

A comparative typology of verbal affixes in Riau-Malay and Sundanese

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of verbal affixes in two Austronesian languages, Riau-Malay and Sundanese, with a focus on their morphological, syntactic, and semantic properties. Both languages are spoken in the Indonesian archipelago, and while they share certain linguistic characteristics, they exhibit intriguing differences in their verbal affixation systems. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of linguistic diversity within Austronesian languages and to reveal on the mechanisms underlying verb formation in these two distinct linguistic systems. By comparing and contrasting the verbal affixation systems in these languages, this study aims to reveal striking differences in terms of affix types, attachment patterns, and grammatical functions. The analysis explored the morphology of verbal affixes used in Riau-Malay and its comparison in Sundanese. It identifies clear distinctions in the ways affixes are employed to mark tense, aspect, mood, and other grammatical categories. Furthermore, the study also investigated the syntactic roles of verbal affixes, exploring how they affect word order and argument structure in sentences. This analysis exposes intriguing patterns of valency-changing operations in Riau-Malay and Sundanese. The findings of this study are expected to enhance people's understanding of Riau-Malay and Sundanese and to contribute to the broader typological and theoretical discussions in linguistics. The comparative analysis of these two languages provides valuable insights into the ways in which languages within the Austronesian family can diverge and adapt to their unique cultural and historical contexts. Ultimately, this study may be valuable to advance our knowledge of linguistic diversity and variation, offering a deeper appreciation of the intricate web of languages that shape human communication in the Indonesian archipelago and beyond.

Keywords: Austronesian languages; Riau-Malay; Semantics; Sundanese; Syntax; verbal affixes

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INTRODUCTION

The diversity of linguistic structures and systems across the world's languages is a testament to the rich tapestry of human communication. Within the realm of Austronesian languages, this diversity is strikingly evident in the morphological and syntactic properties of verbal affixes (Aldridge, 2022; Alves et al., 2020). This study embarks on a comparative journey into the linguistic landscapes of Riau-Malay

and Sundanese, two Austronesian languages spoken in the Indonesian archipelago. These languages, while sharing a common Austronesian ancestry, have evolved unique verbal affixation systems influenced by centuries of cultural and historical interactions. This study aims to unravel the intricate web of affixation patterns that shape verb formation in these languages, shedding light on their typological distinctions and theoretical implications.

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The Austronesian language family is one of the world's largest and most diverse language families, encompassing over 1,200 languages spoken across a vast geographical area, from Madagascar to the Pacific Islands. The linguistic diversity within this family is astounding, with languages that exhibit a wide array of morphological, syntactic, and phonological features (Gil & Schapper, 2020, p. 1). Central to this diversity is the intricate system of affixation used in many Austronesian languages to convey nuanced grammatical and semantic information (Blust, 2013).

Riau-Malay is a prominent Austronesian language. It finds its home in the Riau Province of Indonesia, a region characterized by its cultural and linguistic diversity. This linguistic landscape has been significantly shaped by historical factors, particularly its role as a pivotal trade hub in Southeast Asia (Percillier, 2024, p. 15.). The influence of Riau-Malay extends beyond its geographical boundaries, with traces of its linguistic legacy evident in neighboring regions (Darmawan, 2021). It is a testament to the resilience of this language that, despite centuries of contact with Arabic and other languages, it has maintained its distinct identity while absorbing a rich tapestry of linguistic elements (Adelaar, 2005; Bakar & Wee, 2021).

In contrast, Sundanese, primarily spoken in the West Java Province of Indonesia, presents an intriguing linguistic landscape deeply intertwined with its cultural heritage (Machdalena et al., 2023). Sundanese has not been immune to external influences, but its unique identity has remained remarkably resilient. The Sundanese people have cultivated a rich cultural heritage, complete with their script, *Aksara Sunda*, and artistic traditions (Fadilah et al., 2023; Lindsay, 2003). This cultural richness has played a pivotal role in shaping the linguistic features of Sundanese, setting it apart from neighboring languages, including Javanese and Riau-Malay (Dardjowidjojo, 1998).

The juxtaposition of Riau-Malay and Sundanese provides a fascinating case study in linguistic diversity and contact-induced change within the Austronesian family. While these languages share a common Austronesian ancestry, their unique historical trajectories have led to distinct linguistic and cultural outcomes. Riau-Malay's history as a trade and cultural nexus has exposed it to a plethora of external influences, resulting in a lexicon enriched by Arabic and other languages. The intricate interplay of these linguistic elements within Riau-Malay showcases the adaptability and resilience of language in response to cultural dynamics (Paauw, 2009).

