

## NOMINAL INCORPORATION IN TOBA BATAK LANGUAGE

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### Abstract

The Batak Toba language has often been overlooked as a source of noun incorporation, likely due to its agglutinative nature, where many words are formed by combining multiple morphemes. Despite this, there may actually be significant occurrences of noun incorporation in Batak Toba. This study employs Mithun and Rosen's methodologies to investigate noun incorporation in Batak Toba. The findings indicate that noun incorporation, although not highly productive, does occur at levels I and II. Additionally, the study reveals that noun incorporation aligns with Mithun's concepts and unexpectedly (requiring further study) with two of Rosen's types: Compounding Nominal Incorporation and Nominal Incorporation Classifier. It also shows that much of the noun incorporation in Batak Toba is idiomatic, which, according to Mithun (1986), is common in several languages.

**Keywords:** *Classification of Incorporation, Morphology, Noun Incorporation, Syntax*

### Sari

Bahasa Batak Toba sering kali diabaikan sebagai sumber penggabungan kata benda, kemungkinan karena sifat aglutinatifnya, di mana banyak kata yang dibentuk dengan menggabungkan beberapa morfem. Meskipun demikian, sebenarnya mungkin ada kejadian signifikan dari penggabungan kata benda dalam bahasa Batak Toba. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi Mithun dan Rosen untuk menyelidiki penggabungan kata benda dalam bahasa Batak Toba. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penggabungan kata benda, meskipun tidak terlalu produktif, terjadi pada level I dan II. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa penggabungan kata benda selaras dengan konsep Mithun dan secara tak terduga (membutuhkan penelitian lebih lanjut) dengan dua tipe Rosen: Penggabungan Nominal Majemuk dan Pengklasifikasi Penggabungan Nominal. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar penggabungan kata benda dalam bahasa Batak Toba bersifat idiomatis, yang menurut Mithun (1986) merupakan hal yang umum terjadi dalam beberapa bahasa.

**Kata Kunci:** *Penggabungan Kata Benda, Morfologi, Sintaks, Klasifikasi Penggabungan*

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## Introduction

The Toba Batak language is classified as an agglutinative language due to its typology and morphological structure. In agglutinative languages, morphemes that each carry their own meaning combine to form words. Chimhundu (2021) describes agglutinative languages as being composed of free morphemes, which individually contain meaning. This aligns with Muhammad Fannami's (2011) perspective on agglutinative languages, which emphasizes the use of free morphemes within sentences. Linguists are particularly interested in studying the Toba Batak language as a benchmark for Nominal Incorporation, a feature prevalent in polysynthetic languages like those spoken by Native American tribes, Aboriginal groups in Australia, and some languages in Papua. Previous studies have analyzed Noun Incorporation in polysynthetic languages, such as Mapudungun, a language spoken by an indigenous tribe in Chile.

Noun Incorporation in Mapudungan (Baker, 2009):

a. *Ñi chao kintu-le-y ta.chi pu waka.*

my father seeks-PROG-3SG.SBJ.IND the COLL cow 'My father is looking for cows.'

b. *Ñi chao kintu-waka- le-y.*

My father seek-cow- PROG-3SG.SBJ.IND

'My father was looking for cows.

As mentioned earlier in *Mapudungan*, the clause in 1(a) is a standard transitive clause, where the noun phrase "*ñi chao*" ('my father') functions as the subject, "*kintu*" (search) as the transitive main verb, and "*ta.chi pu waka*" ('the cows') as the direct object. In example (1b), although it shares the same lexical form, the noun or direct object "*waka*" is incorporated into the verb. The intermediate position between the verb "*kintu*" and the suffixes "-le" and "-y" indicates that the newly formed construction is a singular verb.

Based on the examples of noun combining mentioned earlier, it is evident that noun combining is more complex than simply combining words. When words are combined, a new word is formed, categorized, and assigned to its appropriate lexeme, and it is used syntactically like any other lexeme. However, in noun merging, the new word created

from combining verbal and nominal root words serves two functions in the clause: it acts as a verb and one of the verb's arguments. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in languages where the valence of clauses changes with or without compounding. In such languages, when a noun merges with a verb, the clause becomes syntactically intransitive.

The concept of noun incorporation has been extensively studied by linguists across various languages. Krober (1909) suggests that noun incorporation involves combining a noun with a verb to create a predicate. Sapir (1909) further specifies that it is a process where a nominal stem is integrated with a verb, resulting in a morphologically complex verb. This view is supported by Gerds (1998), who asserts that compounding, from a morphological perspective, is the merging of a word (such as a verb or preposition) with another element, typically a noun, pronoun, or adverb.

