

# Differences of Verb Markers between Old and Present-Day Indonesian

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**Abstract.** Indonesian is not a dead language that it develops all the time. When a language develops, changes cannot be prevented or avoided. Language change may occur in every aspect of language, such as sound change, syntactic change, morphological change, orthography change, and semantic change. This paper deals with morphological change of language. It is to find out the differences of transitive verb markers between old Indonesian and present-day Indonesian. This research is a kind of comparative study. Old and present-day Indonesian words used to refer to the same thing were compared to see their difference morphologically. The data of old Indonesian words are taken from Indonesian novels entitled Sukreni Gadis Bali [1], Sitti Nurbaya [2], and Salah Asuhan [3]. All of these novels have been translated into English. The data of present-day Indonesian words are taken from the result of back-translation of the translated novels. The result of the research shows that in general the active transitive verbs of Indonesian are marked by prefix *me-* and the passive ones by prefix *di-*, but there are some differences between old and present-day Indonesian. The markers of active transitive verbs of old Indonesian have changed: *me-kan* becomes *me-*; *me-* and *-i* becomes *me-* and *-kan*; *me-* and *-kan* becomes *me-* and *-i*; and *me-* becomes *me-* and *-i* in new Indonesian. The markers of passive transitive verbs of old Indonesian also changed: *di-* and *-kan* becomes *di-*; *di-* and *-kan* becomes *di-* and *-i*; *di-* becomes *di-* and *-i*; and *di-i* becomes *di-* in present-day Indonesian.

**Keywords:** verbal markers; old Indonesian; new Indonesian; back-translation

## 1 Introduction

Indonesian language was announced as a national language in October 28, 1928. Since then, and even before the announcement, a number of literary works were written in Indonesian. As those literary works were written some decades ago, the speakers of present-day Indonesian found difficult to understand them. This implies that there are differences between old Indonesian and the present-day Indonesian.

Indonesian is not a dead language that it develops all the time. When a language develops, changes cannot be prevented or avoided. Language change may occur in every aspect of language, such as sound change, syntactic change, morphological change, orthography change and semantic change. These also result in the occurrence of differences in all of these language aspects. Differences between the old Indonesian and the present-day Indonesian can be identified by comparing the old Indonesian texts and the present-day Indonesian ones. By applying back-translation [4] and language change [5], this study is to find the differences between old Indonesian and the present-day Indonesian. The old Indonesian texts (OIT) were

taken from the novels *Sukreni Gadis Bali* [1], *Sitti Nurbaya* [2], and *Salah Asuhan* [3]. All these novels have been translated into English. *Sitti Nurbaya* was translated into *Sitti Nurbaya* [6], *Sukreni Gadis Bali* into *The Rape of Sukreni* [7], and *Salah Asuhan* into *Never the Twain* [8]. The present-day Indonesian texts (PIT) were obtained by translating the translated texts (TT) back into Indonesian by using Indonesian spoken nowadays.

The method of back-translation was applied by a number of experts to overcome language phenomena [9], [10], [11]. This present study is to apply the back-translation method in identifying language change which results in the differences of verbal markers between old Indonesian and present-day English.

## 2 Method

This study is to find out the changes of verb markers of Indonesian language. It delas with the changes of verb markers of old Indonesian carried out by comparing old Indonesian and the present-day Indonesian. The data of old Indonesian were taken from Indonesian novels written and firstly published some dacades ago. The novels are *Sukreni Gadis Bali* [1], *Sitti Nurbaya* [2] and *Salah Asuhan* [3]. *Sukreni Gadis Bali* was translated into *The Rape of Sukreni* [7], *Sitti Nurbaya* into *Sitti Nurbaya* [6], and *Salah Asuhan* into *Never the Twain* [8]. This study was carried out in some steps.

Firstly, texts in the forms of verb showing changes found in old Indonesian texts were identified. The translated texts of old Indonesian texts were translated back into Indonesian by using present-day Indonesian. The results of the back-translation were then compared with the old Indonesian texts. The differences were analyzed morphologically from the aspects of their verbal markers.

## 3 Results and Discussion

The investigation on the verb markers of old and present-day Indonesian by using back-translation method reveals that there are differences between them. The differences include differences in terms of their active and passive markers.