In contrast, Sundanese's unwavering focus on preserving its cultural identity has contributed to the retention of a linguistic system that reflects its distinct heritage (Machdalena et al., 2023). This

commitment to cultural preservation, seen in the continued use of *Aksara Sunda* and the maintenance of traditional arts and rituals, has safeguarded the uniqueness of Sundanese (Fadilah et al., 2023; Lindsay, 2005). Such resilience and determination in the face of external influences illuminate the profound connection between language, culture, and identity in the evolution of Sundanese (Machdalena et al., 2023, p. 1748).

This study embarked on an exploration of the verbal affixation systems of Riau-Malay and Sundanese, which are not only a testament to the linguistic diversity within the Austronesian family but also a reflection of the complex interplay between language, culture, and historical dynamics in the Indonesian archipelago. The investigation aims to unravel the intricate web of affixation patterns that shape verb formation in these languages, revealing their typological distinctions and theoretical implications within the broader context of Austronesian linguistics.

Verbal affixes play a pivotal role in the grammar of many languages, including Riau-Malay and Sundanese. They contribute to the expression of tense, aspect, mood, voice, and other grammatical categories (Aldridge, 2021a, p. 214). Understanding the affixation systems of these languages provides a window into their linguistic complexity and the ways in which they encode information within verb forms (Aldridge, 2021b).

Comparative typological studies have long been a driving force in linguistic study, offering insights into the universal and language-specific features of human language (Croft, 2001; Wiltschko, 2021). By comparing the verbal affixation systems of Riau-Malay and Sundanese, this study aims to contribute to broader typological discussions in linguistics. Moreover, this comparative analysis has theoretical implications, as it allows us to examine the mechanisms of affixation and valency-changing operations in distinct linguistic systems (Haspelmath, 2007; Olthof, 2020, p. 205.).

This study sets out to achieve several objectives. Firstly, it seeks to provide a comprehensive description of the verbal affixation systems in Riau-Malay and Sundanese, highlighting their morphological and syntactic properties. Secondly, it aims to uncover the semantic nuances introduced by verbal affixes in both languages. Thirdly, it investigates the historical and contact-induced factors that have shaped these systems. Finally, this study contributes to the broader understanding of Austronesian linguistic diversity and its implications for linguistic theory. The results of this study are expected to contribute valuable insights into the understanding of typological diversity within the Austronesian language family. Additionally, this comparison can offer a deeper understanding of the linguistic relationships between

the two languages and their implications within the social and cultural contexts of the Sundanese and Riau-Malay speaking-communities.

METHOD

This study employed a multi-dimensional approach to data collection, annotation, and analysis. The methodology encompasses some annotation and analytical techniques, ranging from morphological and syntactic analysis to qualitative assessments of affix usage. Furthermore, the study performed semantic analysis to explore aspectual distinctions and employs a historical and sociolinguistic lens to understand the evolution and sociocultural influences on the affixation patterns observed (Di Carlo & Good, 2023; Dukic & Palmer, 2024; cf. Naismith & Kanwit, 2021).

Data Collection

To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the verbal affixation systems in Riau-Malay and Sundanese, this study employed a multifaceted data collection approach. The primary data sources included both written texts and spoken language samples obtained through fieldwork and existing linguistic corpora (cf. Kessler et al., 2023; see also Kessler & Polio, 2023). The written texts encompassed a variety of genres, including literature, folklore, newspapers, and religious texts, to ensure a diverse representation of language use in both Riau-Malay and Sundanese (cf. Alfraidi et al., 2022; Sneddon, 1996).

Fieldwork played a crucial role in the data collection process (Martínez, 2020). Native speakers of Riau-Malay and Sundanese were engaged in interviews and elicitation tasks to elicit natural language production and capture spoken language phenomena. These fieldwork sessions were conducted in collaboration with local linguists and language experts to ensure accurate transcription and data annotation (Borges & Faria, 2023; cf. Djenar, 2009).

Data Annotation and Analysis

The collected data underwent an annotation process to identify and categorize verbal affixes within the corpus. This study utilized specialized linguistic software and tools for morphological and syntactic analysis, enabling us to mark affix boundaries, gloss morphemes, and document their associated grammatical functions (Matan & Velvizhy, 2024).

The annotated data were subjected to qualitative analyses that involved the examination of individual affixes, their attachment patterns, and their grammatical roles within sentences. This study considered a wide range of linguistic features, including tense, aspect, mood, voice, and valency-changing operations, to gain insights into the multifaceted nature of verbal affixation in Riau-

Malay and Sundanese (Arkadiev, 2020; Haspelmath, 2002; Inglese, 2022). Some simple quantitative procedures are employed to provide a statistical overview of the frequency and distribution of affixes in the corpus. These procedures allowed the study to identify significant patterns, preferences, and deviations in the use of verbal affixes, revealing the typological distinctions between the two languages (Bickel et al., 2015; Hecce, 2023, p. 321).