The Experts conclude that noun incorporation happens through the merging of nouns and verbs to create complex verbs. This incorporation can be examined from both morphological and syntactic viewpoints. When objects are combined with verbs, they lose their syntactic independence. However, in certain languages, noun incorporation still necessitates a direct object in some instances (Mithun, 1984).

Research has investigated noun incorporation in numerous polysynthetic languages like North American indigenous languages and Aboriginal languages. It is evident that noun incorporation is highly productive and frequently used in everyday contexts within these polysynthetic languages. Conversely, in Indo-European languages such as Dutch, German, and English, Basilico (2016) examined noun incorporation in Frisian, a language closely related to German, revealing notable differences. The study contends that noun incorporation in Frisian necessitates analysis through syntactic fusion rather than being readily observable through morphological processes. Meanwhile, Barrie and Li (2012) explored noun incorporation in non-canonical languages, highlighting it as primarily a syntactic rather than a morphological phenomenon. According to Syahrin (2018), language is described as a uniquely human, non-instinctive method of expressing ideas, emotions, and desires using intentionally created symbols. Ramlan (2018)

emphasizes that language maintenance is a collective responsibility among its users. Furthermore, Akinwamide (2018) suggests that speaking multiple languages can influence one's attitudes differently compared to those who speak only one language. Ramlan (2018) also notes that language consists of arbitrary symbols with agreed-upon meanings within a community, usable and understandable across various contexts through consistent patterns.

Another language demonstrating noun incorporation as a syntactic process is Hopi, an indigenous language of North America studied by Gronemeyer (1996). Research indicates that Hopi meets the criteria outlined in Mithun's Type IV Noun Incorporation framework (1984). Chi (1992) examined noun combination in Chinese, finding similarities with VN combining units. This study shows that Chinese typology meets Mithun's Nominal Incorporation criteria at levels I and II. Additionally, Baker (2009) compared various approaches to Nominal Incorporation, including core movement, quasi-incorporation analysis by Massam, and base generation analysis by Van Geethoven, revealing new insights through head movement in the Mapudungan language. Meanwhile, Dayal (1998) discussed that unlike in other languages, the valency of noun combinations in Hindi remains unchanged, aligning with Rosen's (2004) classification of noun combinations, particularly those of the Classifier type. Yang (2014) contends that Noun Incorporation in Korean must adhere to the Head Movement Constraint (HMC) stage. The study also posits that semantically, only nouns fulfilling the thematic role of 'Theme' can be incorporated into noun compounds in Korean.

Based on a synthesis of multiple studies, it is evident that noun incorporation can be analyzed through diverse linguistic lenses including syntax, morphology, phonology, and semantics. Various theoretical frameworks such as the Head Movement Constraint in GB Theory and Theta Role, as popularized by Mithun (1984) and Rosen (2004), provide differing perspectives. This research aims to identify instances of Nominal Incorporation in Indonesian, utilizing Mithun and Rosen's classification as a basis.

When discussing noun incorporation, it's crucial to note that many linguists do not classify it as a syntactic construction. This view is supported by Mithun (1984; 1986), Di Sciullo, Williams (1987), and Rosen (2004), who argue that noun incorporation

primarily involves non-syntactic word formation due to the irregularity across languages worldwide. Mithun (2000) further suggests that incorporation is a morphological process where noun stems are merged into verb stems to create verb derivatives. From this perspective, noun incorporation represents the integration of a noun into a verb. Examples in English include "mountain climbing" and "babysitting."

Mithun (1984) categorized four kinds of Incorporation in different polysynthetic languages. This view is supported by Massam (2009), who argues that true Incorporation occurs exclusively in polysynthetic languages. According to this perspective, Incorporation involves the compounding of lexemes, wherein the verb and object merge directly to form a unified verb unit. Despite phonological separation, the noun loses its syntactic role as an argument, with the resulting Verb + Noun (VN) structure functioning as an intransitive predicate. According to Mithun, (1984) there are four types of noun combinations:

1. Lexical compounding involves combining a noun and a verb, or a verb and a noun. Phonological separation can be illustrated by examples like "Climbing a mountain."
2. Case role manipulation incorporates arguments into verbs, allowing new arguments to replace them. This process often involves Oblique Arguments.
3. Discourse structure manipulation uses noun combinations to convey information. Speakers may initially mention an entity clearly and subsequently refer to it as a compound noun, a characteristic often seen in polysynthetic languages.
4. Merger Classification categorizes compounds where a verb is paired with a common noun to describe a property of the entity, rather than the entity itself.

