

## Historical and Cultural Influences on Word Formation in Indonesian and Malagasy

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### Abstract

Word formation is the process of creating new words in a language, which can be influenced by historical events, cultural interactions, and contact with other languages. In this context, this study explores the historical and cultural factors that have shaped word formation in Indonesian and Malagasy, two languages from distinct linguistic and cultural contexts. The primary objective is to analyze how historical events, cultural exchanges, and contact with other languages have influenced the development of word formation processes in both languages. This study uses a qualitative approach using a documentation study to gather relevant textual data. Data collection involved reviewing historical records, linguistic texts, and scholarly articles, while data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis to identify patterns and influences on word formation. The findings reveal that both languages exhibit significant historical and cultural influences, such as colonialism and trade, which have contributed to the introduction of loanwords and new word-formation strategies. In conclusion, the study highlights the role of historical and cultural contexts in shaping the evolution of language and provides insights into the interplay between linguistic structures and societal influences in both Indonesian and Malagasy.

Keywords: Culture, History, Indonesian, Malagasy, Word Formation

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# INTRODUCTION

This study addresses the lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how historical, cultural, and colonial influences have shaped the word formation processes in Indonesian and Malagasy, particularly in terms of the integration of loanwords and the adaptation of morphological systems (Kuhn, 2004). Indonesia, made up of over 17,000 islands, and Madagascar, a large island off southeastern Africa, have unique languages shaped by migration, colonization, and global trade (Alonso, 2023). In both regions, language reflects not only the daily life of its people but also the long histories of interaction with foreign cultures, from early trade with Indian and Arab merchants to European colonization (Francois, 2015). These historical and cultural dynamics have significantly contributed to the processes of word formation in both Indonesian and Malagasy (Uzer, 2019).

In Indonesia, the national language, Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), is part of the Austronesian language family and shares deep ties with the various local languages spoken across the country (Ting, 2023). The influences on Indonesian vocabulary are as varied as the nation's history itself (Luthfiyati & Kholiq, 2017). The spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, along with contact with European colonial powers like the Dutch, has resulted in the incorporation of loanwords from Arabic, Portuguese, and Dutch (Kim, 2018). These influences are not just lexical but also extend to the structure and syntax of the language, showcasing the

adaptive and dynamic nature of Indonesian as it has absorbed elements from various languages over centuries (Chomsky, 2005).

Similarly, Malagasy, the language spoken in Madagascar, belongs to the Austronesian family, specifically the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup (Marty, 2000). Its history is marked by migrations from Southeast Asia, particularly from Indonesia, over 1,500 years ago (Kim, 2018). The language of the Malagasy people has undergone significant changes as a result of centuries of contact with African, Arab, and European cultures (Sudaryanto, 2015). The French colonial period, in particular, left an indelible mark on Malagasy, as French became the language of administration and education (Marty, 2000). As a result, Malagasy has adopted numerous French terms, influencing both the vocabulary and word formation processes.

A key aspect of word formation in both Indonesian and Malagasy is the incorporation of loanwords from Arabic, Dutch, and French, where foreign terms are adapted into the native vocabulary (Lombard, 1996). Loanword adaptation in both phonology and morphology involve the modification of foreign sounds and structures to fit the phonetic system and grammatical rules of the recipient language, ensuring the integration of the loanword into its linguistic framework (Embick, 2015). Loanwords not only reflect the historical and cultural exchanges between these regions and the outside world but also highlight the adaptability of both languages in maintaining relevance in the global context (Fitriati & Fadhila, 2017). In Indonesian, for example, words from Dutch like *meja* (table) and *sekolah* (school) have become integral to everyday speech, while in Malagasy, words like *birao*, bureau in French (office) and *kalitao*, qualité in French (quality) are derived from the influence of French (Georgieva, 2012).

