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Linguistic Incorporation in the Mandailing Language: Analyzing Instrumental and Objective Incorporation for Language Structure and Education

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic incorporation occurs when phrase components merge into a single verb, creating a more complex meaning. This study examines instrumental incorporation, where a tool or instrument integrates into the verb, and objective incorporation, where the object of a sentence is directly embedded into the verb. The research aims to identify and analyze instances of instrumental and objective incorporation in the Mandailing language. Data were collected using purposive sampling and interviews with native Mandailing speakers in Sibuhuan, Padang Lawas. The results show that objective incorporation occurs in words like *marsidoka* (giving alms), *makkobari* (advising), and *mardahan* (cooking rice), which are more concise because the object merges into the verb. Instrumental incorporation is observed in *mangarabi* (harvesting with a sickle) and *manaba* (cutting with a machete), where the instrument modifies the verb's meaning and structure. This study contributes to linguistics and language education by highlighting how incorporation enhances efficiency, sentence structure, and language preservation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon that undergoes continuous transformation based on the social and cultural context in which it is used. Depending on its usage within a community, a language may either develop new linguistic structures or become endangered over time (Greenhill *et al.*, 2017). One example of linguistic change is the derivation of nouns into verbs, a process often marked by affixation. This transformation allows languages to express meaning more efficiently while maintaining semantic clarity.

According to UNESCO's report on endangered languages, more than 30 regional languages in Indonesia have gone extinct, while hundreds more are at risk of disappearing (Sewell, 2022; Zein, 2019). This phenomenon not only threatens linguistic diversity but also endangers traditional knowledge and cultural identity, which are embedded within each language (Amezaga-Albizu & Martínez-Martínez, 2019; Guyot, 2015). As languages change, linguistic structures adapt to new morphological and phonological patterns, ensuring that communication remains efficient and relevant.

An example of linguistic transformation in Indonesian is the word "menjauh", derived from the root word "jauh" by adding the prefix "me-" to indicate an action. This morphological change allows the speaker to convey an idea more concisely without altering the intended meaning. Similarly, regional languages in Indonesia experience modifications in word structure to enhance linguistic efficiency and clarity.

In the Mandailing language, such transformations are evident in words like "mardahan", which means "cooking rice." This word is derived from "indahan" (rice) by adding the prefix "mar-", forming a verb that inherently includes the action and its object. This adaptation reflects linguistic incorporation, a process in which words merge to create a more complex yet concise meaning.

Linguistic incorporation is defined as the unification or merging of one-word constituent with another, typically a verb (Caballero *et al.*, 2008; Olthof, 2020; Roikienè, 2021; Wardana & Mulyadi, 2022). Incorporation can occur in various forms, including nominal, prepositional, and adjectival incorporation, all of which serve to expand vocabulary and adapt language structures to modern usage. In addition to these categories, this study specifically examined objective incorporation and instrumental incorporation in the Mandailing language.

- (i) Objective incorporation occurs when a verb merges with an object, reducing redundancy in sentence construction.
- (ii) Instrumental incorporation occurs when the tool or instrument used in an action is integrated into the verb itself, modifying both its meaning and syntactic structure.

Linguistic incorporation has been categorized into three primary forms: verbal, prepositional, and nominal incorporation (Nursaima & Mulyadi, 2023; Simanjuntak & Mulyadi, 2019). Incorporation can also be identified based on grammatical structure, specifically in the integration of nouns, prepositions, and adjectives into verbs (Roikienè, 2021).

- (i) Noun incorporation occurs when a noun is combined with a verb, creating a single lexical unit.
- (ii) Prepositional incorporation occurs when a preposition merges with a verb, altering its syntactic function.
- (iii) Adjectival incorporation occurs when an adjective integrates into a verb, modifying its descriptive meaning (Roikienè, 2021).