Semantic Analysis

To unravel the semantic nuances introduced by verbal affixes in Riau-Malay and Sundanese, this study employed a semantic analysis framework. This involved the identification of lexical and grammatical aspectual distinctions conveyed through affixation, as well as an exploration of the ways in which these languages express temporality, modality, and event structure (Butt et al., 2021).

Historical and Sociolinguistic Context

The investigation of the historical and sociolinguistic factors influencing verbal affixation in Riau-Malay and Sundanese was informed by a combination of archival study, diachronic linguistic analysis, and limited expert consultations. This study examined texts and language resources to trace the evolution of affixation patterns and discern the impacts of language contact and change (cf. Blust, 2013; Redelinghuys, 2022).

Expert consultations with native speakers, language scholars, and cultural experts from the Riau and West Java regions played a vital role in contextualizing our findings. These consultations provided valuable insights into the sociolinguistic dynamics, language attitudes, and language preservation efforts within the communities where Riau-Malay and Sundanese are spoken (Siebenhütter, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In line with the purposes, this study employed a comparative typological approach to reveal significant insights into the features of verbal affixes in both languages. The comparison not only underscores or proposes the unique characteristics and commonalities between Riau-Malay and Sundanese but also dig to a deeper language typology.

Verbal Affixes in Riau-Malay

The affix types discussed here pertain exclusively to single and co-affixes. Combinations of affixes will not be addressed, as the affix functions are more readily observed when they stand alone as linguistic units (Benavides, 2022, p. 87; and see also Schiff et al., 2020). These affixes exhibit both functional and meaningful properties (Haspelmath, 2021). Functional properties, in this context, refer to their

categorical functions, which transform the base form from one category to another. The discussion of meaning within these affix morphemes pertains to grammatical meaning rather than lexical semantics. Therefore, the discussion of meaning is conducted concurrently with the discussion of function. In this regard, the verbal affixes identified include {meN-},

{beR-}, {peR-}, {teR-}, {di-}, {-kan}, {beR-kan}, and {beR-an}.

Prefix {meN-}

The prefix {meN-} forms adjectives derived from nominal base forms. It conveys the meaning as follows.

1. It signifies the meaning of 'becoming,' for instance, /mengoeh/ 'becoming hard' and /melombik/ 'becoming soft,' as illustrated in the following sentences.

(Example 1) *Tanah itu sudah me-ngoeh saking lamanya.*
ground the has PRE-become hard due to long time
The ground has become hard due to its long duration.

(Example 2) *Tanah itu me-lombik.*
ground the PRE-become soft
The ground has become soft.

In these examples, the prefix {meN-} serves to derive adjectives from nominal base forms, indicating a transformation into a particular state or condition. The prefix {meN-} has the capacity to

form both transitive and intransitive verbs originating from base forms of verbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and numerals.

1. Signifying the meaning of 'performing an action according to what is intended in the base form.' For example, /melempar/ 'to throw' and /membuat/ 'to make,' as demonstrated in the following sentences.

(Example 3) *Husin me-lempar anjing.*
Husin ACT-throw Dog
Husin throws the dog.

(Example 4) *Mak mem-buat kue.*
Mother ACT-make cake
'Mother is making a cake.'

2. It expresses the meaning of 'using or employing.' For instance, /memaku/ 'to nail' and /menyabit/ 'to pluck,' as shown in these sentences:

(Example 5) *Tukang itu mantap botol me-maku tembok itu.*
worker the securely really PRE-nailing wall The
'The worker is nailing the wall securely.'

(Example 6) *Petani itu mem-babat rumput.*
farmer the PRE-cutting Grass
The farmer is cutting the grass.

In addition to its versatility in forming verbs from various grammatical bases that encapsulate meanings of action, usage, and transformation, the prefix also functions to showcase existence, sound production, motion, collection, resemblance, covering, condition, and verbalization. The examples above demonstrate only some versatilityes of the prefix {meN-} in conveying a range of

meanings and functions within the Riau-Malay linguistic context.

Prefix {beR-}

The prefix {beR-} has the ability to form verbs originating from nouns, adjectives, and numerals. It carries several meanings as follows.

1. It signifies the meaning of 'engaging in as a livelihood,' for example, /besawah/ 'to engage in rice farming' in the following sentence.