In an attempt to explore alternative noun compounding forms, Rosen (2004) simplifies Mithun's four types of Incorporation (IN) into just two: IN Classifier and IN Compound. IN Compound affects argument structure, unlike IN Classifier. In IN Compound, when a noun and a verb combine to form a complex verb, the direct object of the simple verb becomes part of the complex verb, precluding the addition of further direct objects. This characteristic of IN Compound resembles Mithun's Type 1 IN syntactically. In contrast, IN Classifier does not incorporate the direct object argument into the complex verb, necessitating the presence of the object in the sentence to complete the verb's argument,

akin to Mithun's Type 2 classification. In the example sentences below

(1) *Bapa mulak tu huta bulan nasalpu.* 'Father came home last month'.

There is a merging process between the verb "pulang" + the noun "desa." Syntactically, this combination is acceptable and grammatically correct in the Toba Batak language. This demonstrates that Mithun's classification approach is applicable to the Toba Batak language. Specifically, Mithun's Category Type 1, which involves the compounding of nouns, aligns with this example. This type of merging, known as lexical compounding or lexeme compounding, involves a verb and a noun and is phonologically distinct. In this process, the noun "kampung" loses its syntactic function as an argument.

### **Methods**

This study employs qualitative methods, gathering data from multiple sources including the Dictionary of the Toba Batak Language and original data generated by the researcher, who is a native speaker. The research adopts a literature review approach for primary data, where George (2008) argues that literature research does not necessitate respondents or participants; instead, the researcher identifies and interprets the data. Additionally, Bogdan and Taylor (1992) suggest that researchers can generate descriptive data to supplement explanations of social phenomena. Data collection utilized a purposive sampling method, as outlined by Hadi (2004). Here are the procedures: information is gathered from multiple sources. Subsequently, the data is presented and analyzed using the methodology developed by Mithun and Rosen. This study demonstrates the level of productivity of noun incorporation in the Toba Batak language, confirming its existence in agglutinative languages like Toba Batak.

### **Results and Discussion**

Noun incorporation in Indonesian diverges from the canonical type due to its Agglutinative Typology. Nevertheless, upon closer examination, certain lexical items align with Type I Noun Incorporation as defined by Mithun (1984), where basic lexical combinations constitute Noun Incorporation. Unlike in languages such as English, where verbs and nouns in Noun Incorporation remain phonologically and morphologically

distinct, Indonesian exhibits a structure akin to polysynthetic languages, where Noun Incorporations are phonologically and morphologically unified. Here, the corporate noun within the verb ceases to function as a sentence argument, with the Verb + Noun compound unit serving as an intransitive predicate.

c. *Damang mamilit asi di anggi niba* 'Father favors my sister'.

\*b Father chose to love my sister.

The term '*mamilit*' in sentence (a) combines the verb 'choose' and the noun 'asi'. This combination falls under type I, where a verb and noun are combined (V+N). Lexically, this process creates a new lexeme through derivation. 'Choose' is a transitive verb requiring an object. When 'choose' is suffixed with 'me' in sentence (b), it introduces semantic and morphological ambiguity, though not syntactic error. Thus, 'asi', an argument for choosing, integrates into the verb, despite remaining phonologically and morphologically distinct. The noun 'asi' loses its original semantic function as an argument.

(1) (a) *Soldadu timbung paiung huhut hasea.* 'Soldier parachuting successfully'

\*(b) Soldiers parachuting.

The two clauses mentioned above, while alike in nature, exhibit significant syntactic and morphological distinctions. In sentence (b), following the intransitive verb 'timbang', an instrument is appended, which contrasts with Mithun's concept of noun incorporation. Sentence (a) considers 'timbang paiung' as a type of noun compound, formed through lexical derivation of V+N. Phonologically distinct, these constructions form a cohesive unit. The noun 'umbrella' ceases to serve as a syntactic argument, with this VN combination acting as an intransitive predicate.

2) *maos ibana lulu pipi tu dosen.*

'He always craves for the attention of the lecturer'

The constructions involving V and N (lulu + cheek) are classified under Mithun Type I. In compound word formation from a morphological standpoint, it is essential that the verb stem remains unaffixed. Lulu pipi qualifies as a noun compound by meeting the criteria for a verb-noun compound that transforms into an intransitive predicate. This

linguistic phenomenon varies across languages, such as Southern Tiwa (South Tiwa), where the arguments of merged nouns retain robust semantic meaning (Rosen, 2004).

