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Exploring Instagram at 2025: The Morphosyntactic Relationship between Indonesian and Dutch

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the morphosyntactic constructions underlying the semantic relations between the Indonesian and Dutch languages, based on the linguistic practices observed on Instagram. Embedded in their common past of colonialism, the two languages have had reciprocal impact on various elements of the lexicon, the syntax, and semantics. This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm in conjunction with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) in order to examine linguistic structures and evolution evidenced in user-generated Instagram posts and observations derived from academic journals, online media, and linguistic discussions on the internet. This aims to uncover morphosyntactic parallels and contact-induced semantic changes wrought by social media communication. Situated within the frameworks of morphosyntax and historical linguistics, the present research illustrates how social media platforms like Instagram can be fertile grounds for analysis of modern cases of postcolonial language contact.

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INTRODUCTION

The undeniable influence of the Dutch language on the Indonesian language is a testament to this half-century relationship and the long history of contact between Indonesia and the Netherlands, which has existed for over 3 centuries of colonization. Recent studies have examined language use on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, revealing various linguistic phenomena and challenges. Research has identified common morphological errors in Indonesian Instagram posts, including incorrect word repetition, affix usage, and compound word formation (Prastikha et al., 2024). The integration of English elements into Indonesian Instagram terminology has also been observed, with new terms created through processes like derivation, compounding, and blending (Nafisah & Budiarso, 2020). Social media platforms contribute to the rapid evolution and globalization of internet slang, blurring boundaries between formal and informal language. Additionally, Instagram users frequently make spelling, grammatical, and word choice errors in their captions and comments, often mixing Indonesian with slang, English, and local dialects (Cahyani et al., 2024). These findings highlight the dynamic nature of language use on social media and the need for improved language proficiency in digital communication.

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Examining the morphosyntactic interface is important because it allows researchers to capture both surface-level linguistic patterns and deeper structural influences. As an Austronesian language, Indonesian possesses distinctive grammatical characteristics, including reduplication, aspectual markers, and flexible argument structures. Dutch, as a Germanic language, introduces fusional morphology, a relatively fixed SVO structure, and auxiliary-based verb phrase constructions. The interaction between these two linguistic systems has generated hybrid structures that continue to shape contemporary Indonesian usage. For instance, the use of modal auxiliaries in Indonesian often aligns syntactically with Dutch constructions, while passive structures employing the agentive marker *oleh* resemble the Dutch use of *door*.

However, previous studies have primarily focused on lexical borrowing, code-mixing, grammatical errors, or the influence of English on Indonesian social media discourse. Very limited attention has been given to the morphosyntactic relationship between Indonesian and Dutch in digital communication contexts, especially on Instagram as one of the most influential social media platforms in 2025. Existing research also tends to examine Dutch influence historically or within formal linguistic corpora rather than investigating how Dutch-derived grammatical patterns are reproduced, adapted, or transformed in contemporary online interactions. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how historical Dutch linguistic structures continue to influence Indonesian morphosyntax in present-day digital discourse.

Therefore, this study offers novelty by exploring the morphosyntactic relationship between Indonesian and Dutch through Instagram discourse in 2025, integrating perspectives from historical linguistics, digital communication, and social media language practices. Unlike earlier studies that mainly emphasized vocabulary borrowing or general language variation, this research specifically investigates morphosyntactic patterns, including sentence structure, auxiliary usage, passive constructions, and hybrid grammatical forms that emerge in Indonesian Instagram communication. Furthermore, this study contributes a contemporary digital-linguistic perspective by demonstrating how colonial linguistic influences are not merely historical remnants but remain actively reproduced and negotiated in modern social media interactions.

THEORY AND METHOD

This study draws on three theoretical frameworks to understand the semantic interrelation between Indonesian and Dutch through morphosyntax: Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG), Comrie's syntactic typology, and Heine & Kuteva's grammaticalization theory.

Chomsky (1995) proposed that there is a universal set of principles common to all human languages—so-called Universal Grammar (UG)—and that this knowledge is innate. UG emphasizes commonalities like phrase structure rules and syntactic hierarchies. Also, although Indonesian and Dutch belong to different typological classes with respect to their morphosyntactic realization (Indonesian as isolating and Dutch as fusional), both languages rely on hierarchical structuring with similar syntactic dependencies. The only strategies that are used are strategies that bridge through similar linguistic constructions.

