphora*) in a clause construction; the present of subject entity is not obligatory (see Van Valin, Jr., and Lapolla, 2002:34; Payne, 2002:170). Thus, the absence of NP subject in a clause is grammatically accepted in Minangkabaunese. In formal-grammatical clause construction, however, the present of NP subject is grammatically preferred.
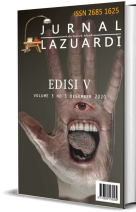
In stylistic-grammatical constructions of Minangkabaunese, in reality, *zero pronominalization* (or *zero anaphora*) or *subject deletion* is mostly preferred. Consequently, most of the clauses in the form of stylistic-grammatical constructions do not have overt grammatical subject; it is a subject-deletion construction. In the sequence of data above, it is hard to identify the NP as the grammatical subject in each clause; most of them do not have an overt grammatical subject. The NP *kito* (in 8), *ambo* (in 9 and 10), *nan pandai* (in 11), and *kato* (in 12) can be simply regarded as the subjects of the related clause. Further grammatical-typological analysis, however, indicates that those NP are not the overt grammatical subjects in the clauses; they grammatically act as topical-subjects rather than grammatical ones (see Anderson in Li (ed.), 1976; Givon in Li (ed.), 1976; Li and Thompson in Li (ed.), 1976). Thus, subject deletion is one main characteristic of stylistic-grammatical (clause) constructions in Minangkabaunese.

Further analysis by using the theories of grammatical-typological properties of the subject, there are, at least, three linguistic reasons why a grammatical subject is mostly deleted in stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese. Firstly, it refers to the nature of Minangkabaunese as one of the pro-drop languages; the grammatical subject is not obligatory in one single clause (see Van Valin, Jr., and Lapolla, 2002; Payne, 2002; Anderson in Li (ed.), 1976; Keenan in Li (ed.), 1976). Secondly, most of the stylistic-grammatical constructions are communicatively used as socio-cultural advice and request or common. Thus, the subject is understood as the second person; the subject is more on the psychological subject rather than the grammatical one. In accordance with this, the subject tends to delete as one way to have stylistic properties. Thirdly, the stylistic-grammatical constructions are naturally used as the polite direct-spoken language in which the grammatical subject is not highly preferred to mention. The constructions are mostly ready-made and fixed. In the speech event of cultural communication, this is also one way to have polite and stylistic utterances.

In relation to the degree of ergativity, it may also be claimed that the stylistic-grammatical constructions are mostly expressed in ergative constructions. The data (1) – (13) above indicate that ergative-absolutive constructions and/or topicalizations are dominant (data (3), (4), (5), (11), (12), (13) are the ergative constructions; (8), (9), (10) are ergatives + topicalizations; meanwhile (1), (2), (6), and (7) are the active ones). In other words, most of the stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese are in ergative (-absolutive) or in topicalization constructions. Ergative-absolutive is the term used by typologists to refer to the system of grammatical relation of intransitive and transitive in such a way showing that S = P, ≠ A. In ergative clause constructions, the grammatical subject (S) of the intransitive clause is grammatically the same as the patient (P) of the transitive clause.
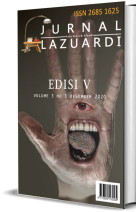
In an ergative-absolutive (clause) construction, the grammatical subject is patient and it has a low degree of agentivity (see Comrie, 1989). The patient-like subject in an ergative construction does not mean in the properties of a grammatical subject in passive

constructions. The ergative construction, in fact, is the underlying clause in ergative-absolute languages. Meanwhile, the passive clause is the derived grammatical construction in nominative-accusative languages. Minangkabaunese itself is a language in neutral typology; both nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive constructions are typologically found. By using ergative constructions in verbal communication, a speaker does not want to emphasize the information delivered on the agent of action. One of the linguistic strategies used by speakers is by constructing clauses that are labeled by linguists as ergative ones. Such a way of verbal communication is regarded as a polite strategy. The meanings are also the type of cultural meanings in the speech community of Minangkabaunese. In this sense, the stylistic-grammatical constructions in Minangkabaunese have a high degree of ergativity.

The participant observation of daily life communication informs that subject deletion is common in oral-direct communication. Then, on many occasions of speech events, it is natural that grammatical subject is psychologically understood by participants. In relation to this idea, it can be stated that psychological subjects play important role in stylistic-grammatical constructions. In addition to subject deletion, ergative constructions serve polite and stylistic ways of speaking, as well. It seems that the rules of grammar are in a certain relationship with language uses and stylistics. Although language styles, in some cases, are the deviation of grammatical rules, it should have a particular relationship with stylistic-grammatical constructions. The stylistic-grammatical constructions do not linguistically work without rules and regulation. It is reasonable to say that the language style is the pictures and reflection of humans' creativity and intellectuality (see further Darbyshire, 1971; Simpson, 2004).

As the degree of ergativity is higher in the stylistic-grammatical constructions, it is assumed that the package and convey a high degree of language politeness values. Thus, the high values of language politeness are "brought" and/or "encapsulated" by ergative construction in Minangkabaunese. For language education, on another side, those who are learning Minangkabaunese should be introduced and lead to know that the ergative
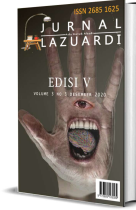
constructions are common to have high values of language politeness. Then, although informal situation and in written language subject of grammatical constructions are explicitly required, but subject deletion is used in order to have politeness values. It means that subject deletion is one of the language politeness strategies in Minangkabaunese. For language education, it is necessary to lead learners to know that subject deletion is another strategy to have high language politeness, especially in Minangkabaunese.

Linguistic information dealing with typological and cultural properties of grammatical constructions in a particular language is benefical for providing data and linguistic information that can be practically used in language teaching and language education. Introducing and explaining ways of having language politeness as universal and also unique phenomena are useful for the teaching-learning processes of language or language education. In addition, linguistic or grammatical strategies to have high values of language used in communication are needed in language education in order that the learners may have language in high politeness and used the language construction appropriately (see further Brown and Levinson, 2000; Watts, 2003).
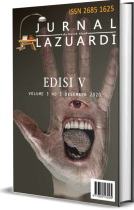
CONCLUSION

It is highly believed that all human languages have formal-grammatical and stylistic-grammatical constructions at syntactic level. The stylistic-grammatical constructions are those of additional-grammatical constructions in which the cultural and metaphorical meanings are linguistically "packaged". As the language forms in which certain language meanings are available and communicated, the stylistic-grammatical constructions should be involved in the studies of grammar. Subject deletion and high degree of ergativity in stylistic-grammatical constructions partially "construct" the polite and stylistic meanings of language uses. Language meanings, in reality, depend on language forms and other relevant contexts which obviously determine and influence communicative meanings intended by participants or language users. The studies on the grammatical properties and language politeness values brought by particular grammatical constructions are helpful for the data and linguistic information in language teaching-learning processes and/or language education in nature. Therefore, it is also suggested to study further grammatical-semantic studies and cultural analyses on the stylistic-grammatical constructions of human languages.

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