### Differences in Active Verb Markers

In general, active verbs of old and present-day Indonesian are characterized by the use of prefix *me-*. Some differences occur when the old and present-day Indonesian verbs are viewed from the affixes used.

*Me-* and *-kan* in old Indonesian but *me-* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 1:

OIT: Kalau aku kembali ke Padang, niscaya akan kulihatlah sekalian mulut yang *menejekkan* aku ... [2, p. 238].

TT: If I return to Padang, I'm sure to see all those who *mock* me ... [6, p. 190].

PIT: Jika aku kembali ke Padang, pastilah banyak orang yang *menejek* aku.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	menejekkan	ejek	<i>me-kan</i>
TT	mock		

PIT	mengejek	ejek	<i>me-</i>
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Based on the comparison between the verb *mengejekkan* and *mengejek*, it shows that old Indonesian verb is marked by the use of confix *me-kan*, while in present-day Indonesian by prefix *me-*.

Datum 2:

OIT: ... karena penjahat yang *membuangkan* Nurbaya, ialah orangnya [2, p. 235].

TT: ... for the criminal who *would have done* it was his man [6, p. 188].

PIT: ... karena penjahat itulah yang telah *membuang* Nurbaya.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	<i>membuangkan</i>	buang	<i>me-kan</i>
TT	would have thrown		
PIT	<i>membuang</i>	buang	<i>me-</i>

Datum 2 also reveals that the verb *membuangkan* and *membuang* have the same base, that is *buang*. The difference is dealing with the markers of the two verbs. *Membuangkan* uses verb marker represented by confix *me-kan*, while *membuang* prefix *me-*.

*Me-i* in old Indonesian and *me-kan* in present-day English

Datum 3:

OIT: Sekarang mataku sudah mengantuk, suruhlah, si Hasan *memadami* lampu dan menutup pintu [2, p. 260].

TT: For now, my eyes are heavy. Have Hasan *extinguish* the lamps and shut the doors! [6, p. 208].

PIT: Aku sekarang sudah mengantuk. Apakah Hasan sudah *memadamkan* lampu dan menutup pintu?

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	<i>memadami</i>	padam	<i>me-</i> and <i>-i</i>
TT	extinguish		
PIT	<i>memadamkan</i>	padam	<i>me-</i> and <i>-kan</i>

The two verbs of datum 3 are composed of the base *padam*. They have different markers. The verb *memadami* is formed by suffix *-i* and prefix *me-*, while *memadamkan* by suffix *-kan* and prefix *me-*.

*Me-kan* in old Indonesian and *me-i* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 4:

OIT: ... masing-masing mencari tempat akan *melindungkan* diri serta barang-barangnya [2, p. 232].

TT: ... they fled this way and that, in search for *shelter* for themselves and their belongings [6, p. 186].

PIT: ... mereka pergi kesana kemari supaya dapat *melindungi* diri dan barang-barangnya.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	<i>melindungkan</i>	lindung	<i>me-</i> and <i>-kan</i>
TT	shelter		

PIT	melindungi	lindung	<i>me-</i> and <i>-i</i>
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*Melindungi* and *melindungi* belong to transitive verbs. They are formed by the same base. The base is *lindung*. The two verbs are different in terms of their markers. Old Indonesian verb uses the marker of prefix *me-* and suffix *-kan*, while the present-day Indonesian verb of prefix *me-* and suffix *-i*.

*Me-* in old Indonesian and *me-i* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 5:

OIT: ... aku akan *mengikut* mereka dengan kapal ini ke jakarta [2, p. 223].

TT: ... I'll *follow* them on board to Batavia [6, p. 180].

PIT: ... saya akan *mengikuti* mereka ke Batavia.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	<i>mengikut</i>	<i>ikut</i>	<i>me-</i>
TT	<i>follow</i>		
PIT	<i>mengikuti</i>	<i>ikut</i>	<i>me-</i> and <i>-i</i>

The two verbs above also show differences in their markers. The base of the two verb is *ikut*. The verb *mengikut* comes with the marker realized by prefix *me-*, the verb *mengikuti* with the markers realized by suffix *-i* and prefix *me-*.

Differences in Passive Verb Markers

Verbs of old and present-day Indonesian have passive forms. The common marker used is prefix *di-*. The results of the research show that the markers used to form passive constructions in old Indonesian are different from those of present-day Indonesian. The kinds of the changes are as the followings.