Comrie's (1981) syntactic typology classifies languages according to their alignment systems. Both Indonesian and Dutch have a nominative-accusative pattern of case, and this makes it easier to adopt both same syntactic roles and same grammatical relationships. For example, in both languages, the subject usually comes before the verb, which helps with syntactic compatibility. In addition, Indonesian has aspectual particles

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such as sudah (already), akan (will), and telah (has) that function similarly to the Dutch auxiliary verbs heef and zal. These parallels enable semantic alignment through different morphosyntactic realizations, providing structural anchoring.

Heine and Kuteva (2005) developed the concept of grammaticalization and grammatical replication in language contact. The results show that this is not limited to lexical items, but that grammatical structures may replicate when languages are in contact. For the Indonesian-Dutch case, Dutch has not only inserted vocabulary in Indonesian, but it has even provided syntactic constructions such as its passive. The use of "oleh" to deploy the Indonesian passive closely corresponds to the Dutch "door" construction which is a case of grammatical replication.

These three frameworks converge to demonstrate that Indonesian's adaptation of Dutch morphosyntactic structures is neither random nor superficial. Instead, it is informed by cognitive universals (UG), typological similarities, and dynamic grammatical innovation. The synergy of these frameworks allows a multidimensional exploration of how meaning is encoded and transferred between the two languages.

Depending on how a language organizes its morphology, the responsibility for encoding and interpreting meaning can be shared quite differently among speakers. For Indonesian and Dutch, this research note both convergence and divergence in morpheme behaviour. Specifically, Indonesian is generally an isolating language whereas Dutch is a fusional language.

Furthermore, The influence of Dutch on Indonesian language and law remains significant, despite efforts to eradicate colonial linguistic heritage (Maier, 2005). Approximately 20% of contemporary Indonesian vocabulary has Dutch origins, even appearing in nationalist texts (Maier, 2005). This linguistic interaction extends to morphosyntactic properties, with Indonesian interference patterns observed in English language learning contexts (Nurhayati et al., 2018). The Dutch-Indonesian linguistic exchange is bidirectional, as evidenced by Indonesian loanwords in Dutch cuisine terminology (Yusuf, 2018). The transition from Dutch to Indonesian as the official legal language has led to challenges in legal terminology and usage, with critics highlighting heterogeneity and deviations from standard language (Massier, 2008). Massier argues that law is inextricably linked to its language of formulation, emphasizing the importance of examining legal training and practice through the lens of language behavior and conventions (Massier, 2008).

This study follows a Systematic Literature Reviews (SLRs) as a structured method for reviewing research findings. SLRs offer a rigorous approach to literature analysis, involving planned steps for searching, filtering, and synthesizing information (Massaro et al., 2016; Pati & Lorusso, 2018). They are particularly useful for meta-studies summarizing evidence from earlier research (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). SLRs can be applied across various fields, including accounting, healthcare design, and linguistics (Massaro et al., 2016; Pati & Lorusso, 2018; Khairani & Nisa, 2024). While proponents claim SLRs provide superior quality through replicability, transparency, and objectivity, critics argue these claims are not fully justified and caution against their universal adoption (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). Despite potential limitations, SLRs remain a valuable tool for researchers, especially those in early career stages, to develop robust research agendas and questions (Massaro et al., 2016).The SLR were implemented in three principal stages:

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1. Literature Selection:
   Academic sources from databases like JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used with search queries "Dutch influence in Indonesian," "Indonesian morphosyntax," "semantic transfer," and "language contact in Indonesia." This search was limited to articles published between 2010 and 2024 to include contemporary conversation while retaining essential texts. Inclusion criteria were publications that went through peer review, which was language contact oriented, and that relevant to the linguistic structures of the Indonesian or Dutch language.

2. Inclusion of Digital and Non-Traditional Sources:
   To supplement the scholarly texts, the study also included examination of digital texts sourced from Indonesian social specially in the Instagram content, and comment sections. The databases contained in these platforms offers some real-life informal linguistic evidence of how Dutch morphosyntactic features are used or adapted, by modern day speakers of Indonesian. It has been quite some time since that, since then data is limited to high frequency Dutch loanwords from those language environments and structures used.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. The data were analyzed through coding linguistic items into categories (such as syntactic borrowing, morphological integration, semantic shift and code-switching patterns). It also considered usage frequency, contextual domains (e.g., education, law, daily speech), and user demographics where relevant. All of this triangulation across multiple sources provides us with representative coverage of formal and informal linguistic spaces.