(Example 7) *Sekolahnya itu dibiayai orang tuanya dari hasil bersawah di desa.*
school the funded parents from result PRE-rice farming In village
His school is funded by his parents from the income earned from rice farming in the village.

2. It expresses the meaning of 'calling,' for instance, /beRulung/ 'to call out' in the following Example.

(Example 8) *Anak itu berulung kepada orang yang menolongnya.*
kid the PRE-call to person that help-him
The child calls out to the person who helped him.

3. Conveying the meaning of 'acquiring, producing, or having,' for example, /beRanak/ 'to give birth to children' and /beRuntung/ 'to be lucky' in the following sentences.

(Example 9) *Aku tak menyangka akan beranak kembar.*
 I not expect will PRE-give birth Twins
 I did not expect to give birth to twins.

These examples demonstrate the versatile usage of the prefix {beR-} in conveying various meanings and functions within the Riau-Malay language context. In addition to indicating livelihood engagement, calling, and possession or production, the prefix also forms verbs that indicate

states of being, reflexivity, seeking assistance, transportation, and unification.

Prefix {peR-}

The prefix {peR-} is capable of forming verbs derived from nouns, adjectives, and numerals. It carries several meanings.

1. It signifies the meaning of 'making or turning something into,' for example, /peRbabu/ 'to enslave' in the following sentence.

(Example 10) *Jangan perbudak lagi orang-orang tak punya itu.*
 not enslave again people not having the
 Do not enslave those who are helpless.

2. It expresses the meaning of 'calling or regarding as,' for instance, /peRtuan/ 'lord' in the sentence as follows.

(Example 11) *Jangan pertuan lagi orang-orang yang tidak bijaksana itu.*
 not master again people that not wise The
 Don't regard them as lords; they are not wise.

3. Conveying the meaning of 'each, dividing, or making into,' for example, /peRdua/ 'into two,' /peRcantik/ 'to beautify,' and /peRjelas/ 'to clarify' in the following sentences.

(Example 12) *Perdua-lah kue-kue itu.*
 divide – two cakes The
 Divide the cakes into two.

Prefix {teR-}

The prefix {teR-} is capable of forming verbs derived from adjectives. Its meaning is 'continuous' or 'repetitive,' for instance, /teRmonung/ 'to be lost in thought' in the Example 13.

(Example 13) *Mengapa kau dari tadi duduk termenung saja?*
 why you from previous sit think only
 Why have you been sitting lost in thought since earlier?

(Example 14) *Perkaranya sudah diperiksa dari sebulan yang lalu.*
 The case have been-examined from a month that ago
 The case has been examined since a month ago.

Prefix {bese-}

The prefix {bese-} forms verbs derived from base verbs. Its meaning is 'mutual' or 'reciprocal,' for example, /bese-tikam/ 'to stab each other' in the Example 15.

(Example 15) *Orang-orang tadi saling bersetikam di samping itu.*
 people previously each-other Stabbing in beside it
 Those people were stabbing each other next to it.

(Example 16) *Kabarkan sama mereka berita yang bagus itu.*
 announce to they news that good the
 Announce the good news to them.

Confix {beR-kan}

The confix {beR-kan} forms verbs derived from nouns. Its meaning signifies the meaning of 'using as,' for example, /besenjatokan/ 'to arm with'.

Prefix {di-}

The prefix {di-} can form passive verbs derived from base verbs. Its meaning is 'passive,' for example, /diperiksa/ 'to be examined' (see Example 13).

Suffix {kan-}

The suffix {kan-} forms verbs derived from nouns and verbs. Its meaning is 'causative,' for example, /kabarkan/ 'to announce' (see the Example 16).

Circumfix {beR-an}

The circumfix {beR-an} forms verbs derived from base verbs. Its meaning expresses 'mutual' or 'reciprocal,' for example, /bepogangan/ 'to hold hands' and /bedatangan/ 'to arrive together'.

(Example 17) *Pahlawan kita pada jaman dulu bersenjatakan bambu runcing.*
hero we on era ago armed bamboo sharp
Our heroes in ancient times armed themselves with bamboo spears.

(Example 18) *Kedua pengantin itu berpegangan tangan.*
two brides the PRE-hold Hand
The two newlyweds are holding hands.