(3) *Oma manunsi abit di aek godang.*

Mother washes the clothes in the river

The V and N construction (*manunsi + abit*) falls under Mithun's Type II classification. According to Mithun's classification of Nominal Mergers, when Type I Nominal Mergers can introduce an object, it is termed as Case manipulation. This phenomenon involves inserting the object into the verb, resulting in the creation of a new intransitive verb. In the given sentence, '*aek godang*' serves as the direct object in the Nominal Incorporation of '*manunsi abit*'.

(4) a. *damang mangan di arian ari.*

'Dad eats at noon'

d. *damang mangan japjap.*

'Dad eats lunch voraciously'

e. *hansit roha dainang*

'Mother is disappointed'

In the Batak Toba language, the verb "*mangan*" acts ergatively, functioning both transitively and intransitively. In sentence 7(a), "*mangan*" is followed by a time adverb, crucial for highlighting the close relationship between the verb and its combined noun. Sentence 7(b) illustrates how "lunch," a type I noun combination, loses its valency with "*arian*" merged into "*mangan*," transforming it into an intransitive predicate incapable of taking an object but modifiable in specific contexts. Similarly, in sentence 7(c), "*roha*" merges with the verb "eat," reflecting how in certain Austronesian languages, such as Aboriginal and Fijian, noun combinations alter meanings. According to Arms (1974), cited in Mithun (1984), such phenomena occur due to lexical derivation, where the compounded meaning may not directly correlate with the individual components' meanings..

5) a. \*halaki mangalo manuk\*.



b. They are cockfighters.

'They are cemani cockfights'.

The verb 'mangalo' and the noun 'manuk' fall under Mithun's Type II Nominal Combination because even after combining these nouns, it remains possible to include an object, such as 'cemani'. Sentence (8) a. becomes ungrammatical because the Indonesian verb 'manuk' forms a word pair. In contrast, sentence (8) b. satisfies the grammatical requirements of this Nominal Concatenation and aligns with the classification proposed by Rosen (2004). Rosen argues that this type of Classifier Merger involves a noun doubling phenomenon, where there is resemblance between the merged noun 'mangalo manuk' and the object noun 'cemani', which specifies 'manuk'.

(6) a. *Dainang mangampini anggi niba.* Dainang defends anggi.

(7) a. *Au naeng mambalos pangalaho na denggan*

'I want to repay'.

The noun combinations found in the preceding sentence fall into category I Noun compounding, as described by Mithun, and noun compounding as discussed earlier (Rosen, 2004), involve combining the noun 'ampini' to create the verb 'mangampini', thereby fulfilling the V+N process classification. Semantically, 'mangampini' carries an idiomatic meaning, a concept supported by Mithun (1986), who notes the diverse occurrence of noun combinations across languages. In examples (6) a and b, both 'mangampini' and 'mambalos pangalaho' exemplify idiomatic noun combinations, a phenomenon observed in various languages, including Tongan.

(7) b. *malo ibana manangko roha niba*

'He is good at winning my heart'.

The phrase 'manangko' + 'roha' exemplifies noun compounding in the Tongan Batak language. This V + N construction fits into Mithun's type I Noun Merger classification and also aligns with Rosen's Compound Noun Merger. In this merger, 'roha' loses its syntactic role as an argument and morphologically merges into 'manangko', while remaining phonologically distinct. Semantically, 'manangko roha' idiomatically denotes being adept at capturing attention.

## Conclusion

Noun combinations in Indonesian are generally unproductive and infrequently used. This is attributed to the agglutinative nature of Indonesian rather than a polysynthetic typology. Nevertheless, noun incorporation does occur in Indonesian, albeit subtly. Previous research on incorporation in Indonesian has primarily focused on verb deletion, as seen in studies on the Toba Batak language by Simanjuntak & Mulyadi (2019) and on the Balinese language by Winaya (2017). This presents an opportunity for researchers to delve into Noun Mergers in Indonesian. According to Mithun (1986), noun combining is a morphological process that emphasizes lexical formation or derivation. Massam (2009) suggests that Nominal Incorporation is ripe for exploration at syntactic, morphological, and semantic levels. The study indicates that noun incorporation in Indonesian, although not prolific, occurs at levels I and II. Mithun's concept of noun combining, and surprisingly, Rosen's classifications of Nominal Merging require further investigation. Additionally, many noun combinations in Indonesian are idiomatic, a common phenomenon in several languages according to Mithun (1986).

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### **Conflict of Interest**

No potential conflict of interest is reported.

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