Table 1. Common Dutch Loanwords in Indonesian and Their Semantic Fields

Linguistic Category	Key Findings	Examples	Explanation
Morphology (Morpheme Borrowing)	Borrowing of affixes from Dutch into Indonesian.	berdiskusi (from "bediscussiëren"), -isme (liberalisme, nasionalisme)	Dutch affixes such as "be-" and "-isme" have enhanced morphological productivity in Indonesian, especially in formal and academic registers.
Syntax (Sentence Structure)	Adaptation of sentence structures like passive voice, subordination, and use of auxiliaries.	"dibaca oleh" ≈ "gelezen door"; "Saya tahu bahwa…" ≈ "Ik weet dat…"	Passive construction using "oleh" mirrors the Dutch "door"; subordinate clause structures in Indonesian reflect similar patterns to Dutch, though not identical.
Semantics (Meaning Shift)	Semantic broadening and narrowing of Dutch loanwords in Indonesian.	kantor (broader function in Indonesian); gratis (more informal in Indonesian)	Loanwords undergo semantic shift depending on context and language economy, showing

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			expanded or specialized meanings.
Code-Mixing & Translanguaging	Blending of languages (Indonesian, Dutch, English) on Instagram.	Mixed caption: "Lagi meeting di kantor, tapi vibes-nya chill banget."	Instagram facilitates informal environments where users mix languages and borrow structures from Dutch and English spontaneously.
Idiomatic & Cultural Transfer	Idioms in Indonesian lack direct equivalents in Dutch, requiring contextual translation or adaptation.	besar kepala ≠ groot hoofd (literal translation doesn't work)	Cultural and idiomatic expressions are difficult to translate directly and require pragmatic, culturally aware adaptation.
Nominalization & Bureaucratic Style	Dutch influence evident in the use of abstract, nominal phrases in formal Indonesian writing.	pelaksanaan kegiatan, peningkatan mutu pendidikan	Indonesian academic and bureaucratic writing reflects nominalized constructions similar to Dutch administrative language.

Table 1 presents the main findings of the thematic analysis regarding the morphosyntactic relationship between Indonesian and Dutch as reflected in contemporary language use, particularly on Instagram. The table categorizes the linguistic influences into several dimensions, including morphology, syntax, semantics, code-mixing, idiomatic transfer, and nominalization. Each category demonstrates how Dutch linguistic structures have contributed to the development of Indonesian expressions, especially in formal, academic, and digital communication contexts. The examples provided illustrate not only lexical borrowing but also deeper structural adaptations that influence sentence construction, meaning formation, and stylistic preferences in Indonesian. These findings indicate that Dutch influence remains visible in both formal linguistic practices and informal social media interactions, where multilingual users actively negotiate hybrid forms of communication.

A salient example of semantic transfer via morphological structures is evident in the adoption and adaptation of Dutch affixes into Indonesian loanwords. For instance, the Dutch prefix "be-" as in "bediscussiëren" (to discuss), parallels the Indonesian "ber-" as in "berdiskusi." Although "ber-" has Austronesian roots, the Dutch influence reinforced its productivity in forming verbs from noun roots, particularly in formal and academic registers (Clynes & Djamal, 2011).

Another instance is the suffix "-isme" in the words "liberalisme" (liberalism), "kapitalisme" (capitalism) and "nasionalisme" (nationalism) are borrowed directly from Dutch. This not only let newly minted vocabulary enter into Indonesian, but also brought European ideological and philosophical concepts that restructured local sociopolitical discourse (Sneddon, 2003).

Furthermore, semantic broadening is frequently observed. Words like "kantor" (from Dutch "kantoor" meaning office) in Indonesian can refer to both the place and the

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administrative function, depending on context. This multifunctionality is less common in the original Dutch usage but arises in Indonesian due to its morphosyntactic economy.
Dutch morphology has laid its influence on compounding in Indonesian as well. So the traditional Indonesian is more compound-like by juxtaposition (as in "rumah sakit" for hospital), while modern Indonesian has more compound constructions due to the influence of the Dutch that also show Dutch syntactic structures as in "tanggung jawab" (responsibility) based on Dutch "verantwoordelijkheid." These are prime examples of the semantic enlargement that morphological borrowing and reconfiguring provides.

Syntactic structures offer an important locus of interaction between the Indonesian and the Dutch. They have a subject-verb-object (SVO) order in their unmarked declarative sentences, which is a typological similarity between the two languages. This makes syntactic borrowing and structural adaptation easier, as it has been in the case of formal and bureaucratic jargon.