Verbal Affixes in Sundanese

Verbal affixes in Sundanese play a critical role in conveying grammatical and semantic nuances. Sundanese, like many Austronesian languages, utilizes a rich system of affixation to modify the meaning of root words, especially verbs. These affixes can indicate aspects such as tense, mood, voice, and the relationship between the subject and the action. Since the main idea of this study is to compare the verbal affixes in Rieu-Malay to the similar in Sundanese, some forms are identified as their equals. They are Prefixes {Ng-}, {Ny-}, {M-}, {N-}, {Di-}, {Ar-}, Circumfixes {PaN- + -Keun}, {Di-+-An}, and {Di- + -Keun}, and infix {-ar-}. The use of prefixes, circumfixes, and infixes is extensive, allowing speakers to convey different aspects of verbal and nominal action, including voice, aspect, mode, and relational dynamics between subjects, objects, and actions.

Prefix {Ng-}

Indicates an active voice, often used with verbs to show that the subject is performing the action. For instance, the word "*ngadangu*" (to listen), from "*dangu*" (ear/hear), undergoes a morphological process that is characterized by the addition of the prefix "ng-" to the root word "dangu". The template for this conversion case is [[ng]V[dangu]N-aff]V. In this process, "*Ngadangu*" is transformed into a verb, making it a verbalization. The meaning of "*Ngadangu*" differs from the original root "*dangu*" as it conveys the idea of making a slight movement.

Prefix {Ny-}

Prefix {Ny-} denotes an active voice and is used based on phonological rules, depending on the initial sound of the root word. For example, the word "*nyarita*" (to speak), from "*carita*" (say/tell) undergoes a morphological process of affixation through the addition of the prefix "ny-" to the root word "*carita*". The conversion process can be represented as [[ny]V[carita]V-aff]V. Similar to the previous case, "*nyarita*" becomes a verb, serving the function of verbalization. It transforms the meaning of "*carita*" into "to speak." Interestingly, the letter "c" in the morpheme "*carita*" disappears after affixation, and the prefix "ny-" assumes the role of the head of the morpheme, signifying control or agency.

Prefix {M-}

Prefix {M-} form active verbs, showing that the subject is performing the action. The choice

between "Ng-", "Ny-", and "M-" often depends on the initial sound of the root word and regional dialects. For instance, the word "*Meungkeut*" (to tie) demonstrates a morphological process of affixation by adding the prefix "m-" to the root word "*beungkeut*" (string). This process can be represented as [[m]V[beungkeut]V-aff]V. "*Meungkeut*" also functions as a verb, indicating verbalization, that changes the meaning of "*beungkeut*," which originally means "string," to "tie." Notably, the letter "b" in the morpheme "*beungkeut*" disappears post-affixation, and the prefix "m-" takes on the role of the head of the morpheme, implying control or agency.

Prefix {N-}

Prefix {N-} indicates an active voice, similar to "M-", "Ng-", and "Ny-", used based on the root word's initial sound. The word "*Nunjuk*" (to point) a morphological process of affixation occurs with the addition of the prefix "n-" to the root word "*tunjuk*" (show). The conversion case template is [[n]V[tunjuk]V-aff]V. "*Nunjuk*" functions as a verb, serving the purpose of verbalization. It changes the meaning of "*tunjuk*," originally signifying "to show," to "point." The prefix "n-" becomes the head of the morpheme after affixation, indicating control or agency.

Prefix {Di-}

Prefix {Di-} marks the passive voice, indicating that the subject is the recipient of the action. For instance, the word "*Diseupan*" (be steamed) exhibits a morphological process of affixation through the addition of the prefix "di-" to the root word "*seupan*" (steam). The template for this conversion case is [[di]V[seupan]N-aff]V. "*Diseupan*" functions as a verb, signifying verbalization. It transforms the meaning of "*seupan*," which means "steam," into "be steamed". Following affixation, the prefix "di-" assumes the role of the head of the morpheme, implying control or agency.

Prefix {Ar-}

In the morphological transformation involving the word "*Arindit*," ([some people] go) the application of the prefix "ar-" to the base lexeme "*indit*" (go) is through a process of affixation, a representation of which can be formalized as [[ar]V[indit]V-aff]V. Analogous to preceding instances, "*Arindit*" assumes a verbal function, epitomizing the process of verbalization. This alteration modifies the semantic content of "*indit*," which fundamentally

denotes "some people go," maintaining the same denotation post-modification. Post-affixation, the prefix "ar-" ascends to the role of the head of the morpheme, thereby embodying a sense of control or agency.

Circumfix {Pang-keun}

The circumfix {Pang-keun} forms verbs indicating causative action or to make a verb transitive, implying that the subject causes someone or something to perform an action. For example, the word "*Pangninyuhkeun*" (do the brew for someone) demonstrates a morphological process of affixation using a circumfix "pang-keun." This process can be represented as [[pang]V[inyuh]V[keun]V-aff]V. "*Pangninyuhkeun*" functions as a verb, serving the purpose of verbalization. It changes the meaning of "*inyuh*" which originally means "brew" to "please, do the brew". The circumfix "pang-keun" becomes the head of the morpheme after affixation, implying control or agency. This circumfix is typically used in imperative sentences.

