



Capacity building on a local and national level

The Language

Totoli is an Austronesian language (Malayo-Polynesian), spoken in northern Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. It is commonly considered a member of the Tomini-Tolitoli group, although it is still unclear whether these languages actually form a genetic group or whether they are just geographically related. Totoli appears to have a unique voice and applicative system which combines features of a typical Philippine-type voice system with features of the applicative systems found in western Indonesia and the southern half of Sulawesi.



Winarno Alamudi interviewing a Totoli speaker

Endangerment

Of the overall Totoli population of about 25.000 people probably less than 5000 are fluent speakers. A widespread pattern in families is for family members over 50 to be fluent, and for members between 20 and 50 to have a good passive knowledge. Children and teenagers know very little, if anything, of the language, usually exclusively speaking the local variety of Malay.



A Totoli village elder preparing a wedding ceremony



The staple food: rice

There are two main areas where Totoli is spoken, one centered around the city of Tolitoli, the other one being located in four villages in the north of Tolitoli (see map). The dialects spoken in these two areas show



Fishermen at work

some crucial grammatical differences, and also their degree of vitality differs considerably: while the loss of Totoli is unfortunately well advanced in and around Tolitoli, the language is still used in everyday life in the northern language area.



Kids at primary school

People and Culture

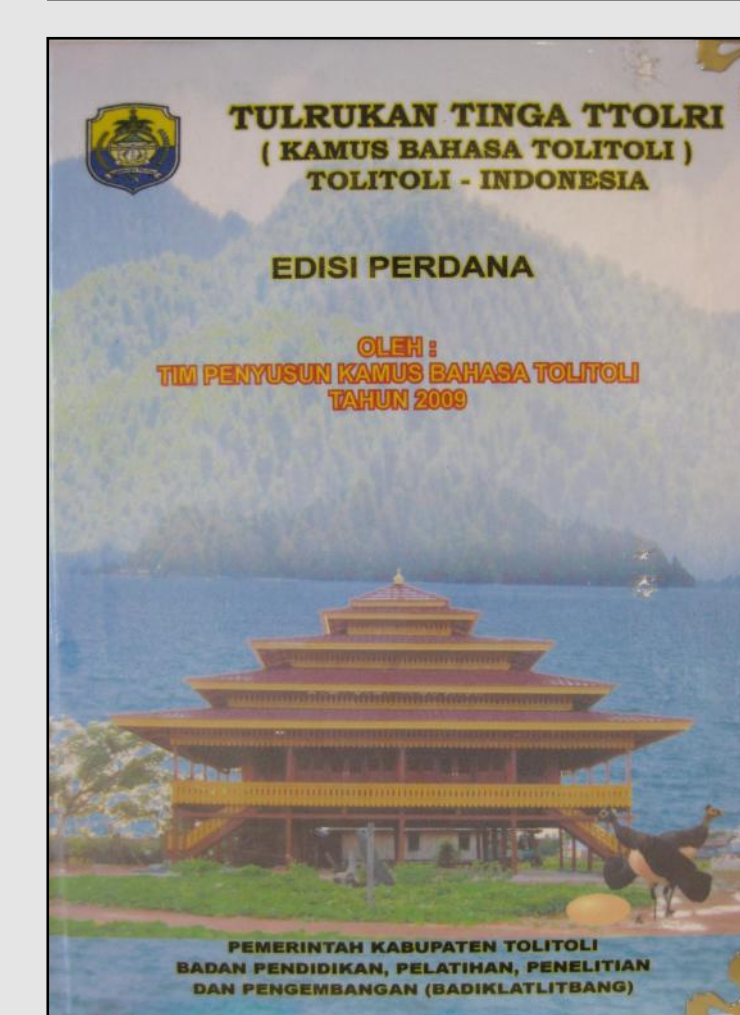
While the Totoli speech community nowadays is a Muslim society adhering to the values and aspirations of the modern Indonesian mainstream, the older speakers still have a very rich repertoire of verbal art genres. This includes elaborate genealogies detailing the history of the Totoli people which appear to follow the model found in South Sulawesi (Bugis, Makassar). Another genre is a form of verbal combating (Lele-gesan). The challenge here is to produce as

many rhyming two-liners as possible where the first line always consists of the name of a part of a plant (the blossom of the Aren tree, etc.) and the second line conveys a political or situational commentary (i.e. it is completely ad-hoc).



The major local cash crop: cloves

Community Commitment



The Totoli-Indonesian dictionary

In 2009 a group of community members formed a committee to make a Totoli-Indonesian dictionary. Building on and extending the data collected by the DoBeS team, they produced a dictionary with more than 5000 lexical entries.

Core Team Members

Winarno S. Alamudi
Nikolaus P. Himmelmann
Jani Kuhnt-Saptodewo
Claudia Leto
Sonja Riesberg

CONTACT ADDRESS

Nikolaus P. Himmelmann
Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft
Universität zu Köln
D-50923 Köln
sprachwissenschaft@uni-koeln.de