*Di-kan* in old Indonesian and *di-* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 6:

OIT: Dia hendak *dibuangkan* ke laut, ... [2, p. 235].

TT: She was to *have been thrown* into the sea, ... [6, p. 188].

PIT: Dia akan *dibuang* ke laut.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	<i>dibuangkan</i>	<i>buang</i>	<i>di-</i> and <i>-kan</i>
TT	<i>have been thrown</i>		
PIT	<i>dibuang</i>	<i>buang</i>	<i>di-</i>

*Dibuangkan* old Indonesian and *dibuang* of present-day Indonesian are formed by the same base. That is *buang*. To form *dibuangkan*, suffix *-kan* and prefix *di-* are attached to the base and to form *dibuang*, prefix *di-* is attached to the base.

*Di-kan* in old Indonesian and *di-i* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 7:

OIT: ... segala kehendak hati tak dapat *diturutkan* [2, p. 306].

TT: We can't *follow* the call of our hearts [6, p. 244].

PIT: Keinginan kita tidak bisa *dituruti*.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	diturutkan	turut	<i>di-</i> and <i>-kan</i>
TT	follow		
PIT	dituruti	turut	<i>di-</i> and <i>-i</i>

The verb *diturutkan* and *dituruti* have the same base. That is *turut*. In their morphological processes, they have different markers. *Diturutkan* is formed by the base *turut* attached with suffix *-kan* and prefix *di-*, while *dituruti* by the base *turut* attached with suffix *-i* and prefix *di-*.

*Di-* in old Indonesian and *di-i* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 8:

OIT: Adat dan aturan siapakah yang harus *diturut* orang Islam? [2, p. 253].

TT: Whose customs and ways must *be followed* by Muslims? [6, p. 202].

PIT: Adat dan kebiasaan siapakah yang harus *dituruti* oleh umat Islam?

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	diturut	turut	<i>di-</i>
TT	be followed		
PIT	dituruti	turut	<i>di-</i> and <i>-i</i>

*Diturut* is formed by the base *turut* and prefix *di-*. *Dituruti* also has the same base, that is *turut*, but the markers are different. The base comes with suffix *-i* and prefix *di-*.

*Di-i* in old Indonesian and *di-* in present-day Indonesian

Datum 9:

OIT: Sebagai Tuanku-Tuanku ketahui, tanah Hindia ini *diperintahi* oleh Pemerintah Belanda [2, p. 323].

TT: As you know, the lands of the Indies *are governed* by the Dutch Government [6, p. 258].

PIT: Seperti semua mengetahui, tanah Hindia *diperintah* oleh Pemerintah Belanda.

Seen from the forms, *diperintahi* and *diperintah* are morphologically different. *Diperintahi* is formed by the base *perintah* attached with confix *di-i*, *diperintah* by the base *perintah* attached with prefix *di-*.

	Verb form	Base	Marker
OIT	diperintahi	perintah	<i>di-i</i>
TT	are governed		
PIT	diperintah	perintah	<i>di-</i>

To summarize, old and present-day Indonesian have similar characteristics. Their active verbs are characterized by the use of the marker represented by prefix *me-*, such as *membuangkan*, *membuang*, *melindungi*, and their passive ones by prefix *di-*, such as *diturutkan*, *diperintahi*, *diperintah*. They are different in terms of their morphological markers. Old Indonesian active verbs come with the markers *me-kan*, such as *membuangkan*; *me-* and *-i*, such as *memadami*; *me-* and *-kan*, such as *melindungi*; and *me-*, such as *mengikuti*. Present-day Indonesian active verbs come with the markers *me-*, such as *membuang*; *me-* and *-kan*, such as *memadamkan*; and *me-* and *-i*, such as *menuruti*. Old Indonesian passive verbs use the markers which include *di-* and *-kan*, such as *dibuangkan*; *di-*, such as *diturut*; and *di-* and *-i*, such as

*diperintahi*, present-day Indonesian ones use the markers *di* and *-i*, such as *dituruti* and *di-*, such as *dibuang*.

## 4 Conclusion

Active and passive verbs of old and present-day Indonesian are formed through affixation process. The difference of the two versions is in terms of their markers when attached to the base.

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