



The Degree of Ergativity in Bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese: The Case of Prefix *ber-* and *ba-*

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabaunese are assigned as morphological markers of intransitive and/or active voice of transitive clause. However, some data based on typological studies on grammatical constructions assert that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese are not pure nominative-accusative language at syntactic level. Bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese may be treated as an ergative-absolutive language, as well. This paper, which is further developed based on the result of a research conducted in 2021, discusses the degree of ergativity of clause constructions grammatically marked by prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and by prefix *ba-* in Minangkabaunese. Two main questions are the bases for data analysis and discussion in this paper, namely: (i) do prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabaunese morphologically mark ergative constructions? and (ii) how is the degree of ergativity in bahasa Indonesia and in Minangkabaunese based on the morphological marker, prefix *ber-* and *ba-*? The data were analyzed by using related theories of linguistic typology, especially those of grammatical typology. The data were collected by means of the execution of a field research and supported by a library study conducted in 2021. The data analysis reveals that some of clause constructions morphologically marked by prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and by prefix *ba-* in Mingkabaunese are the ergative constructions. Then, the degree of ergativity in Minangkabaunese is higher than that of bahasa Indonesia indicated by the frequencies of uses and the acceptability related constructions in grammar. The result of analysis, finding, and conclusion of this paper may claim that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese should be assigned both as a nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive language or a neutral language in typology.

Keywords: *ergativity, bahasa Indonesia, Minangkabaunese, ergative-absolutive*

1. INTRODUCTION

Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of Indonesia, and Minangkabaunese, a main-local language in West-Sumatera, are assumed similar in grammatical typology; they are closely related in morphosyntactic properties. The two languages are mainly assigned by linguists as a nominative-accusative language (hence called accusative for short) at syntactic level in which $S = A, \neq P$. The two languages grammatically have the dichotomy of active-passive voice as the main diathesis in nominative-accusative languages. In typological studies, active voice is the underlying construction in accusative language and its derived construction is that of passive one. In addition, related grammatical references points out that the active and passive voice in bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese fulfil the universal criteria of diathesis (voice) system and they are possibly differentiated by means of morphosyntactic

markers as many accusative languages have. Such grammatical properties assert that the two languages are highly similar in grammar, in nature.

In bahasa Indonesia, the passive voice as in data (1b) is grammatically derived from (1a), its active voice as the underlying form, by means of passivization.

- (1) a. *Petani mem- bawa benih ke sawah.*
farmer ACT-bring seed to rice field
'The farmer brought the seed to rice field'
b. *Benih di- bawa (oleh) petani ke sawah.*
seed PAS-bring (by) farmer to rice field
'The seed was brought (by) farmer to rice field'

In the data above, prefix *meN-* is the morphological marker of active voice, and prefix *di-* is the one for passive voice. This is the main proof to assign that bahasa Indonesia is an accusative language since the dichotomy of active-passive is grammatically identified.

In Minangkabau, on the other side, the active voice is morphologically marked by prefix *maN-* and the passive one is marked by prefix *di-* as in the following data.

- (2) a. *Pak guru sedang mam-baco buku.*
 teacher ASP ACT-read book
 'The teacher is reading a book'
 b. *Buku di- baco (dek) Pak guru.*
 book PAS-read (by) teacher
 'The book is being read (by) teacher'

The data (1a, b) and (2a, b) above assert that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau belong to a nominative-accusative language (or accusative language for short) in the case that the clause constructions of the two languages can be grammatically identified as active and passive voice. Again, the passivization occurred in bahasa Indonesia and in Minangkabau is relatively identical and it follows the universal passivization rules (see Dixon, 1994; Tallerman, 2009; Jufriзал, 2012; Artawa and Jufriзал, 2021).

Another prefix morphologically marked verbal constructions in bahasa Indonesia is *ber-* and its counterpart in Minangkabau is *ba-*. These two verbal prefixes are unique since they have various grammatical-semantic properties. In bahasa Indonesia, prefix *ber-* may function as intransitive marker and in other grammatical constructions it is decided as morphological marker for transitive and semi-transitive clauses (see for instance Alwi et.al., 2000). Similar grammatical phenomena are also possessed by prefix *ba-* in Minangkabau (see Jufriзал, 2012; Artawa and Jufriзал, 2018; 2021). Based on a series of typological studies on Minangkabau grammar, Artawa and Jufriзал (2018, 2021) claim that prefix *ba-* in this local language is the morphological marker for ergative construction. Even though no 'strong' claim yet concerning with prefix *ber-* argued by linguists, it may be linguistically assumed that this prefix is a morphological marker of ergative construction in bahasa Indonesia. This assumption is logically based on the grammatical facts that prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabau are equal, if they cannot be said as identical prefixes.