Beyond loanwords, both languages also showcase a rich tradition of affixation and compounding as methods of word formation. In Indonesian, the addition of prefixes, suffixes, and infixes allows for a high degree of flexibility in creating new words (Kusumastuti, 2017; Fatmawaty & Anggraini, 2019). This morphological system allows for the creation of terms that are highly specific to Indonesian culture and society. Similarly, Malagasy utilizes affixes to form new words and modify meanings, and this practice is deeply rooted in the traditional structure of the language (Ting, 2023). This aspect of word formation offers insights into the ways these languages have adapted to changing social and technological landscapes (Aldridge, 2008).

The role of language in expressing cultural identity cannot be overlooked (Echols & Shadily, 2003). Both Indonesian and Malagasy are important symbols of national pride and unity (Lin, 2017). In Indonesia, the development of Bahasa Indonesia as the unifying language of the archipelago was a significant political decision, with word formation being a key aspect of national identity building (Guilfoyle et al., 1992). Likewise, in Madagascar, language serves as a bridge to the island's distinct cultural heritage. Despite the pressures of globalization and foreign influences, both languages have preserved core elements that are intrinsically linked to local customs, beliefs, and ways of life (Kim, 2018).

Understanding how historical events have shaped the word formation processes in both Indonesia and Madagascar also involve considering the role of indigenous languages (Teeuw, 1996). In Indonesia, over 700 local languages, such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese, coexist with Bahasa Indonesia (Georgi, 2017; Fitriati et al., 2018). The interaction between these local languages and the national language has produced a complex linguistic environment in which new words are continuously coined to reflect both local and global influences (Ting, 2023). In Madagascar, while Malagasy remains the dominant language, French and English have become important in the context of education and business, contributing to the ongoing evolution of word formation in the country.

Recent research on word formation in Indonesian and Malagasy has highlighted the significant role of historical, cultural, and linguistic influences in shaping the vocabulary of both languages. Studies have focused on the impact of Austronesian roots in Indonesian and the influence of Bantu and Austronesian languages on Malagasy, examining morphological processes such as compounding, affixation, and reduplication. However, there remains a gap in understanding how colonial, religious, and trade interactions with external cultures such as Dutch in Indonesia and French in Madagascar have specifically contributed to the evolution of word formation. Additionally, there is limited comparative analysis between these two distinct languages, which, despite sharing Austronesian origins, have developed unique pathways in their morphological systems. This gap presents an opportunity for a deeper exploration of cross-linguistic influences and their impact on contemporary word formation processes in both languages

### **METHOD**

The study uses a qualitative approach, focusing on documentation analysis to explore historical and cultural influences on word formation in Indonesian and Malagasy. Data collection involves the systematic gathering of written texts, linguistic records, and historical documents, including dictionaries, linguistic surveys, and colonial archives, to trace the evolution of word formation in both languages. These texts were analyzed for linguistic patterns, including the use of affixes, compounds, and borrowed terms, with particular attention given to influences from external languages such as Dutch in Indonesian and French in Malagasy. The study also examines the role of cultural exchanges, trade, and religion in shaping these word formation processes. The analysis was conducted through an interpretive framework, allowing the researchers to identify and contextualize the impact of historical events and sociocultural dynamics on linguistic development.

The research flow follows a structured sequence, beginning with an initial literature review to establish the historical and linguistic context of Indonesian and Malagasy word formation. This was followed by the collection of primary sources, focusing on historical texts, linguistic records, and documentation related to colonial and cultural interactions. Data analysis was proceeded in two phases: first, a morphological analysis to identify patterns of word formation, and second, a thematic analysis to connect these patterns to historical and cultural events. Finally, the study was synthesizing findings to present a comparative analysis of the influences on word formation in both languages. The conclusion highlights the implications of these findings for understanding the broader relationship between language, culture, and history in Austronesian languages.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Colonialism on Word Formation

Colonialism has played a pivotal role in shaping the word formation processes in both Indonesia and Madagascar. The long periods of European colonial rule, first by the Portuguese, then the Dutch in Indonesia, and by the French in Madagascar introduced a significant influx of foreign terms into the local languages (Ratih & Gusdian, 2018). In Indonesia, Dutch colonial rule from the 17th to the mid-20th century left a lasting legacy on Bahasa Indonesia, particularly in the areas of governance, law, education, and technology (Foley, 2023). Many Dutch words became part of the everyday vocabulary. The integration of these loanwords demonstrates how colonial rule not only influenced the political and social systems but also the language itself.