The clearest syntactic comparisons involve passive voice constructions. Indonesian uses the particle "oleh" to indicate the agent in passive sentences, analogous to the way Dutch uses "door." In Indonesian, for example, "Buku itu dibaca oleh guru" (The book was read by the teacher) parallels closely at the same time to "Het boek werd gelezen door de leraar" in Dutch. Stylistically and structurally based in Dutch syntax, this construction generally derives from Austronesian passive voice (Steinhauer, 2007).

A syntactic feature in Dutch that greatly contributed to the way Gaełitz spoke was the frequent use of auxiliary verbs. Indonesian auxiliary verbs such as "sudah" (already), "akan" (will) and "harus" (must) parallel Dutch auxiliaries like "heeft" (has), "zal" (will) and "moet" (must). These auxiliaries were not new in pre-colonial Indonesian, but exposure to Dutch probably solidified their syntactic position (Poedjosoedarmo, 2006) and increased their use in standardized, written forms.

Dutch influence is also visible in subordinate clause structure. In Dutch, subordinate clauses often involve verb-final word order, a trait occasionally mirrored in complex Indonesian sentences used in formal writing. For instance, constructions such as "Saya tahu bahwa dia akan datang" (I know that he will come) resemble the Dutch structure "Ik weet dat hij zal komen." While Indonesian does not regularly adopt verb-final order, the positioning of the complementizer "bahwa" (that) reflects a similar syntactic strategy.
Furthermore, Indonesian has a much higher rate of nominalization (the conversion of a verb into a noun) because of the Dutch influence. This syntactic shift is also seen in the use of abstract noun phrases in administrative and academic writing, as in the repeated use of "pelaksanaan kegiatan" (implementation of the activity), a phrase that mirrors Dutch bureaucratic writing.

The similarities and differences in syntactic domains show the complexity of language contact. Indonesian syntactic norms have not been replaced by Dutch; rather, these two languages complement one another, with Dutch offering additional structural models, resulting in a hybrid system, which permits Indonesian to code both meaning more flexibly and formally.

Lexical borrowing is the most outward and direct form of language contact, possibly. Indonesian borrowed thousands of Dutch words especially for administrative, legal, educational, transportation, and technological terms. Often, these borrowings are phonologically and morphologically adapted to Indonesian language but also have semantic traces of their Dutch origins.

Examples would be "administrasi" (from Dutch "administratie"), "universitas" (from "universiteit"), and "perusahaan" (from "onderneming"), which corresponds to the

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fields of meaning that were introduced or formalized in Dutch colonial administration. These borrowings did not only provide lexical gaps but also brought in new conceptual frames into the Indonesian lexicon (Sneddon, 2003).

These borrowings are often accompanied by semantic shifts. Certain words of Dutch origin in Indonesian have developed a wider or narrower sense. For example, "gratis" in both languages means "free of charge," but in Indonesian it is typically found in vernacular use and can serve as a marketing ploy, while in Dutch it has a more neutral tone. In a similar way, "kantor" (from Dutch "kantoor") has experienced functional broadening, being employed to denote the physical office space and the institutional system as such.

Calques (loan translations) have also been traced via Dutch to Indonesian, e.g. "rumah sakit" (lit. sick house) for hospital, paralleling Dutch "ziekenhuis. The borrowed lexicon became as much a semantic and cultural framework as it was a linguistic one, shaping how Indonesians think and talk about institutional life, professions, and ideologies.

The continued and evolving jedas from Dutch show that it has both added to the indonesian vocabulary and changed relationships of meanings subtly. These transformations are especially clear in the formal registers, where these variants look and where they still reach the younger generations through the education or media system.

Semantic equivalence is an important issue in bilingual communication and translation between Indonesian and Dutch. But even intuitively translatable words and expressions come with subtle differences and uses, connotations and contexts that can make it impossible to line up semantics. in that precision and fidelity are very crucial within the fields (Newmark, 1988), legal, academic and literary translation.

One fundamental challenge comes from polysemy, where a single word has many meanings. The Indonesian word "hak," for example, can mean "right" (as in human rights) or "privilege," depending on context. In Dutch, one can translate "spelled out" as "recht" in the context above. Meaning, although the above context may lead you to equate with "straight," "recht" means "straight" but also a sense of "law," so direct translations vis-a-vis a domain knowledge and culture (Hatim & Munday, 2004).