In addition, further and recent studies on grammatical typology of bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau may reveal that there are grammatical constructions that are reasonable to assign as ergative-absolutive constructions (hence called ergative for short), as well. Based on further analysis on verbal-grammatical constructions morphologically marked by prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and by prefix *ba-* in Minangkabau, the following data ((3a,b,c) are bahasa Indonesia and (4a,b,b) are Minangkabau) are typologically claimed as the ergative constructions in the two languages.

- (3) a. *Ya, tugas-tugas saudara sudah ber- terima.*
 yes assignments your ASP ERG-accept
 'Yes, your assignments have been accepted'
 b. *Sejak itu, plastik ber- bayar oleh pembeli.*

- since that plastic ERG-pay by pembeli
 'Since that time, plastic was paid by buyers'
 c. *Acara akan ber- mula oleh panitia.*
 agenda ASP ERG-begin by committee
 'The agenda will be begun by the committee'
 (4) a. *Layang-layang ba- puluik dek Amin.*
 kite ERG-pull by Amin
 'The kite was pulled by Amin'
 b. *Mentri ba- ganti dek presiden.*
 ministry ERG-change by president
 'The ministry was changed by president'
 c. *Namo-nyo ba- ukia rancak-rancak.*
 name POS3SG ERG-draw well
 'His name was drawn well'

Syntactic ergative constructions in bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau may be grammatically constructed in other forms of grammatical constructions and morphologically marked by other affixes. However, the focus of this paper is only limited to address to the case of prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and prefix *ba-* in Minangkabau as the morphological markers of ergative constructions. In reality, the discussion on ergative constructions in these two languages is not as popular as the discussion of active and passive ones. This condition may be back to the traditional and previous studies which mostly assigned bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau as a nominative-accusative language rather than as an ergative-absolutive one. In fact, to analyze and to assign these two languages as an ergative-absolutive language is also reasonable and supported by related data.

The data (3a,b,c) and (4a,b,c) above, in glance, perform that they are similar to passives. That is why some linguists state that passives and ergatives are not different; they are preferred to assign as passives for simple understanding. It may be right what Comrie states (see Comrie in Shibatani (ed.), 1988:9) about passive and ergative. According to him, many linguists do not strictly differentiate between passive and ergative. This may be caused by the case that passive and ergative have similarities. In order to differentiate them, Comrie suggests three criteria to be considered. First, passive and ergative are alike in that both involve assignment of at least some subject properties to the patient rather than the agent, although the extent of this assignment is typically greater for passive. Second, passive and ergative differ in that the ergative typically involves greater integration of the agent phrase into the syntax of the clause. And thirdly, passive and ergative differ in term of markedness – the passive is a marked construction, whereas the ergative is typically an unmarked construction.

It may be argued as well that the ergativity in bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau is similar to the case of ergativity phenomena found in some Nusantara local languages and Tagalog as another Austronesian language (see Artawa, 2004; Verhaar, 2006; Arifin, 2006; Aldridge, 2012; Kusuma, 2018; Artawa and Jufriзал, 2021). Even though bahasa Indonesia and

Minangkabaunese have ergativity properties, it should be further proved whether the degree of ergativity in the two languages is the same or not. The typological analysis on the degree of ergativity in different languages is essential in order to explore and to decide the grammatical-typological properties of the languages. In relation to this, the specific study on the degree of ergativity in bahasa Indonesia compared to that in Minangkabaunese is significantly essential in having related linguistic data and information dealing with ergativity of these two languages.

Most of grammatical-typological studies concerning with diathesis and voice system of bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese treat them as nominative-accusative languages. Therefore, the dichotomy of active-passive voice in the two languages has been discussed by linguists. Traditionally, prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabaunese are assigned as morphological markers of intransitive and/or active voice of transitive voice. However, some data based on typological studies on grammatical constructions assert that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese are not pure nominative-accusative language at syntactic level. In relation to related data, it may be linguistically considered that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese may be treated as an ergative-absolutive language (where $S = P, \neq A$) as well.