A subtype of noun incorporation involves instrumental incorporation, where a verb absorbs the name of the instrument used in an action. The following example illustrates this process (Roikienè, 2021):

- (i) He stoned John to death. (Dia melempari John dengan batu hingga tewas.)
- (ii) He killed John with a stone. (Dia membunuh John dengan batu.)

In sentence (a), the verb "stoned" is an incorporated form of the verb "killed" and the noun "stone" in sentence (b). The incorporation process makes the sentence more direct and semantically rich.

Verb incorporation is another linguistic phenomenon in which multiple words or sentence components are combined into a single verb to convey a more complex meaning (Nursaima & Mulyadi, 2023; Olthof *et al.*, 2021; Simanjuntak & Mulyadi, 2019). Within verb incorporation, two primary subcategories exist:

- (i) Objective incorporation: The direct merging of an object word into a verb, replacing a multi-word expression with a single, compact verb (Winaya, 2016). An example of this is the word "memancing", which is a combination of "menangkap ikan" (to catch fish). Here, the word "ikan" (fish) is absorbed into "menangkap" (to catch), forming a new verb that inherently includes the object.
- (ii) Instrumental incorporation: The merging of tools or instruments into the verb, modifying its function and meaning (Caplan *et al.*, 2020; Hahn *et al.*, 2020; Nursaima & Mulyadi, 2023; Simanjuntak & Mulyadi, 2019). For example, the word "memalu" (hammering) is derived from "memukul dengan palu" (to hit with a hammer). In this case, the noun "palu" (hammer) is incorporated into the verb "memukul" (to hit), forming a new lexical unit that conveys both action and tool in a single word.

Linguistic incorporation has been widely studied across different languages, with researchers examining various linguistic objects and syntactic structures (Branigan & Wharram, 2019; Jiang & Cohn, 2022; Kantarovich, 2022; Nursaima & Mulyadi, 2023; Olthof, 2020; Roikienè, 2021; Simanjuntak & Mulyadi, 2019; Wardana & Mulyadi, 2022). However, this study differs from previous research because it focuses on a specific regional language—the Mandailing language.

The Mandailing language, spoken by the Mandailing ethnic group, serves as an important part of Indonesia's linguistic heritage. This study examined how incorporation influences sentence structure in Mandailing, focusing on objective and instrumental incorporation. Data was collected in Sibuhuan, Padang Lawas, Indonesia a region where Mandailing is actively spoken, ensuring authentic linguistic representation.

Based on our previous study (Bangun *et al.*, 2024), by analyzing verbal incorporation in Mandailing, this research contributes to the fields of linguistics, morphology, phonology, and language education, emphasizing the importance of preserving regional languages and understanding their structural evolution.

2. METHODS

This study employed a purposive sampling method, supported by interviews to collect data directly from participants. To enhance data accuracy, recording and note-taking techniques were also utilized. The recording process served as a backup mechanism in case of uncertainties in pronunciation or spelling during manual transcription. The data collected consisted of Mandailing words that had undergone linguistic incorporation. Data collection was conducted directly within the Mandailing community in the Sibuhuan area, Padang Lawas. This approach was essential because direct interaction with native speakers ensured the authenticity and reliability of linguistic data. The integration of audio recordings and

written documentation strengthened the accuracy of phonetic and morphological observations, making the study highly relevant to linguistic research and language education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected in this study were categorized into two types: instrumental incorporation and objective incorporation. Each case was analyzed based on its structural transformation within the Mandailing language, particularly focusing on verbalization processes that modify the lexical and syntactic structure of sentences.

3.1. Objective Incorporation

Words classified under objective incorporation undergo structural changes that influence sentence composition. The following examples illustrate how verbalization alters the form and function of words in Mandailing:

Example #1

(1) *baenna giot adong marsidoka di bagas godang, ro ma sude koum sisolkot tu son*
"Karena ini dilaksanakan bersedekah di rumah keluarga, semua sanak saudara pun datang."
"Because this is being held as a charity at the family home, all the relatives came."