Similarly, French colonialism in Madagascar, which lasted from the late 19th century until 1960, left a deep imprint on Malagasy. During the colonial period, French became the language of administration, education, and governance, leading to a significant number of French loanwords being adopted into Malagasy (Raja, 2014). The French words were incorporated into Malagasy with minimal modification, demonstrating how colonial languages served as the medium through which modern concepts and practices were introduced to the local population.

The process of integrating these foreign terms into the local lexicons was not always a straightforward adoption. Both Indonesian and Malagasy underwent significant phonological and grammatical adjustments to accommodate these loanwords (Sirulhaq et al., 2023). In Indonesian, for example, Dutch words were modified to fit the phonological structure of the language, with some words undergoing changes in pronunciation to better align with Indonesian phonetics. Similarly, Malagasy, while retaining its Austronesian roots, adjusted French terms to its own phonological rules, ensuring they blended smoothly into the existing language system. This adaptation illustrates the resilience of both languages, maintaining their core structures while absorbing foreign elements (Fitriati et al, 2018; Emynorane et al., 2024).

Colonialism also influenced the socio-political function of language in both countries. In Indonesia, the process of language unification through Bahasa Indonesia in the 20th century incorporated many Dutch terms, as the language of administration became central to national identity. In Madagascar, the use of Malagasy and French in parallel created a bilingual linguistic environment, with French continuing to dominate in official and educational contexts even after independence. This colonial legacy in both countries underscore how the languages have evolved under foreign influence, reflecting the broader socio-political changes brought about by colonialism (Crystal, 2022).

### The Role of Loanwords in Indonesian and Malagasy

Loanwords are words that are borrowed from one language and incorporated into another, often with adjustments to suit the phonological, morphological, and syntactical rules of the receiving language. This process of borrowing typically occurs as a result of cultural contact, trade, colonization, or globalization, where one language influences another (Travers, 2021). Loanwords play a vital role in language development,

especially in societies that encounter new ideas, technologies, or practices from external sources. They allow a language to expand its vocabulary and keep pace with changes in the external world, reflecting the interaction between different cultures and their linguistic practices.

In the case of Indonesian, loanwords are an essential aspect of the language's evolution, influenced by Indonesia's long history of trade and colonization. The influence of Arabic, Dutch, Portuguese, and, more recently, English, has contributed to a rich tapestry of borrowed terms in Indonesian (Sundari & Faizal, 2023). The loanwords are not merely reflections of historical contact but have been adapted into the Indonesian language to fit its phonetic and grammatical structures. Through this process, Indonesian has enriched its lexicon without losing its inherent linguistic identity.

In the case of Malagasy language, loanwords have played a crucial role in shaping the language, reflecting Madagascar's interactions with various foreign cultures, particularly the French colonization. The borrowed words have been adapted into the Malagasy phonological system, showing how the language maintains its distinctive sound system while integrating foreign influences (Verdoodt, 2017). In this way, loanwords in Malagasy are a testament to the island's diverse history of cultural exchange. The following tables illustrate the examples of loanwords from foreign language in Indonesian and Malagasy, categorized by their origins and changes.