Circumfix {Di-an}

Circumfix {Di-an} forms a passive voice, indicating an action performed on the subject, often with a sense that the action is fully completed or affecting the subject entirely. The word "*Dilalajoan*" (be watched) undergoes a morphological process of affixation using a circumfix "di-an." This process can be represented as [[di]V[lalajo]V[an]V-aff]V. "*Dilalajoan*" functions as a verb, signifying verbalization. It changes the meaning of "lalajo," which originally means "to watch," to "is watched by". The circumfix "di-an" becomes the head of the morpheme after affixation, indicating control or agency.

Circumfix {Di-keun}

Circumfix {Di-keun} also indicates passive voice but often implies an action directed towards the subject or for the benefit of the subject. For instance, the word "*Diasupkeun*" {being inserted} experiences a morphological process of affixation using a circumfix "di-keun." This process can be represented as [[di]V[asup]V[keun]V-aff]V. "*Diasupkeun*" functions as a verb, serving the purpose of verbalization. It changes the meaning of "*asup*," originally meaning "to enter," to "is inserted". The circumfix "di-keun" becomes the head of the morpheme after affixation, implying control or agency.

Infix {-ar-}

The infix {-ar-} is used for emphasis or to form different meanings, sometimes changing the class of the word. Its usage can vary widely and often depends on regional variations and context. For example, the word "*marawa*" (all subject bring) demonstrates a morphological process of affixation

using an infix "-ar-." This process can be represented as [[mawa][-ar-][mawa] V-aff]V. "*Marawa*" functions as a verb, signifying verbalization. It changes the meaning of "mawa," originally meaning "bring," to "bringing" (all subject bring) The infix "-ar-" becomes the head of the morpheme after affixation, indicating control or agency.

Similarities in Verbal Affixation: Riau-Malay and Sundanese

Verbal affixation offers a rich vein of inquiry into the morphological structures of various languages, including both Riau-Malay and Sundanese. Despite their origins, both languages exhibit compelling parallels in their employment of prefixation to construct verbal forms. This phenomenon underscores a broader linguistic principle that the processes of verb formation, particularly through affixation, transcend linguistic boundaries, revealing underlying universal patterns (Atmawijaya, 2023; Neubauer, 2024). Sneddon (1996) in his comprehensive analysis of Indonesian languages, including Riau-Malay, highlights the significance of prefixation in the Austronesian languages (see also Blust, 2023; McDonnell & Chen 2022), noting its centrality in verbal construction and grammatical function articulation. Similarly, Bangsa and Doran (2021), Gil (2005), and Robins (1959), in their respective studies, emphasize the role of affixation in Sundanese, illustrating how it serves not only to form verbs but also to encode nuanced aspects of meaning such as tense, aspect, and modality. These scholarly works collectively attest to the pivotal role of verbal affixation in linguistic morphology, illustrating how it acts as a unifying mechanism across linguistically and geographically diverse languages such as Riau-Malay and Sundanese.

Prefixation for Verb Formation

Both Riau-Malay and Sundanese employ prefixes as essential tools for creating verbs. These prefixes play a fundamental role in expanding the vocabulary of these languages and enabling speakers to convey a wide range of actions and concepts.

In Riau-Malay, the prefix "meN-" is central to the verbalization process. It acts as a versatile tool for deriving verbs from root words. For instance, consider the root word "makan" (to eat). By adding the "meN-" prefix, it transforms into "memakan," which conveys the idea of consuming. This prefix is not limited to specific semantic categories, allowing it to be used with a broad spectrum of root words, making it a highly productive element in Riau-Malay. It serves as a testament to the language's adaptability and its ability to convey precise actions by affixing "meN-" to various roots.

In Sundanese, the prefixes "ng-" and "ny-" serve functions similar to the "meN-" prefix in Riau-Malay. They are instrumental in converting root

words into verbs, thereby enabling speakers to articulate actions and events. For example, consider the Sundanese root word "*kulisik*," which denotes a slight movement or action. When the prefix "ng-" is added, it becomes "*Ngulisik*," signifying a subtle or slight action. This demonstrates the flexibility of Sundanese in utilizing prefixes to express nuanced meanings.