In grammatical typology, the ergativity refers to a system of marking grammatical relations in which intransitive subjects pattern together, or treated in the same way, with transitive objects (“absolutive”), and differently from transitive subjects (“ergative”) (Coon and Abenina-Adar, 2019). The intransitive subject is the only grammatical subject in such clause and commonly symbolized as S, the transitive object is an object (O) or a patient (P), and the transitive subject is an agent (A). This theoretical statement is formally formulated as $S = P, \neq A$. The ergative grammatical alignment is contrast to other grammatical alignment of accusativity (in nominative-accusative language) where $S = A, \neq P$ (see Comrie, 1989; Dixon, 1994; Song, 2001; Payne, 2002; Song, 2018).

As it has been mentioned above, most grammatical studies on bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese treat them as an accusative language. As the result, the grammatical properties of ergativity in these two languages have not become the focus of discussion yet. Even though the ergativity in Minangkabaunese has been being studied in some matters (see Jufriзал, 2004; Jufriзал, 2012; Artawa and Jufriзал, 2018, 2021), but it still needs further exploration and analyses. In other side, however, the studies on ergativity phenomena in bahasa Indonesia are highly limited. It can be said that the ergativity is still “new” in bahasa Indonesia.

This paper, which is further developed based on the result of a research conducted in 2021, only discusses the degree of ergativity of clause constructions grammatically identified and marked by prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and by prefix *ba-* in Minangkabaunese. Two main questions are the bases for

data analysis and discussion presented in this paper, namely: (i) how do prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabaunese morphologically mark ergative constructions? and (ii) what is the degree of ergativity in bahasa Indonesia and in Minangkabaunese based on morphological marker prefix *ber-* and *ba-*? Even though there are other forms of ergative construction in bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese, but the focus of this paper is only limited to ergative constructions morphologically marked by prefix *ber-* and those of Minangkabaunese morphologically marked by prefix *ba-*. The idea, data, and analyses exposed through this paper may contribute to further typological analyses toward bahasa Indonesia as the national language, in fact.

2. METHODS

This linguistic study was designed as a descriptive-qualitative research conducted in 2021. In its operation, this study was executed as a field research and supported by a library study. As a field research, the sample areas chosen as location of research were fourteen main towns/regions of the main-land of West-Sumatera where the native speakers of Minangkabaunese habitually and socially live. The data were in the forms of the clause constructions of Minangkabaunese which are assumed as the formal-grammatical ones and they are linguistically categorized and assigned as the standard grammatical constructions. Practically, the data were simultaneously collected by means of participant observation, depth-interview, administering questionnaires, and quoting/selecting data from written-related manuscripts and texts written in Minangkabaunese as the library study.

The instruments of research were field-notes, observation sheets, recorders, interview guideline, and questionnaire sheets. The sources of spoken data were 28 informants and 280 respondents intentionally selected from native speakers with certain identities and criteria used in linguistic studies. The informants are selected based on criteria of linguistic field research. As the researchers are also the native speakers of Minangkabaunese, they were also behave as the sources of data, but the intuitive data were systematically cross-checked and consulted to the selected informants in order that the validity and reliability of data were obtained. The data gathered 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 related theories of grammatical typology, especially those of ergativity. The results of data analysis and discussion are argumentatively described in formal and informal ways commonly used in linguistics

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ergative Construction with *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia

Grammatical studies on bahasa Indonesia, as previously mentioned, assign it as an accusative language. When bahasa Indonesia is grammatically treated as an accusative language, the active voice, which is morphologically marked by prefix *meN-*, is regarded as the underlying construction. Meanwhile, the passive construction as the derived one is morphologically marked by prefix *di-*. This active-passive dichotomy is basic in bahasa Indonesia. In the following data, the examples codified by (a) are the clauses in active voice, (b) are the passive clauses, and (c) are nor actives or passives; they are ergative morphologically marked by prefix *ber-*. In the following data, the active clauses typologically fit to universal criteria of active voice and passives follow the passivization rules cross-linguistically.