Table 1. Examples of Dutch Loanwords in Indonesian

Indonesian Word	Indonesian Meaning	Dutch Word	<b>Dutch Meaning</b>
bus, bis	bus	bus	bus
bioskop	cinema	bioscoop	cinema
buku	book	boek	book
cokelat	chocolate	chocolade	chocolate

Table 2. Examples of Arabic Loanwords in Indonesian

Indonesian Word	Indonesian Meaning	Arabic Word	Arabic Meaning
akhir	end	آخِر	'ākhir, end
alam	nature	عالم	'ālam: world, earth
aman	safe	أمان	'amān, safe
asal	origin	أصل	'aṣl, origin

**Table 3.** Examples of Portuguese Loanwords in Indonesian

Indonesian Word	Indonesian Meaning	Portuguese Word	Portugeuse Meaning
meja	table	mesa	table
sepatu	shoes	sapato	shoes
gereja	church	igreja	church
roda	wheel	roda	wheel

**Table 4.** Examples of Arabic Loanwords in Malagasy

Malagasy Word	Malagasy Meaning	Arabic Word	Arabic Meaning
alahady	sunday	الأحد	al'ahad, sunday
maty	die	مات	mat, die
alakamisy	thursday	يوم الخميس	alkhamis, thursday
soratra	script	سيناريو	script, scenario

**Table 5.** Examples of French Loanwords in Malagasy

Malagasy Word	Malagasy Meaning	French Word	French Meaning
tabilao	blackboard	Tableau	blackboard
radio	radio	Radio	radio
savony	soap	Savon	soap
papay	papaya	Papaya	papaya

The importance of loanwords in word formation is clear in both Indonesian and Malagasy, as they provide a means for these languages to evolve and meet the needs of modern society. In both cases, loanwords have introduced new concepts that did not exist in the native vocabulary, particularly in fields such as technology, science, governance, and education (Randriambololona & Rakotondrafara, 2022). They also serve as markers of social and cultural identity, reflecting the historical and ongoing interactions with other countries and cultures (Adelaar, 2013; Emynorane et al., 2024). As globalization continues to influence the world, the influx of loanwords into both Indonesian and Malagasy will likely persist, contributing to the continual evolution of both languages while also preserving their unique cultural identities.

## **Morphological Processes of Word Formation**

Morphological processes of word formation refer to the ways in which words are created, modified, or expanded by altering their structure. In both Indonesian and Malagasy, these processes play a crucial role in expanding the vocabulary and adapting language to meet the needs of modern communication. Two of the most common morphological processes are affixation and compounding, both of which are widely used in both languages to form new words (Augustin & Emynorane, 2024).

In Indonesian, affixation is one of the primary ways of word formation, involving the addition of prefixes, suffixes, infixes, or circumfixes to a base word. For example, the base word *tulis* (to write) can be transformed into *menulis* (to write, as a verb), *penulisan* (writing, as a noun), or *tertulis* (written). Indonesian has a complex system of affixation, with many prefixes and suffixes that alter the meaning of a word, allowing speakers to create new words from existing roots (Barton & Hall, 2022). This morphological flexibility enables the language to express various grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, and voice, contributing to its rich vocabulary and adaptability.

Malagasy also relies heavily on affixation to form new words. In Malagasy, affixes can modify the meaning of the base word, change its grammatical function, or create new terms that fit specific cultural contexts (Sudaryanto, 2015). Malagasy has a set of prefixes and suffixes that govern the transformations, and the use of affixation allows speakers to generate new words in response to emerging needs, such as describing modern technology, social roles, or concepts introduced through cultural exchange (Sirulhaq et al, 2023).

Compounding is another important morphological process in both languages, where two or more words are combined to create a new term. In Indonesian, compounds often involve a combination of nouns, adjectives, and verbs to form new meanings. For example, *rumah* (house) and *sakit* (sick) combine to form *rumah sakit* (hospital) (Amin, 2000; Sudaryanto, 2015). Similarly, in Malagasy, compounding is used to combine words to express complex ideas. For example, *taona* (year) and *fianarana* (study) combine to form *taom-pianarana* (academic year), showing how the language uses compounding to reflect cultural and societal norms. Both Indonesian and Malagasy utilize these morphological processes to enrich their lexicons and meet evolving communicative needs, ensuring their languages remain dynamic and adaptable to change.