Even equivalence is affected by pragmatic shifts. The Indonesian expression "mohon perhatian" (please pay attention) sounds polite and is commonly used in announcements, while its Dutch equivalent "let op" tends to be more blatant, authoritative or even urgent. These practical differences in translation strategies are especially critical for context-based and pragmatic adaptations when fine-tuning content with respect to target audience expectations and formality levels (Baker, 1992).

Additionally, word-for-word translations can cause semantic distortion. For instance, the literal translation of "pekerjaan rumah" into Dutch as "huiswerk" is effective (both words mean homework), but for more intricate phrases like "menjalankan tugas negara (to carry out state duties), interpretative translation is needed to keep intent and formality, as it is often translated to the Dutch as "uitvoeren van staatsverplichtingen." This mechanism illustrates how the principle of Functional Equivalence plays a vital role in translation, as meaning takes precedence in translation over word-for-word representation (Nida & Taber, 1969).

Then cultural idioms — another layer of complexity. Indonesian idioms such as "besar kepala" (hubristic, lit. zogenaamde(n), groot hoofd (big name) may simply lack a direct translation in Dutch and hence would have to be replaced by some sort of cultural substitution or explanation. In the case of idiomatic phrases, failing to consider their

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usage can lead to an incorrect interpretation or create cultural insensitivity, particularly when translating media and literature.

Also, the register and stylistic conventions differ between the languages. Dutch often uses shorter and more syntactically embedded constructions, whereas Indonesian tends to rely more on repetition and elaboration. These distinct differences require translators to be sensitive so that the target language does not become too unnatural (Munday, 2016).

Such challenges are why translation theory helps us journey through one of those contact zones where two languages are themselves in contact. It also shows how bilingual speakers negotiate meaning intuitively through context and general knowledge, and it constructs a dynamic interface between Indonesian and Dutch. These processes illustrate the central importance of semantics in maintaining linguistic hybridity and mutual intelligibility between historically related languages.

The semantic relationship between Indonesian and Dutch is not merely lexical but deeply embedded in morphosyntactic structures. These linguistic parallels reflect historical, social, and political relationships. As Indonesian evolves, the remnants of Dutch morphosyntax become both a linguistic heritage and a tool for contemporary expression.

Implications for Language Policy and Education

This study provides important implications for language education and language policy in multilingual contexts, particularly in Indonesia, where understanding the morphosyntactic and semantic relationships between Indonesian and Dutch can enrich linguistic awareness and language learning practices. Identifying Dutch structural influences on formal Indonesian may support curriculum developers in designing more effective instructional materials, especially for learners of academic and formal Indonesian. Similarities in auxiliary verb usage, passive constructions, and sentence organization may also encourage educators to apply comparative linguistic approaches in bilingual or multilingual learning environments.

The findings additionally contribute to language preservation and language planning efforts. As Indonesian continues to develop through contact with global languages, awareness of historical Dutch influences may help policymakers preserve the integrity and cultural identity of the Indonesian language while remaining open to linguistic innovation. Understanding Dutch-derived grammatical structures can also assist scholars and educators in interpreting historical linguistic developments and examining how colonial linguistic legacies continue to shape contemporary Indonesian communication, particularly in digital and social media contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study has illuminated the intricate morphosyntactic and semantic relationships between Indonesian and Dutch, shaped by centuries of colonial contact and ongoing linguistic interaction. Through the application of theoretical frameworks—including Universal Grammar, syntactic typology, and grammaticalization theory—combined with qualitative data analysis, the research has identified significant patterns of borrowing, structural adaptation, and semantic transformation.

Dutch influence on Indonesian is evident not only in lexical items but also in deeper syntactic and morphological structures. From auxiliary verb placement to passive

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constructions and word order in subordinate clauses, Indonesian exhibits patterns reflective of Dutch grammatical systems, particularly in formal and high-register contexts. Semantic shifts, such as broadening and narrowing of meaning and the rise of polysemy, further illustrate the dynamic nature of this linguistic contact.

Importantly, digital-platform data emphasises that speakers are active agents, driving this linguistic change. These findings underscore the proposition that morphosyntax operates as a nexus of semantic innovation and transculturative transmission, thereby elucidating the relationship of language as a social product vs medium of exchange.

Future research needs to adopt corpus-based approaches that could provide indices of the scale of Dutch impact over registers, and to consider comparative study with other Dutch-contact languages. Such work will help us to better understand how the effects of past language contact continue to shape the phonological system present in the languages spoken today around the world.

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