- (5) a. *Para siswa me- nerima rapor.*
student ACT-receive rapor
'The students receives report'
- b. *Rapor di- terima (oleh) para siswa.*
rapor PAS-write by siswa
'the report was received (by) students'
- c. *Rapor ber- terima oleh para siswa.*
report ERG-receive by students
Report was received by students
- (6) a. *Mereka me- nolak bantuan itu.*
PRO3PL ACT-reject donation ART
'They rejected the donation'
- b. *Bantuan itu di- tolak (oleh) mereka.*
donation ART PAS-reject by them
'The donation was rejected by them'
- c. *Bantuan itu ber- tolak oleh mereka.*
donation ART ERG-reject by them
'The donation was rejected by them'
- (7) a. *Kakak mem-bayar plastik baru.*
sister ACT pay plastic new
'Sister paid the new plastic'
- b. *Plastik baru di- bayar (oleh) kakak.*
plastic new PAS-pay by sister
'New plastic was paid by sister'
- c. *Plastik baru ber- bayar oleh kakak.*
plastic new ERG-pay by sister
'New plastic was paid by sister'

The dichotomy of active- passive constructions as in (5a,b), (6a,b), and (7a,b) are not questioned anymore in the grammatical analyses of bahasa Indonesia. The subject grammatical in each active construction (5a, 6a, and 7a) is agent (*para siswa, mereka, and kakak*). The subject grammatical agent (A) does an action and affects the argument patient (P). In this construction, the verbal predicate is morphologically marked by prefix *meN-*. In each passive clause, as its derived construction, the subject grammatical is patient after following passivization rules. As summarized by Tallerman (2009), cross-linguistic passive construction: (i) applies to a transitive clause (the active clause) and

forms a derived transitive clause; (ii) object promoted > subject; (iii) former subject demoted > oblique argument, or is deleted; and (iv) changes occur in the morphology (= form) of the verb to signal passivization. It seems that these are all grammatically applicable in active-passive constructions in bahasa Indonesia.

Different grammatical phenomena and semantic properties are found in 5c, 6c, and 7c. Surface grammatical forms are similar to passive voice, except for morphological marker. They cannot simply be assigned passives or a kind passive voice in bahasa Indonesia. If in passive constructions the verb is morphologically marked by prefix *di-* and the subject grammatical is an argument patient (P) (as in 5b, 6b, and 7b), prefix *ber-* appears as the morphological marker in 5c, 6c, and 7c. A close grammatical-semantic analysis toward the constructions with prefix *ber-* indicates that the subject grammatical in each construction (*rapor* (5c), *bantuan itu* (6c), and *plastik* in (7c)), are not the argument with strong property as an agent like in an active construction. The grammatical-semantic roles of the use of prefix *ber-* in its verb partially reduce the value/degree of agentivity conveyed by the verb. In this case, there is a reducing value of agentivity once prefix *ber-* used. It means that the agent value of subject grammatical in (5c), (6c), and (7c) is not as strong as it is in (5a), (6a), and (7a).

If such grammatical-semantic role and value of subject grammatical are compared to those possessed by grammatical subject of passive voice, there must be particular distinction. In passive voice in nature, the grammatical subject is a "pure" patient; no agentivity of grammatical subject in a passive construction at all. In *ber-* clause construction, however, the grammatical-semantic properties of grammatical subject are not "pure" patient. The grammatical subjects in clause as in (5c), (6c), and (7c) are neither pure patient as in passives, nor pure agents as in actives, in nature. It may be argued that the grammatical-semantic property of a grammatical subject in *ber-* construction in bahasa Indonesia is not a "pure" agent or a "pure" patient. In other words, such kind of grammatical construction does not have basic criteria of an active or a passive construction cross-linguistically. However, it is necessary to note that the grammatical-semantic property of the grammatical subject in such grammatical construction is more as a patient (close to passive) rather than as an agent.