### Cultural and Religious Influences on Language Development

Cultural and religious influences have played a significant role in the development of language, shaping vocabulary, expressions, and communication styles in both Indonesian and Malagasy. In Indonesia, the spread of Islam, along with earlier influences from Hinduism and Buddhism, has introduced a variety of terms related to religion, rituals, and cultural practices. Many Arabic loanwords, for instance, have become deeply embedded in the Indonesian language due to the widespread adoption of Islam (Sudaryanto, 2015). Terms such as *salat* (prayer), *puasa* (fasting), and *masjid* (mosque) reflect the deep connection between language and religious practices. These religious terms are used in both daily conversations and formal contexts, highlighting how religious beliefs have influenced linguistic development and the vocabulary of Indonesian speakers.

In addition to religion, Indonesian culture has had a profound impact on the language. The diversity of ethnic groups and traditions in Indonesia has contributed to the rich vocabulary, with specific terms linked to cultural practices such as festivals, family structures, and food (Adelaar, 2020). The culturally specific words play a vital role in expressing local values, social norms, and the day-to-day experiences of different communities, reinforcing the importance of cultural identity within language development.

In other hand, in Madagascar, cultural and religious influences have shaped the Malagasy language over time. The arrival of Christianity and its interaction with traditional Malagasy beliefs has influenced vocabulary related to spirituality and social practices. The words highlight the syncretic nature of Malagasy culture, where both indigenous and foreign influences have shaped the language in parallel. The blending of cultural and

religious elements in the vocabulary enriches Malagasy, making it a reflection of the island's history and diversity (Aldridge, 2008).

Language in Madagascar also reflects its strong ties to local customs and social practices. Many words in Malagasy are linked to agricultural practices and social hierarchies, which are central to traditional Malagasy society. Terms such as *fianakaviana* (family) and *tanàna* (village) encapsulate the communal and familial values that shape Malagasy life. These terms have not only preserved the cultural significance of social structures but also allowed the language to adapt to modern contexts, integrating new concepts while maintaining its cultural roots (Sudaryanto, 2015). The cultural and religious influences on Malagasy demonstrate how language evolves in tandem with society's values, offering a unique lens through which to understand both the history and identity of the Malagasy people.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the significant impact of colonialism, cultural interactions, and religious influences on the word formation processes in both Indonesian and Malagasy, illustrating how external forces shape language evolution. However, this study also has limitations, including the scope of available historical records and the potential for bias in interpreting the influence of specific events or cultures. Furthermore, the study primarily focuses on documented sources, which may not fully capture the dynamic and ongoing processes of word formation in contemporary language use. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between language development and historical, cultural, and social factors.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the profound influence of historical and cultural contexts on the word formation processes in both Indonesian and Malagasy. Colonialism played a pivotal role in introducing new vocabulary and shaping linguistic structures in both languages, particularly through the introduction of loanwords. Additionally, the interaction with foreign languages, especially during trade and colonization, has left lasting imprints on the lexicons of Indonesian and Malagasy. The morphological processes, such as compounding and affixation, show how both languages have adapted to external influences while maintaining their unique linguistic identities. Cultural and religious factors further contributed to language development, as seen in the incorporation of terms related to religion and cultural practices. While the study sheds light on these influences, it also reveals that language is continuously evolving, and some processes may not be fully captured in historical documentation.

### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Ravaorisoa Simonette Augustin: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, and Writing - Original Draft; and Ralaivao Hanginiaina Emynorane: Writing - Review & Editing and Supervision.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare no known financial conflicts of interest or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this manuscript.

### **DECLARATION OF ETHICS**

The authors declare that the research and writing of this manuscript adhere to ethical standards of research and publication, in accordance with scientific principles, and are free from plagiarism.

### DECLARATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCCESS

The authors affirm that Generative Artificial Intelligence and other assistive technologies were not excessively utilized in the research and writing processes of this manuscript.

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