The employment of prefixation for verb formation in both Riau-Malay and Sundanese not only highlights the morphological richness of these languages but also underscores their dynamic nature in accommodating linguistic innovation and expansion. This morphological strategy facilitates a nuanced expression of actions and concepts, enhancing the descriptive capabilities of these languages. The productivity of such prefixes as "meN-" in Riau-Malay and "ng-" or "ny-" in Sundanese reflects a linguistic mechanism for adapting to new ideas and cultural shifts, thereby ensuring the languages' vitality and relevance in contemporary contexts.

Furthermore, the extensive use of prefixation has significant implications for language learning and computational linguistics. For language learners, understanding the system of prefixation is crucial for achieving proficiency, particularly in verb usage and construction. From a computational perspective, the predictability offered by such morphological processes can aid in the development of more sophisticated language processing tools, enhancing machine translation, speech recognition, and natural language understanding systems for Austronesian languages.

Recent studies, such as those by Adelaar (2021) and Nothofer (2022), continue to explore the morphological complexities of Austronesian languages, offering insights into their synchronic and diachronic developments. These investigations not only contribute to our understanding of language evolution but also have practical implications for linguistic documentation, preservation, and the development of educational resources aimed at promoting language learning and revitalization.

Enriching Vocabulary

The application of verbal affixation via prefixes in both Riau-Malay and Sundanese languages significantly augments their lexical inventories. This morphological mechanism permits the generation of novel verbs through the amalgamation of these prefixes with an extensive selection of root words. Such a process bestows upon speakers the capacity to articulate nuanced meanings, thereby rendering the languages both dynamic and highly adaptable to communicative needs.

Moreover, the processes of affixation afford speakers the facility to fabricate verbs that are contextually pertinent, a feature of considerable

value in dialogic and narrative contexts. Whether delineating actions, events, or processes, the faculty to construct verbs via prefixation underpins clear and precise communication.

This linguistic flexibility not only enriches the expressive power of the language but also reflects and accommodates cultural evolution and technological advancements. Recent scholarly works, such as those by Gunawan and Fauziyah (2021) and Samsi et al. (2021), provide an in-depth analysis of the role of morphological processes in language development and communication strategies. These studies underscore the importance of verbal affixation in the adaptive capacity of languages to new communicative challenges and sociocultural shifts.

Language Evolution and Adaptation

The commonality of prefixation in Riau-Malay and Sundanese exemplifies the dynamic nature of languages. Languages evolve and adapt to meet the communicative needs of their speakers. The utilization of prefixes for verb formation reflects the linguistic innovation and creativity within these language communities.

In summary, the use of prefixes for verb formation is a shared linguistic feature that underscores the richness and adaptability of Riau-Malay and Sundanese. It demonstrates how these languages leverage affixation processes to expand their vocabularies, convey nuanced meanings, and adapt to the evolving needs of their speakers. This commonality serves as a testament to the creative potential of languages and their ability to capture the intricacies of human experience.

Differences in Verbal Affixation: Riau-Malay and Sundanese

While Riau-Malay and Sundanese exhibit convergent patterns in the realm of verbal affixation, the nuances in their application of prefixes to forge verbs underscore distinctive linguistic features inherent to each language. These divergences not only illuminate the individual morphological complexities but also enrich our understanding of the broader typological landscape within the Austronesian language family. Such distinctions are pivotal in revealing the intricate interplay between linguistic structure and cultural context, offering profound insights into the unique linguistic identities of Riau-Malay and Sundanese.

Recent academic inquiries, such as those conducted by Begus et al. (2023) in the origins of the Austronesian voice system and subject-only restriction, and by Evans et al (2024), who explores prominence in Austronesian provide grounds for these differences. The first delineates the morphological strategies employed in Austronesian Languages, highlighting the distinct morphosyntactic environments that influence prefix

selection and application. Meanwhile, the later reveals how socio-cultural factors and historical language contact have shaped the evolution of verbal affixation in Austronesian, offering a nuanced perspective on Sundanese divergence from Riau-Malay.

Prefix Variation

In Riau-Malay, the primary prefix used for verb formation is "meN-." This prefix demonstrates a high degree of versatility, as it can be affixed to various root words, enabling the language to convey a wide range of actions and processes. Riau-Malay's consistent reliance on "meN-" for verbalization simplifies the process of verb formation and creates a sense of uniformity in the language.

In Sundanese, verb formation is more varied, as it employs multiple prefixes, primarily "ng-" and "ny-." These prefixes are attached to root words to create verbs, but the choice between "ng-" and "ny-" often depends on phonological considerations and the specific characteristics of the root word. This variation adds complexity to the language's verbal affixation process, requiring speakers to be attuned to the phonological nuances of the roots.