In this case, verbalization results in a more concise form by replacing a noun phrase with a verb-based structure. This transformation is further demonstrated in the following comparison:

- (1a) *baenna giot adong managalehen sidoka di bagas godang, ro ma sude koum sisolkot tu son*
(Because this is being held as a charity distribution at the family home, all the relatives came.)
- (1b) *baenna giot adong marsidoka di bagas godang, ro ma sude koum sisolkot tu son*
(Because this is being held as a charity at the family home, all the relatives came.)

The noun phrase "managalehen sidoka" (to give charity) in (1a) maintains its full word structure without verbalization. However, in (1b), the transformation replaces the noun phrase with the verb "marsidoka", created by adding the prefix "mar-", which converts the noun into a verb.

Example #2

(2) *minggu na giot ro on marbagas ma abangku na paling tobang, ima so makkobari opung tu abang*
"Minggu depan abangku yang paling tua akan menikah, karena itu kakek menasihati abang."
"Next week, my oldest brother will get married, so grandfather advised him."

The verbalization process is further illustrated through sentence comparison:

- (2a) *minggu na giot ro on marbagas ma abangku na paling tobang, ima so mangalehen hobar opung tu abang*
(Next week, my oldest brother will get married, so grandfather gave him some advice.)
- (2b) *minggu na giot ro on marbagas ma abangku na paling tobang, ima so makkobari opung tu abang*
(Next week, my oldest brother will get married, so grandfather advised him.)

In sentence (2a), the structure "mangalehen hobar" (to give advice) retains its full form, maintaining the noun "hobar" (advice) with the verb "mangalehen" (to give). In (2b), the process of verbalization leads to the creation of "makkobari" (to advise) by removing the auxiliary verb and transferring its meaning to the noun.

Example #3

(3) marun inangta sion natuari, baenni i ma akkon au ma na mardahan ditolongi anggiku so ulang markarejo inangta

"Ibuku sakit dari semalam, karenanya aku harus memasak dibantu adikku agar ibuku tidak bekerja."

"My mother has been sick since last night, so I have to cook with my younger sibling's help so that my mother doesn't have to work."

A comparison between the non-verbalized and verbalized forms further clarifies this process:

- (3a) *marun inangta sion natuari, baenni i ma akkon au ma na marmasak indahan ditolongi anggiku so ulang markarejo inangta*

(My mother has been sick since last night, so I had to cook rice with my younger sibling to prevent my mother from working.)

- (3b) *marun inangta sion natuari, baenni i ma akkon au ma na mardahan ditolongi anggiku so ulang markarejo inangta*

(My mother has been sick since last night, so I have to cook with my younger sibling's help so that my mother doesn't have to work.)

This transformation is linguistically significant because it reflects a phonological and syntactic adaptation in Mandailing speech patterns, where prefixation is commonly used to create more efficient expressions.

3.2. Linguistic and Educational Implications

The results of this study reveal that verbalization in Mandailing is an essential feature of language evolution, shaping how speakers construct meaning and simplify communication. The incorporation of prefixes and verb transformations not only enhances linguistic efficiency but also provides valuable insights for language education.

- (i) Language Learning and Pedagogy: Understanding verbalization processes aids language instructors in developing effective teaching materials for Mandailing learners.
- (ii) Second Language Acquisition (SLA): Learners of Mandailing as a second language can benefit from recognizing morphological changes, improving their fluency and grammatical accuracy.
- (iii) Bilingual Education: In multilingual settings, knowledge of verbalization rules can help students transition between Mandailing and Indonesian, fostering better language transfer skills.
- (iv) Linguistic Preservation: Documenting these changes is crucial for preserving indigenous languages, and ensuring that native language structures are maintained and passed down to future generations.

This study demonstrates that verbalization in Mandailing modifies sentence structure by shifting noun phrases into verb-based expressions, contributing to language efficiency and phonological adaptation. Because linguistic transformations impact both spoken and written forms of language, these findings have significant implications for language education, phonology, and linguistic research.