In many literatures and grammatical references of bahasa Indonesia, such typological and semantic uniqueness have not been discussed in details yet. Most grammarians simply state that such type of construction is an active-intransitive or it is a type of passive. The statement, for grammatical-typological reasons, needs to revise as they are not linguistically suitable. Referring back to Comrie's opinion (in Shibatani (ed.), 1988) and other such as Dixon (1994), Song (2001), or Song (2018), it may be claimed that this is the ergative clause construction in bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, bahasa Indonesia may have ergative construction and one type

of the ergative construction is morphosyntactically marked by prefix *ba-* and other syntactic properties. One more thing that make the ergative construction is different from passive is dealing with the use or the presence of preposition *oleh* ‘by’ as the oblique marker in the clause. As in universal passives, the use of preposition as oblique marker is optional; it may be deleted as well. In ergative construction as in (5c), (6c), and (7c), however, the presence of preposition *oleh* ‘by’ is obligatory. Thus, the followings are not grammatical in bahasa Indonesia:

- (8) **Rapor ber-terima para siswa.*
 (9) **Bantuan itu ber-tolak mereka.*
 (10) **Plastik baru ber-bayar kakak.*

3.2 Ergative Construction with *ba-* in Minangkabaunese

Similar to grammatical-typological properties of ergative constructions with prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia as explained above, it may be argued that the ergative construction in Minangkabaunese may be morphologically marked by prefix *ba-*. It is not questioned anymore that basic active clause in Minangkabaunese is morphologically marked by prefix *maN-* and its passive is morphologically marked by prefix *di-*. Then, the prefix *ba-* attached to base form of verb is to form an ergative construction. The following data are the examples of active, passive, and ergative constructions in Minangkabaunese.

- (11) a. *Urang tu man -jua lado.*
 man ART ACT-sell chilly
 ‘The man sold chilly’
 b. *Lado di- jua (dek) urang tu.*
 chilly PAS-sell by man ART
 ‘Chilly was sold by the man’
 c. *Lado ba- jua dek urang tu.*
 chilly ERG-sell by man ART
 ‘Chilly was sold by the man’
 (12) a. *Abak ma-ulang carito lamo.*
 father ACT-repeat story old
 ‘Father repeated the old story’
 b. *Carito lamo di-ulang (dek) abak.*
 Story old PAS-repeat by father
 ‘The old story was repeated by father’
 c. *Carito lamo ba-ulang dek abak.*
 story old ERG-repeat by father
 ‘The old story was repeated by father’
 (13) a. *Uda ma-abuih aia kutiko itu.*
 brother ACT-boil time that
 ‘Brother was boiling water at that time’
 b. *Aia di-abuih (dek) uda kutiko itu.*
 water PAS-boil by brother time that
 ‘Water was being boiled by brother at that time’
 c. *Aia ba-abuih dek uda kutiko itu.*
 water ERG-boil by brother time that
 ‘Water was being boiled by brother at that time’

As described and explained before, active and its counterpart – passive – in Minangkabaunese are closely similar to that of bahasa Indonesia. In data above, (11a), (12a), and (13a) are basic clause constructions in active voice (actives); they are morphologically marked by prefix *maN-* and the grammatical subjects are agents (A). In contrast, data (11b), (12b), and (13b) above are the passives, the derived constructions of their related actives. In passives, the verbs are morphologically marked by prefix *di-* and the agents (A) are demoted to oblique arguments. As in many languages, the argument oblique is optional or may be deleted. Data (11c), (12c), and (13c) cannot be assigned as actives or as passives; they are different in the sense that grammatical-semantic properties behaved by of such kind of constructions are unique and specific.

As the grammatical constructions morphologically marked by *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and refers to Comrie’s idea (in Shibatani (ed.), 1988) and others, the grammatical construction of Minangkabaunese as in (11c), (12c), and (13c) may be claimed as an ergative construction. The grammatical subject in such clauses is neither a “pure” agent nor a “pure” patient, even though it is more as patient (close to passive) rather than as an agent. This is one of main criteria of ergative construction and how to differentiate it from passives.

In the data claimed as the ergative constructions of Minangkabaunese above, the agent (A) – prepositional NP – is not optional, but obligatory. This grammatical property makes it different from passive where the oblique argument (demoted agent) is optional. Thus, the following ergative constructions are not grammatical in Minangkabaunese.

- (14) **Lado ba- jua urang tu.*
 (15) **Carito lamo ba-ulang abak.*
 (16) **Aia ba-abuih uda kutiko itu.*

The data analysis and discussion above lead to a main essential thing that prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabaunese are the the morphological markers for ergative constructions in these two languages. In addition, it is proved that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese have grammatical-typological properties as an ergative language, beside as an accusative one. Assigning bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese only as a nominative-accusative language and neglecting ergativity analysis toward them is not a correct decision linguistically.