The contrast in verbal affixation strategies between Riau-Malay and Sundanese—specifically, the reliance on the "meN-" prefix in Riau-Malay and the utilization of both "ng-" and "ny-" prefixes in Sundanese—reveals underlying linguistic frameworks that reflect each language's unique approach to verb formation. This distinction not only has implications for linguistic analysis but also for language learning and computational linguistic modeling.

For learners, the uniformity in Riau-Malay's verb formation process may facilitate quicker acquisition of verbal structures, given the consistent application of the "meN-" prefix across verbs. Conversely, Sundanese presents a more challenging learning curve due to the need to master the phonological rules governing the selection between "ng-" and "ny-." Such complexity demands a deeper understanding of phonological patterns, potentially enriching learners' linguistic competence by encouraging attentiveness to subtle linguistic cues.

Phonological Considerations

Riau-Malay exhibits a more straightforward phonological system, where the prefix "meN-" is consistently applied, with limited variations based on root word characteristics. This phonological simplicity contributes to the ease of verb formation in the language. On the other hand, in Sundanese, phonological considerations play a significant role in determining which prefix to use. The choice between "ng-" and "ny-" depends on the phonemes present in the root word. This adds an additional layer of complexity to Sundanese verb formation, as

speakers must be mindful of phonological patterns and shifts.

Semantic Nuances

Riau-Malay's "meN-" prefix primarily focuses on the action or process itself, allowing for straightforward verb formation. It emphasizes what is being done, making it suitable for expressing actions in a direct manner. In Sundanese, the use of "ng-" and "ny-" prefixes can convey subtle semantic nuances. Depending on the prefix chosen, a verb may carry connotations related to the manner, intensity, or direction of an action. This allows for a more intricate expression of actions and events in Sundanese.

Regional Variation

Both Riau-Malay and Sundanese encompass regional dialects and variations, which can influence how verbal affixation is applied. In some cases, specific regions or communities may exhibit preferences for certain prefixes or affixation patterns, contributing to the richness and diversity of the languages.

Language Evolution

These differences in verbal affixation highlight how languages evolve and adapt to their unique cultural and linguistic contexts. Riau-Malay's reliance on "meN-" demonstrates a consistent and pragmatic approach to verb formation, while Sundanese's use of "ng-" and "ny-" reflects a more intricate phonological and semantic consideration in the process.

In summary, while both Riau-Malay and Sundanese use prefixes for verb formation, they differ in terms of prefix variation, phonological considerations, semantic nuances, regional variations, and the evolution of their linguistic systems. These differences illuminate the distinct linguistic characteristics of each language, showcasing their individual complexities and adaptability to meet the communicative needs of their speakers.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis between Riau-Malay and Sundanese regarding verbal affixation illuminates the linguistic complexities and distinct characteristics inherent to each language. Both languages utilize prefixes in verb formation, showcasing a foundational similarity in their morphological processes. Specifically, Riau-Malay predominantly employs the "meN-" prefix, whereas Sundanese utilizes "ng-" and "ny-" prefixes, reflecting a fundamental approach to deriving verbs from root words. This process underscores the transformation of nouns, adjectives, and other non-verbal elements into verbs, facilitating the

articulation of actions, processes, or events. Furthermore, the selection of prefixes in both languages is not arbitrary but imbued with semantic precision, allowing for the conveyance of nuanced meanings such as manner, intensity, or direction. This semantic depth, coupled with regional dialectical variations, highlights the dynamic adaptability of these languages to fulfill the expressive needs of their speakers.

However, beneath these similarities lie divergent linguistic practices that reveal the unique identities of Riau-Malay and Sundanese. The consistent use of "meN-" in Riau-Malay contrasts with the phonological sensitivity required in Sundanese, where the choice between "ng-" and "ny-" hinges on the phonetic context of the root word. This variance introduces an additional layer of complexity to Sundanese verb formation, demanding a nuanced understanding of phonological patterns. Moreover, the multiplicity of prefixes in Sundanese enables a richer expression of semantic nuances, offering a more intricate portrayal of actions and events than the comparatively straightforward approach of Riau-Malay.

This exploration into the verbal affixation of Riau-Malay and Sundanese not only showcases the linguistic dynamism and adaptability of these languages but also contributes to a broader appreciation of the Malayic and Sundanese language families. It reveals how linguistic structures evolve to meet the communicative demands of their cultural and regional contexts. The pragmatic use of "meN-" in Riau-Malay for verb formation signifies a streamlined linguistic strategy, while Sundanese's intricate prefix selection underscores a rich engagement with phonological detail and semantic depth. Through this lens, the study of Riau-Malay and Sundanese verbal affixation enriches our understanding of language structure, offering a glimpse into the intricate linguistic tapestry of the regions where these languages flourish.

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