3.3. Instrumental Incorporation

Several words in the Mandailing language fall under instrumental incorporation, where the instrument or tool used in an action is merged into the verb, forming a more concise term. The following examples illustrate this linguistic transformation:

Example #4

(4a) *manggotap dohot gupak karet bayo i di kobun rap dongan-dongan nia*

"Laki-laki itu memotong dengan parang pohon karet bersama dengan teman-temannya."

"The man was cutting rubber trees with a machete together with his friends."

(4b) *manaba karet bayo i di kobun rap dongan-dongan*

"Laki-laki itu memotong pohon karet bersama teman-temannya."

"The man was cutting rubber trees with his friends."

In sentence (4a), the action "manggotap dohot gupak" explicitly describes cutting using a machete. However, in sentence (4b), the tool "gupak" (machete) is omitted and merged into a new verb "manaba", which now inherently conveys the action of cutting rubber trees with a machete. This transformation occurs because Mandailing speakers prefer concise expressions, integrating the instrument into the verb to make the sentence more efficient and fluid in spoken communication.

Example #5

(5a) *bahat halak sadarion kehe tu saba baenna giot manggotap rap rabi*

"Hari ini banyak orang yang pergi ke sawah untuk memotong padi dengan sabit."

"Today, many people went to the fields to harvest rice with sickles."

(5b) *bahat halak sadarion kehe tu saba baenna giot mangarabi*

"Hari ini banyak orang yang pergi ke sawah untuk panen."

"Today, many people went to the fields to harvest."

A similar transformation is observed in sentence (5b), where the clause "manggotap rap rabi" (cutting rice with a sickle) in sentence (5a) is condensed into the verb "mangarabi", formed by merging the instrumental noun "rabi" (sickle) with the prefix [manga-], changing its grammatical function into a verb that inherently includes the tool used. This adaptation occurs because Mandailing speech patterns favor linguistic efficiency, condensing complex phrases into simpler, contextually understood expressions.

3.4. Discussion

The linguistic transformations demonstrated above align with previous research on verbal incorporation in Mandailing speech (Nursaima & Mulyadi, 2023). While the focus of previous studies may differ, this research supports the widespread use of incorporation within the Mandailing community. The words that undergo incorporation are commonly used in daily communication, reinforcing their functional significance in spoken language. As observed, instrumental incorporation plays a crucial role in Mandailing linguistic structures because it allows for:

- (i) Condensed Sentence Structures: Incorporation reduces phrase length, making communication more efficient.
- (ii) Enhanced Expressiveness: The merged words retain the original meaning while simplifying the syntax.
- (iii) Contextual Understanding: Since these linguistic forms are commonly used, speakers within the Mandailing community can easily recognize and understand them (Caplan *et al.*, 2020; Hahn *et al.*, 2020; Nursaima & Mulyadi, 2023; Simanjuntak & Mulyadi, 2019).

This incorporation process highlights how the Mandailing language continues to evolve, adapting to communication needs while maintaining cultural and linguistic identity.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data leads to the conclusion that verbal incorporation in the Mandailing language occurs in two primary categories: objective incorporation and instrumental incorporation. In objective incorporation, the verb and object are merged, resulting in a shorter and more efficient expression. This is observed in words such as marsidoka (giving

alms), makkobari (advising), and mardahan (cooking rice), where the noun is absorbed into the verb to simplify sentence structure. In instrumental incorporation, the tool used for an action is integrated into the verb itself, modifying both its meaning and syntactic structure. Examples include manaba (cutting with a machete) and mangarabi (harvesting with a sickle), where the instrument becomes part of the verb rather than remaining an independent noun. These linguistic transformations occur because Mandailing speakers favor concise expressions, enhancing communication efficiency and fluency. Understanding these processes contributes to the study of morphology, phonology, and language education, particularly in teaching and preserving indigenous languages.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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