3.3 Ergativity in bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabaunese

It is time to have the grammatical-typological discussion about the degree of ergativity in bahasa Indonesia and in Minangkabaunese. This analysis and discussion is necessary in order to have data and information whether these two languages have the same capacity and degree of ergativity or not. This is also helpful for formulating typological claims and conclusion concerning with degree of ergativity cross-linguistically. And of course, the ideas and data brought

by this article are only limited to the case of prefix *ber-* and *ba-* morphologically marked the ergative constructions.

Based on data collected, the degree of ergativity in bahasa Indonesia is not the same with that in Minangkabau. It may be argued that the degree of ergativity in Minangkabau is higher than that of bahasa Indonesia. The term *higher* used in this paper may refer to qualitative and quantitative measurement. Qualitative measurement refers to the sense and the nature of ergative constructions in the grammar of the languages, meanwhile quantitative measurement refers to frequency and capacity of uses. For the time being, the degree of ergativity is only based on the case of prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia and *ba-* in Minangkabau.

Qualitatively, the degree of ergativity in Minangkabau is higher than that of bahasa Indonesia. It means that almost all verbal grammatical constructions in the form of clause with prefix *ba-* are grammatical in Minangkabau. However, in bahasa Indonesia, not all of verbal clause constructions with prefix *ber-* are grammatical, or at least they are not natural. The following verbal clause constructions, assigned as ergatives, are grammatical and natural in Minangkabau.

- (17) *Parumahan ba- bangun dek urang dakek pasa.*
houses ERG-build by people near market
'The houses are built by people near market'
- (18) *Karambia ba- tabang dek Ali.*
coconuts ERG-cut by Ali
'Coconuts were cut by Ali'
- (19) *Guru-guru ba- uji baliak dek pamarentah.*
teachers ERG-test back by government
'Teachers were retested by government'
- (20) *Wali Nagari ba- pilih dek rakyat.*
local leader ERG-elect by people
'The local leader was elected by people'

However, the following equal constructions constructed by using prefix *ber-* may be formally grammatical but not natural; it does not make sense in bahasa Indonesia.

- (21) *Perumahan ber-bangun oleh orang dekat pasar.*
houses ERG-build by people near market
'The houses are built by people near market'
- (22) *Kelapa ber-tebang oleh Ali.*
coconuts ERG-cut by Ali
'Coconuts were cut by Ali'
- (23) *Guru-guru ber-uji kembali oleh pemerintah.*
teachers ERG-test back by government
'Teachers were retested by government'
- (24) *Wali Nagari ber-pilih oleh rakyat.*
local leader ERG-elect by people
'The local leader was elected by people'

Quantitatively, the degree of ergativity in Minangkabau is also higher than that of bahasa Indonesia. Two reasons are probably argued to support this claim. First, not all of verbs in bahasa Indonesia are

possibly attached by prefix *ber-* to form natural ergative constructions. The data (21) – (24) indicate that attaching *ber-* to certain verbs does not make sense and such ergatives are not natural. Second, prefix *ber-* in bahasa Indonesia is not relatively productive to form a natural ergative construction. In Minangkabau, however, prefix *ba-* is highly productive. It may be attached to almost all verbs to form a natural ergative construction.

4. CONCLUSION

Bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau have similarities grammatical items and equal typological-grammatical properties. If so far these two languages are mostly assigned as nominative-accusative language, but recently there are grammatical evidences to support that bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau can be also viewed and analyzed as an ergative-absolutive language. Since these two languages have grammatical properties to group as both accusative and ergative language, it may be state that they belong to a neutral language in grammatical typology. This claim may relate to other languages in Austronesia family, such as to Tagalog and some languages in Nusantara.

Although bahasa Indonesia and Minangkabau may be assign as an ergative language, but they have different degree of ergativity. Ergativity in Minangkabau, based on the case of *ber-* and *ba-* as morphological marker in ergative constructions, is higher than that of bahasa Indonesia. It leads to another claim that bahasa Indonesia as the national language in Indonesia tends to be an accusative language, but Minangkabau is still in its position as a neural language at syntactic level.

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